Came the Dawn

Memories of a Film Pioneer

CECIL M. HEPWORTH

a film pioneer

The Dawn comes to Flicker Alley

STILL a familiar figure in Wardour Street, Mr. Cecil Hepworth is a pioneer of British Cinema. In his autobiography he has a fascinating story to tell.

They were simpler, sunnier days. Hepworth began in the 'showmanship' period in the late 'nineties, carrying his forty-second films to lecture-halls all over the country, where frenzied audiences demanded their repetition many times at a sitting. From the 'fairground' period he helped nurse the cinema to the time of the great Hepworth Company at its Walton-on-Thames studios.

To those studios came famous stage actors, men of mark in many fields, anxious to try the new medium. In those studios many 'stars' of yesterday made world-wide reputations: Alma Taylor, Chrissie White, Gerald Ames, Ronald Colman, Violet Hopson, Stewart Rome, names remembered with deep affection four decades later. From Walton-on-Thames films were dispatched in quantity to the world, even to the United States before the Hollywood era.

Conditions, if not primitive, were rudimentary in the earlier days; the grandiose notions of the industry today were undreamt of; and, most marvellous of all, leading actors and actresses played for as little as half a guinea a day (including fares), and were not averse to doing sorting, filing and running errands in their spare time.

[*please turn to back flap*

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CECIL M. HEPWORTH

Portrait of Cecil Hepworth

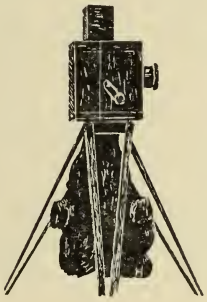
CAME THE DAWN

Memories of a Film Pioneer

by

Cecil M. Hepworth

Hon. Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society,
of the British Kinematograph Society
and of the British Film Academy.
Chairman, History Committee, British Film Institute



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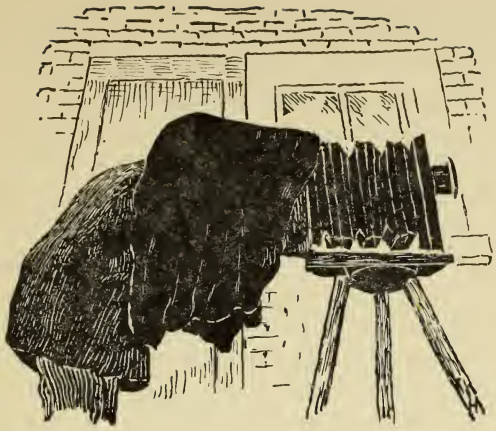
CAME THE DAWN



CHAPTER 1

This is the story of a man whose life was devoted to the making of films, but it is *not* a categorical account of the film industry, although the two stories ran parallel for many years. Mine begins —as for complement it must—with my birth, in 1874, in a humble house in South London, long before films were thought of. But the goodness which should go with humility was certainly not mine. Not to put too fine a point upon it, I was a thoroughly naughty, and very unpleasant, child.

My father was the dearest and best of men and he was very clever. His only fault was a lack of business acumen, and, though everybody liked him, I suppose no one expected him to make money out of his numerous abilities. He was very diligent and worked far into the night when the house was quiet, writing articles for various technical papers, mostly photographic, for he was an ardent photographer; one of the early workers of the old wet-plate process which you never hear of now except as a vague memory of the distant past, but it was one of the fertile places in which the seeds of the modern 'pictures' first began to germinate.

Watch him at work when I was about three years old. He had an immense camera which he must have picked up at a sale somewhere. He set it up in our back yard—we never had a garden

—and after focussing it he retired to the scullery which must have been darkened for the purpose, sensitised the big sheet of glass and then placed it all wet in the dark-slide, took it out to the camera and made the exposure before the plate got dry.

When dry-plate photography came to be invented a year or so later, he made the plates in large batches at a time and stored them for future use. He had a smaller camera by then but he still coated upon large glasses and cut them up later, and that sometimes left a narrow strip which I won—to experiment with! My eyes were just high enough to see over the edge of the table, gloating, and longing that there might be a strip of waste for me. Once he had a run of bad luck with his diamond and made a whole lot of faulty cuts. Then, for the only time in his life, so far as I know, he lost his temper. He smashed up all the pieces with the back of his diamond, and I burst into a flood of tears.

Many years later as I sat beside his bed in his last illness we talked of things which somehow had never been mentioned between us before. I was a grown man by then, married and full of business cares, but our talking often concerned my early childhood and that is why it crops up in this place. He reminded me of this dry-plate episode, and then he told me how utterly ashamed he had been when his outburst of temper made me cry. But it wasn't his feelings I was crying about—it was the loss of the little strips of glass I had been counting upon.

I told him that one of my very earliest memories was of him carrying me up in his arms from floor to floor of a huge windmill. He remembered it, too, but was very surprised that I did, for I was only eighteen months old. I could remember the strong pressure of his arms as he held me tight to him while he climbed the ladders, and it was the comfort of those arms that saved me from being terrified by the noise and the shuddering and shaking of the whole place.

I remember my first homecoming. I had been sent to stay with my grandmama, probably while my sister Dorothy was being born—she is fifteen months younger than I—and then, because of severe financial stringency at home, I was left to stay there for another year or so.

Grandmama lived in a tall old basement house in Lansdowne Road, Clapham. She was one of innumerable sisters; a stream of great-aunts who were always floating in and out around her. They varied very much but most of them were nice and had quite good

knees. She also had a husband; a gruff man who said 'Damn.' He seemed to keep in one frightening room, and he had a beard and a very red face and he didn't like children. Besides the great-aunts there were two ordinary-sized ones who, I gathered, were my father's sisters, and there was also an assortment of uncles, but only one of them, Uncle Wheldon, lived in the house and he was its support and mainstay. He was a very great friend and he loved me with all his big heart. Between him and grandmama, and sweet Aunt Maud, I had a gloriously happy time.

Aunt Maud was a very kind and gentle lady, much given to high-church religious observances and to painting on china, at which she worked professionally and very skilfully. She almost always painted saints for the decoration of altar-panels. Once she painted me—a peculiar aberration, for by no stretch of imagery could I possibly be included in the category. But I loved to watch her at work when I went to stay with grandmama. China has to be 'baked' after painting. The colours—powder in little glass tubes, I remember—are often quite different from what they will be when they are baked, and, unless I have forgotten, flesh tint was bright blue to start with, which must have made painting very difficult. It certainly made the saints look peculiar. It intrigued me immensely to see how they changed after cooking—and even a sinner might be improved that way!

This dear old house, with all the happy people in it, was a great joy to me whenever I could have the opportunity to go there. The only drawback was the black beetles. There were thousands of them in the basement kitchen, and if you went down there with a candle at night you could hear the gentle scrabble of their feet as they hurried away from the light. I was terrified of black beetles: I am still.

But the time came at the end of my first visit, when my mother decided she must have me at home. The news was broken to me as gently as possible but black despair curled round my heart. They carried me home weeping. It must have been a wretched disappointment for my parents, although it was natural enough. I had scarcely seen them since my babyhood: grandmama's house meant everything of home to me. I remember vaguely how miserably I blubbered and I think there was in me a flickering of regret that I could not put up a little show of filial decency. My mother's sorrow was very genuine—I remember that—and I am sorry that I was such a little beast.

37, St. Paul's Crescent, Camden Town

But I had very little understanding. My mother was, I realise now, a good, hard-working and essentially unselfish woman. On practically no money she kept our little household going, not smoothly certainly, but without the disaster which must often have been threatening. She ruled us with the proverbial rod of iron and to us children (there was soon a third one, another girl) she seemed to be a veritable dragon, to be dodged and hidden

from whenever we could possibly manage it. All this, of course, made dad dearer to us than ever. He never by word or sign took our part against her, and indeed I know he was very fond of her, but his gentle unspoken love wrapped itself around us and healed our little wounds almost before they hurt.

Saturday night was bath-night for us children. A round flat bath, like the lid of a cake tin only bigger, was put down in front of the kitchen fire and a mixture of cold and boiling water poured into it to a depth of about two inches. Then we three, who had been slowly undressing in preparation, stepped into it together and sat down, bottoms to the edge and toes together in the middle. Then the fun began: the thing was to see who had the blackest legs. It was an important point and was carefully and impartially considered. I think I generally won that round. That decided, we set to work and scrubbed and cleaned one leg each, getting it as clean and bright as we possibly could. The contrast between the black and the pink one in each of the three sets was a sheer delight to all of us. Then, of course, there followed a general cleaning up, the usual trouble with the ears and the soap in the eyes and so on, but we were soon dried and night-dressed and down in a row at mother's knee to say our prayers.

After we were in bed, I think poor mother had a little rest—the first she had had all day—but whether she allowed daddy to have any I do not know. I know he had to account for every penny he spent and I know he usually sat up writing far into the night, for most of the little money we had came from that mysterious writing.

We were living at that time at 37, St. Paul's Crescent, Camden Town, in North London. My mother always insisted that the address should be given as of Camden *Square* which she held to be much more respectable. It was not the place of my birth for that occurred on the other side of London, either at Blackheath or Lewisham I think. I cannot be expected to remember the details of that event. Our house in St. Paul's Crescent was the last one in the road, which terminated abruptly in a coal-yard belonging to the railway company. My little bedroom at the side of the house overlooked the yard. One night there was one of those curious and very unusual thunderstorms in which the lightning seems to stand still in the sky for a second or more. My parents had gone to an early performance of *H.M.S. Pinafore* at the Park Theatre, Camden Town (now, of course, a picture-house). I woke in the

middle of one of those long flashes, took one look at the flood-lighted coal-yard, closed my eyes quickly again before the flash ended, and kept them closed. I fully realised that the world had come to an end—and that my mother and father were out!

People seldom understand what dreadful things happen to children. They say a coward dies a thousand deaths. I died a dozen before I was ten years old. My father, among other things, was a popular scientific lecturer. He had one lecture on electricity. It was a simple lecture, for electricity in those days was a simple thing. The lecture needed a number of simple experiments and he carried a battery of two or three bichromate cells. Bichromate of potash is a considerable poison. He made up a saturated solution, mixed it with a proportion of sulphuric acid and kept it in old wine bottles. I strolled into his den one afternoon when he had gone to lecture, found a wine bottle apparently with a heel-tap of wine still in it and tipped it straight into my mouth. I tasted the acid and knew instantly what I had done. I knew that I was bound to die in a very little while. But do you think I said anything about it? Not a word. I just waited for the end. This was not courage: it was sheer cowardice; I didn't want to get into a row. I was very violently sick and that, no doubt, saved my life. One of my bilious attacks, they thought, and I did not tell them about it until many years afterwards.

I tell you these things to show that I was brought up in an atmosphere of moderated science. It probably had its effect upon my future career.

Once when Uncle Wheldon had been to see us he gave me a half-crown. A huge sum; the first half-crown I had ever seen. Then from the half-landing overlooking our back yard, my parents spotted a hole in the ground filled with water. Charged with this misdemeanour I promptly lied and said 'I never!' The lie was brought home to me and my half-crown was confiscated. It was an awful punishment. It cramped my career for the rest of my life, for I have never been a good liar since. This is a severe handicap in trade—even in the film trade. Also the half-crown has never been given back to me!

As I lay awake in my cot one night, in the subdued light of the nursery, I looked up at the wall just above my head and saw a black mark which I instantly said to myself might be a black beetle. Of course I knew it was nothing of the kind, but it gave me a nasty turn because if it *had* been a beetle, it was just where it

might fall on my face. I *knew* it was only a hole in the plaster, but every time I opened my eyes, there was the sinister black thing and I even began to imagine I saw it move. At last I screwed up enough courage to settle the question once and for all by touching it. I put up my finger. It *was* a black beetle; and it *did* fall on my face.

My mother's great pride—and my despair—was my long golden hair which she insisted in doing up into long curls all round my head and one prodigious sausagey one right across the top from front to back. Then she put me into a black velvet frock with white lace cuffs and trimmings and sent me off to a party. There I gained notoriety by bowing down so low that my careful coiffure fell over the top of my head and touched the floor in front. This anecdote would have no value except for the fact that it was at this party that I fell in love with a girl in a pink-and-white muslin frock. A man's first love affair inevitably sets its mark upon him.

In St. Paul's Crescent, further up where it *is* a crescent, there lived a man whose name was Mr. Belton. He had a peculiar trade. He made and sold sheets of sensitised albumenised paper such as photographers used to print their cartes-de-visite and cabinet portraits upon. I could buy these sheets for ninepence each—not often, for ninepence was a lot of money. Then, with old negatives begged from dad, and a cheap printing-frame, I could produce veritable photographs.

So there I was, at say four years old, equipped with a tiny but basic knowledge of electricity and photography, a film-producer in embryo, and with a forgotten love affair to build up the heart interest.

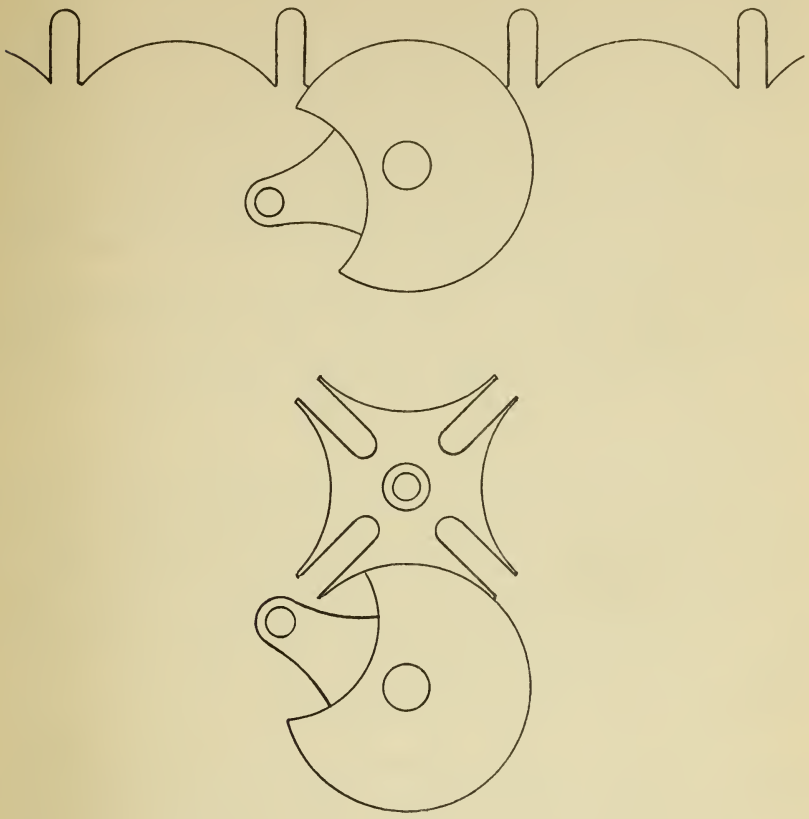
But though my father was without doubt the great vital spirit; the mainspring of my future career—the setting, the background, the atmosphere, were all provided by the Polytechnic. He and that, were the two grand factors which prepared me for my future life—and then blind chance tipped me into it.

The Royal Polytechnic Institution, as it was called, was a building in Upper Regent Street, in London's West End. Upon that site the present Polytechnic was later built. The old 'Poly' was a wondrous place of delight to the small boys, and even to some of the small girls, of Queen Victoria's days. It was opened about the time she came to the throne but it languished and died several years before her reign came to an end.

I remember the thrill of joy which went through me every time I climbed the half-dozen steps which led up to the great front door: the surge of delight as I passed into the wonderful Great Hall and sensed the magic of its atmosphere. For in this place were gathered together examples of all the latest scientific wonders of the day. First, just inside the entrance, was a huge plate-glass static electricity machine. Given a boy big enough to turn the handle—it was too heavy for my little arm—you could have long sparks of miniature lightning at will. At the far end of the Great Hall there was an immense induction-coil whose spark, they told me, could kill a horse. There was a long narrow lake the whole length of the hall, shallow for the most part but deep enough at the far end to sink the big diving bell. Right above the lake and along the whole length of the hall was slung a tight-rope upon which, at stated intervals, an automatic full-size figure of a man would walk from end to end. There was a gallery all round this hall and here there was a model railway with electric trains which ran 'all by themselves' in a day when there was scarce a real one to be found anywhere. And here in this gallery there was a 'wheel-of-life'—a cinematograph in embryo. It was a big disc which you could turn quite easily and it had narrow slots cut at intervals all round its edge. Between these slots, on the other side of the disc, a little dancing figure was painted in consecutive stages of movement. When you turned the wheel and peeped through the slots at a mirror hung a foot or two beyond it you saw the little figure dance as though alive.

For sixpence you could take your seat with a lot of other boys in the huge diving bell and be completely submerged. Just below your feet there was the surface of the blue water, for the bell was open at the bottom, but as it descended the surface of the water went down too and you didn't get your school boots even wet. I have been told since, but I don't believe it, that the band played particularly loudly while the diving bell was going down to smother the screams of the drowning people inside it.

Alongside the Great Hall was the part I liked best of all—the theatre. This was a rather complicated mixture of an ordinary theatre, with stage and scenery and so on, and a projection theatre more elaborate than would be found in any cinema today. The operating box ran the whole width of the theatre at dress circle level, and with a galleryful of seats above it, I think, though I can't be sure about that. In the operating box there were about



Above : The Choreutoscope Movement
Below : Modern Projector Movement

fifteen magic-lanterns of all sorts and sizes, but all worked by limelight. I think some of the lantern slides were photographic, though of that I cannot be sure, but the majority of them were hand-painted and many were of great size, eight or ten inches in diameter. There were any number of trick slides too, of the *Sleeping Man Swallowing Rat* description, and revolving geometrical patterns which gave some very fine effects upon the screen. Also there was a Beale's 'Choreutoscope,' a curiously interesting anticipation of a modern cinematograph though not the least like it in effect. It had a cut-out stencil of a skeleton

figure in about a dozen different positions which changed instantaneously from one to another. The interesting thing about it now is that the means of that quick movement was practically the same as the 'Maltese cross' movement of a modern film projector. If you can imagine a Maltese cross straightened out into a line with an ordinary pin wheel working it, and at the same time closing and opening a very rapid shutter, you will understand the 'Choreutoscope,' which was showing its crude pictures on the screen at the 'Poly' ten or fifteen years before anyone had a film to show. For it was in or about 1878 or 1879 when I saw it and it had been showing long before that.

It was intermittent movement which made the cinematograph possible. Many films had been made years before any of them could be projected on a screen. Here was the intermittent movement almost exactly as it is used today—and everybody overlooked it!

The Polytechnic stage was small but very well equipped for those days—no electric light, of course, but plenty of gas, Argand burners and so on, and limelight in the wings and perches. There were plenty of trap-doors including a star-trap through which a man could be shot up from below on to the stage and land on his feet on the spot he had just come through. 'Pepper's Ghost' was born in this theatre and later that very clever ghost illusion invented by J. J. Walker, the organ builder.

In this theatre there were daily lantern lectures, mildly educational but always entertaining, by such lecturers as B. J. Malden, Professor Pepper and my own father, T. C. Hepworth, who were on the regular staff of the 'Poly.' And that is how it is that I was so frequently there and was able to gain an insight into the wonders of the operating box and the delights of the stage and all its contraptions behind and below. My little mind became stored and almost clogged with details which were to serve me wondrously well in after years.

The crowning tragedy of my childhood was on the day when the Polytechnic was closed for ever and I could draw no further upon its riches.

It was about this time that the family migrated to a slightly larger house at 32, Cantelowes Road in the same neighbourhood. Here, fired with the stage enthusiasm inspired by the 'Poly,' we children fitted up the nursery as a theatre. There was a drop curtain of the proper roll-up-from-the-bottom type (not your

modern drapery which flies up solid into the roof), side wings, gas footlights—by rubber tube from the burner over the mantelpiece —and a very moderate store of home-made scenery which, Shakespeare-like, 'played many parts.' The curtain and scenery were painted on unbleached calico at a penny three-farthings a yard, and the whole outfit could be taken down in a few minutes and stored away, according to parental decree.

Our repertory varied from nursery stories to such little things as *Macbeth*—in which Dorothy played Lady to my lead and Effie had the whole of the rest of the cast to herself. Imagine the effect upon grown-ups of hearing a little girl of five lisping the immortal lines:—

> 'I have given suck and know how tender 'tis
> To love the babe that milks me——'

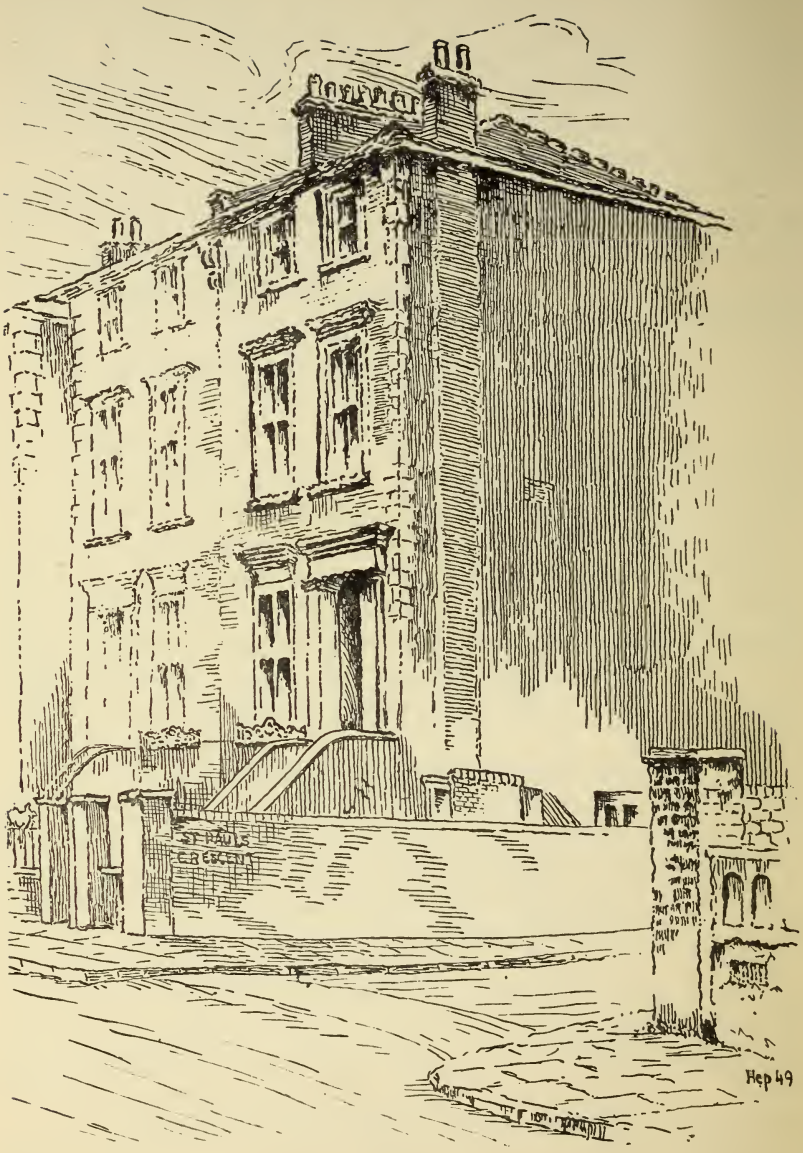
I am told I was a fierce stage-manager, insisting upon letter perfection and strict attention to detail. Those who worked with me in later years were inclined to make the same complaint.

Alternating with the theatrical phase there was a deeply religious period in which Church took the place of stage and I, as parson, read all the prayers of the English Church service and insisted upon the correct responses in the proper places. We spent very many hours upon our knees. My sisters especially disliked the litany, but as that was my favourite they had to go through with it.

As a kind of moral (not too moral) background to all this there was the deadly governess period. The poor, wretched governesses came one at a time, saw, and were conquered. It was our part, not deliberately conceived but tacitly understood and immediately adopted, to make their lives miserable and get rid of them as quickly as possible. I remember one incident which, though far worse than the others, was typical of all of them. The victim was a poor old thing of uncertain age, poor health and very weak eyes. Gentle and helpless she was, yet in some now forgotten way she incurred our relentless wrath. It was I who invented and carried out the diabolical scheme of revenge which put an end to her regime and gained me a thoroughly deserved thrashing.

I stole up to her room when she was out and painted a deep ring of non-drying coal-tar all round the top edge of a private but humble article of bedroom furniture.

After that, the deluge! I was seated by my father at his study



32, Cantelowes Road, Camden Square

table as he worked, when the door literally burst open and framed that weak governess, now a quivering tower of rage, spluttering out her wrath and the story of her woe. She had on a tight petticoat bodice of scarlet, a very short skirt and long thin naked arms in one of which she brandished the offending article with most of the tar still upon it: her lips quivering, her poor weak eyes full of hot tears. It was a pitiful, horribly comical sight. I did not dare glance at my father. I do not know how far his quick sense of humour fought with his pity and anger. And if anyone thinks I triumphed in my sorry revenge I would like to punch his head. I believe I almost enjoyed my thrashing.

CHAPTER 2

After the closing of the Polytechnic my father took up itinerant lecturing on several popular scientific subjects. This involved a great deal of preparatory work which had a considerable bearing on my unofficial education. It began each season with the sending out of large numbers of circulars giving the syllabus of each of some fifteen or twenty lectures, from 'A Trap to Catch a Sunbeam' (meaning a camera), Electricity, Telephony, the Phonograph—all as unknown to the average audience then as atomic fission is now—to 'The Footprints of Charles Dickens' and, very much later, 'The Röntgen Rays' and the Cathode Rays of Crookes. It does not need much imagination to visualise the effect of all this on the receptive, adolescent mind of the growing boy. Then add to it the fact that, in a little while, that boy was called in from time to time—glorious times!—actually to operate the biunial lime-light lantern with which the lectures were illustrated. Oxygen gas had to be generated and stored in a huge gas-bag and transported to the scene of action, with the pressure boards, the big double-lantern, the box of slides and the lantern screen.

These days of wonderful adventure were rudely shot through by the necessity of going to school, which followed naturally upon the sack of the governesses. School seemed to be a horribly unnecessary interruption to an education which was going along famously and developing exactly as one wished. Natural laziness, mixed with inarticulate resentment, led inevitably to the almost complete neglect of opportunities, and only science lessons and drawing produced any appreciable results.

But it was in my first school—Shaw's, in the Camden Road—

that I met my one and only real school chum, a wild Irish boy named Jim Flanagan. We were always together and our talks were of all sorts of things; chiefly girls, but that was later on. It was at this school that I first became conscious of my inveterate and incurable shyness which was to be one of the banes of my existence. I was too shy and nervous to go into the playground with the other boys and used to skulk in the empty classroom, pretending to study. This was the negative side of my education. It's a pity I wasn't driven out to play; I should have made a better film-producer afterwards.

From about this time the family seems to have quieted down to a comparatively settled existence. It made another move, this time to 45, St. Augustine's Road, still a little nearer to the coveted Camden Square, and meanwhile increased its numbers—after a long interval—by another girl and a boy. The boy, being the last of the line, was so terribly spoiled by his doting mother that all the others disliked him intensely and he ultimately went abroad and after a few letters, disappeared and could never be traced. The rest of us, including the youngest girl, Kitty, are all very good friends after our turbulent youth and meet very happily whenever we can.

Jim Flanagan's widowed mother had a house a little larger than ours and actually *in* Camden Square. That may have prompted her to like to be known as Mrs. O'Flanagan, for which there appeared to be no other justification. With this little touch of pardonable pride she was a kind and very pleasant lady, and she had a very nice little girl, named Nita, with whom brother Jim quarrelled and fought most happily. It is possible that they even had a bathroom in their big house, but of that I never heard. Nice people were careful not to mention such things to their less affluent neighbours.

The still rather unpleasant youth who is the centre figure of this story was moved to a new school at Hillmartin Crescent, Jim Flanagan remaining behind at the old one. Here again, 'playground funk' seems to have been his principal characteristic, coupled with most assiduous inattention to lessons. He had two slight excuses: hopeless at arithmetic, 'figure-blind' as some people are tone-deaf, and with an all-absorbing home interest in 'inventions,' photography, electricity and heaven knows what besides. His mother complained that it was almost impossible to get him in to meals or to bed or anything. His homework was the despair

of his every schoolmaster. There was one school interest however. With another boy, named Hutchinson, he started a school magazine, printed by lithography, of all things! A lithographic press came from father's den and these two blessed infants wrote backwards and made drawings upon the stone and printed the magazine in genuine printer's ink!

My father had become the editor and, I think, part owner, of a languishing weekly journal called the *Photographic News*, and I joined the 'staff' at a salary of five shillings a week and my keep. I held that job down—on those terms—for four years but I had to find other means to augment my salary. I did what I could on the advertising side, collecting overdue accounts on commission and sometimes getting in new advertisers. I wrote articles and illustrated them in pen-and-ink, and got paid seven shillings and sixpence a column—half the usual rate—and all the time I saved and saved every penny I could get.

But I had my small extravagances. On the left-hand side of Peckham Rye as you face south, there is, or there was then, a very appetising little shop where they sold lovely beef-steak puddings, hot, at fourpence each. Several of my customers from whom I tried to collect accounts lived in this neighbourhood and there was one in particular who was a very sluggish payer and I used to have to call upon him three or four times for every once I collected any cash. When I succeeded I used to turn into this little shop and celebrate with a beef-steak pudding, hot. And if I failed I sometimes had a hot pudding, then, to comfort me.

There was a small chemist's shop by the railway bridge at Blackheath kept by people by the name of Butcher. I liked going there, not merely because the collection of the money was easier but principally because I liked to see them growing steadily bigger, a little bigger every time I went there. There were two or three brothers and a father I think, and I suppose they must have had between them that curious flair for business which makes a few people always choose the right path and be led on to prosperity. Their name became one of the biggest in the photographic trade before I was very much older and they were among the first people to take a tentative interest in the new-fangled Living Photographs when that strange adventure sprang itself upon the world. Even now, the name of Butcher has an important place in the industry of the moving pictures.

In the middle of 1891 when the Hepworth family were spending

The old Polytechnic : The Royal Polytechnic Institution, about 1880, showing the diving bell, extreme left, and 'Wheel of Life' in the Gallery

At Algiers I filmed the solar eclipse of May, 1900

Early 'news-reel': 'Queen Victoria's Funeral,' 1901. King Edward VII, hearing the camera, stops the cortège

'Rover,' 'Hepworth Picture Player,' hero of 'Rescued by Rover' with the 'rescued,' 1905

their summer holiday at Deal as usual, we struck up a friendship with the MacIntosh family and among them was a very pretty little girl named Blanche who, very much later, became chief scenario writer to the Hepworth firm, makers of cinematograph films, which up to that date had not yet been invented. It was at Deal and at this time that I had my first self-taught lessons in sailing—afterwards the great passion of my life. I had had an early inoculation when, as a very small boy, I sailed across the Solent from Newtown to Lymington in the cutter *Mary* (Skipper, Fleuss, of diving-dress fame) with my father and mother. There was a lovely breeze and mother lay full length in the lee scuppers —a picture of perfect bliss. We were delayed at Lymington with a fouled anchor which took hours to clear and it was dark by the time we got outside. Then it fell a dead calm and my father and friend Fleuss each took an oar and gave me the tiller, to my unbounded joy. Whether the skipper gave me the wrong light to steer for or whether I got it mixed up with another one half-way across I do not know, but when we reached the island at dead of night we learned from a coastguard tramping along the beach that we had been swept by the tide far below our proper place and could do nothing until the tide turned again. I wanted to stay aboard and see the adventure out, but mother and I were put ashore and the coastguard saw us home. That was the beginning: that was when the lovely poison entered my blood stream.

When, years later, at Deal mother bought herself a dinghy for me to row her about in, I saw to it that a mast and sail and rudder were included in the bargain. It was a terrible old boat, with a length scarcely in excess of its breadth, like some of the old ladies standing around, and we always called it 'she.' Mother, being musical, also called it the *Vivace* which was hopelessly unsuitable; *Largo* would have been much more appropriate. One day I offered to sail the pater and his brother Wheldon to Pegwell Bay for the day. We had the flood tide and a fair breeze from the south and did the passage comfortably.

I was relying upon the ebb tide to bring us home as the *Vivace* was very little good on the wind. But we hadn't been very long on the return journey when we found the breeze had freshened very much and being now against the tide was knocking up a considerable jobble. Soon we began to take in a fair amount of water. I asked Uncle Wheldon, being the heavier, to sit on the floor to balance us better, which he obediently did though it was three inches deep

in water before he sat down and much deeper afterwards. Soon I saw we'd never make it and I said I thought we ought to turn and run for Ramsgate. I don't know whether they were scared, for if they were they didn't show it. They quietly agreed, feeling, I suppose, that if I didn't know what I was about they didn't either. So I managed to put her about, thanking heaven I did not have to gybe. I allowed for the tidal outrush from Pegwell Bay and we drove into Ramsgate Harbour in great style.

At the big electrical exhibition held at the Crystal Palace in 1892, my father and Professor Ambrose Fleming (Thermionic Fleming—we called him the 'cough-drop') gave several illustrated lectures in the theatre there. I worked the electric lantern for them. It was a beast. The lamp, which was supposed to be automatic, kept going out and had to be started again, in the dark, by twiddling the nearly red-hot knob between finger and thumb. I used to wake up in the night and go blundering around in my dark bedroom, trying to find the lantern which I had dreamed had just gone out again.

This, and the many opportunities of wandering about the show and talking to the exhibitors, had a very important effect upon my career as I will show.

In July, 1893, Birt Acres, who afterwards came into my life quite a lot, told me he had been invited to give a show of some films that he had made, at Marlborough House at the wedding of the Duke of York to Princess Mary of Teck. At that time I had never heard of 'films' and could only guess what he was talking about, but I must have surmised that some kind of lantern was involved and that would have been enough for me. He was very excited, naturally, and admitted that, while he was competent to work the projector, he would be very glad if I would come along and look after the electric lamp. I willingly agreed and we duly arrived at Marlborough House with the gear, projector, lamp, resistance and wire and all the rest of it. The whole place was gaily decorated and there was a considerable air of fuss and tension. Birt Acres was a man who perspired easily. He fully lived up to his reputation in that respect. We didn't have any real difficulty in obtaining the few things we wanted and we set the whole apparatus up in a sort of tent which was an annex to the room where the guests were to assemble for the show.

I remember being mildly surprised when the Prince of Wales

—afterwards King Edward VII—came over and talked to us when we were getting the show ready in this kind of small anteroom. He seemed to speak with a fairly strong German accent. But I do not remember being greatly impressed with the pictures. Probably I was a bit excited too, and was thinking far more of keeping the light burning properly than of looking to see what the pictures were like. One of them did startle me, though: it was a picture of a great wave rushing into the mouth of a cave and breaking into clouds of spray.

Looking back, it seems very curious to me that a subject to which I was destined to dedicate all my future life should make so little first impression on me. I suppose I was so obsessed with the behaviour of the arc-lamp that I paid no real attention to the pictures: yet at that very early date they must have been 'a dainty dish to set before a king.' It is true that Friese Greene had had many ideas and at least one master-patent before that time but I cannot learn that he ever actually produced anything to which that poetic description could be applied.

Some twelve years later when I read that the brothers Wright in America had actually lifted off the ground in a flying machine I was intensely excited, though that had no effect upon my future life except for one little incident. My father had some time previously bequeathed to me the writing of the science notes for a monthly journal and I reported, perhaps glowingly, this most important adventure as it seemed to me. The editor asked me to discontinue the column. He may have thought that 'flying'—till then unheard of—was too fanciful and flippant for a staid and solemn journal, or it may have been only that my work generally was not up to his standard. I shall never know; but I got the sack from *that* job.

CHAPTER 3

On my twenty-first birthday in 1895 the dear old pater gave me a little lathe which he had managed to stump up for, secondhand. He held, rather unsoundly, that if I mastered the art of metal turning I never need be without a job. It must have strained resources very badly but it was a great joy to me and the beginning of all sorts of things. Looking back, it does seem to me that Fate had a very clear notion from the beginning of what she intended to do with me and had all the time been steadily pushing me along in the selected direction. If I have told the story fairly, that general trend should have become apparent to the reader also.

My first camera was one I made for myself when I was a small boy at a cost of tenpence—ninepence for wood and a penny for a magnifying-glass which I mounted in a cardboard tube for a lens. I took a successful photograph with it from the nursery window. The first cinematograph camera I ever had my hands upon was one made by Prestwich and owned by Thomas R. Dallmeyer. He was a great chum of my father's, and those two, with Thomas Bedding, the Three Thomases, were dubbed the Three Musketeers of photography. Dallmeyer asked me to go with him and film the Diamond Jubilee in 1897, but the camera jammed at the critical moment and I failed. Whether this was my fault or its, I do not know, but I used those cameras for many years afterwards and had no trouble with them.

But between the coming of my lathe and the incident of the Diamond Jubilee there were a couple of years which were pregnant with many things that, all unknown to me, were to have a profound influence upon my subsequent film-life. I worried

about that red-hot electric lamp at the Crystal Palace exhibition. Being used to limelight which required manual attention every thirty or forty seconds, I couldn't see why an electric lamp, used for a similar purpose, shouldn't be similarly trimmed by hand. I determined that as soon as I had sufficient dexterity I would make a hand-feed lamp for use in magic or optical lanterns. I did in fact design and make and patent[1] such an arc-lamp exactly three months after I received the lathe and *before* I had attained sufficient dexterity to make it decently, but it worked and it was good enough to serve as a model for others to work from. Soon it was put on the market by Ross, the opticians, and presently the makers of the finest cinematograph projectors.

Then my father and I went to Olympia and saw among other things a little side show of 'Living Photographs' by R. W. Paul, who was projecting through a translucent screen some films made by Edison for his peep-show Kinetoscope. This was a modern miracle I shall never forget. We had somehow missed the first showing, several months earlier, of Lumière's 'Living Photographs' at the New Polytechnic in February, 1896, and I hadn't even read about it, so I was completely unprepared and immensely impressed, and my first reaction was that here was a chance to sell my electric lamp. With a sudden access of unusual business enterprise I pushed through the crowd and into the operating room behind the screen and tackled Paul about it. He said I could come and see him at his office at 44, Hatton Garden in the City. I went there and found that his work-room was at the very top of a tall building and I stumbled up the narrow staircase, trying not to tread upon the dozen or more sleeping Polish and Armenian Jews who had been waiting there for days and nights for delivery of 'Animatographs,' as Paul's machines were called. And there at the top was Paul himself, perspiring freely and cranking away at his big clumsy machines in the hopeless endeavour to run them in and make them usable by the weaker brethren outside. Robert Paul later became one of my best and firmest friends, and on this occasion he purchased half a dozen of my lamps at a profit of over a pound apiece and thus laid the foundation of my fortune.

Thus, at about 21 years old, was I caught in the outer fringe of the film-net that Fate was spreading and baiting for me, but even then I did not know that I was snared.

It was then that in my working hours—always to be distinguished

[1] Patent No. 11,892. June 19th, 1895.

from the hours when I was working—I was taking care of an office in Dashwood House in the City for a Dutchman named Noppen, who was trying to sell reflex cameras, I think he had something else on his mind that took up very much more of his attention than did his business. I had come upon him when I was trying to sell advertising space for the *Photographic News*. One morning, early, I found him anxiously scratching round London searching for someone to take his place while he went back to Holland 'on business.' I stood by him, as a fellow should when another is in distress, and I never left him until late in the evening he engaged me at thirty shillings a week, to look after things in his absence. Those business trips to Holland took place with increasing frequency and then one day he never came back. I sold the cameras as well as I could and paid the rent and my salary out of the proceeds, and when that source came to an end, I closed the office and went home.

Well, now I must either sink or swim. Either I must be prepared to invest my poor savings or hang on to them and look for another job. Investment was decided upon and my young cousin, Monty Wicks, agreed to come in with me for a small wage and the lark of the thing. Early in 1897, we took a shop in Cecil Court, Charing Cross Road, and set up there to work an agency we secured for the sale of cameras and dry-plates. We enjoyed the lark and waited for custom—which never came.

I was still being bitten by the thought of those film pictures of Robert Paul's, and it was at some time during the first months at Cecil Court that I discovered the possibility of buying an experimental film-projector from a man named Bonn in High Holborn. I bought it for a pound, modified it and coupled it to my existing lantern, and thus I had a means of projecting films.

A kinematograph projector is in essence nothing but an ordinary optical or magic lantern with a mechanism fitted in front in place of the slide carrier. The film in fact takes the place of the slide and the mechanism is merely a contraption to pull it through the optical system *intermittently* and at sufficient speed. Just in case this should come to the notice of anyone who does not already know it, that speed is one foot or sixteen 'frames' a second for silent films. It is faster still for sound pictures.

The mechanism I bought from Bonn was just this movement complete with its objective lens. I made a simple alteration to my lantern, fitting its objective lens (for the slides) into a sliding

platform, on the other end of which I attached the film mechanism. Now I could at any moment change over in a second from lantern slides to 'living pictures' or vice versa by merely sliding the platform across.

Paul had some 'throw-outs,' cheap films, in a junk basket. I bought one or two for four shillings each. We now had a means of producing a film show in our cellar. Each film ran for forty seconds.

Remember my early life: photography—limelight—lantern shows—lectures. The next step was obvious and inevitable. I had some hundreds of lantern slides from my own negatives accumulated over several years. What more natural than that they should be grouped into a few short series having a 'story content,' be fertilised by suitable films from the said junk basket, built up with lecture and music and taken all over the country to halls where many in the audience had never seen a living photograph in their lives before.

My father was still travelling with his several lectures to various halls about the country but things had changed a little. He seldom travelled his big biunial lantern and all the accessories but had to be content with carrying a box of slides under his arm and trusting to local showmanship to see him through. He never grumbled and I did not think of it at the time, but I expect now that fees were shrinking in value and shortage of cloth meant cutting his coat to fit. In any case lantern shows would not have stood up long against moving pictures, though many of the slides were very beautiful and there are others now more beautiful still in the hands of really clever amateur photographers.

Other things were changing their pattern too. It ceased to be necessary to travel oxygen-making plant and heavy gas-bags, for both gases could be bought and carried in comparatively small cylinders. That is what I used and even with film-showing apparatus my luggage was smaller than his used to be. As to subject matter, I remember one little series which always went down very well indeed. It was called *The Storm* and consisted of half a dozen slides and one forty-foot film. My sister Effie was a very good pianist and she travelled with me on most of these jaunts. The sequence opened with a calm and peaceful picture of sea and sky. Soft and gentle music (Schumann, I think). That changed to another seascape, though the clouds looked a little more interesting, and the music quickened a bit. At each change

the inevitability of a coming gale became more insistent and the music more threatening; until the storm broke with an exciting film of dashing waves bursting into the entrance of a cave, with wild music (by Jensen, I think).

I did the commentary, of course, as well as working the lantern and films. The influence of my father kept cropping up everywhere. I must have followed his technique somehow in getting the engagements for these shows, though I cannot quite remember what I did. I remember as a child helping, with the rest of the family, to fold up circulars and putting them into envelopes addressed to mechanics' institutes and all sorts of likely halls and societies and I suppose I must have done something of the same in my own case, though I am not clear how I found the addresses. However that may be, we went to many halls and with only one exception we met with invariable success. That was somewhere up in the north of Lancashire where the people spoke with a very funny accent. I couldn't understand them and I like to think that my failure there was only because they couldn't understand me.

One of the essential conditions of good showmanship in a show of this kind is a means of rapidly changing over from lantern-slide to film without noticeable interval but that was not beyond the limits of my mechanical ability. I have never in my life before or since witnessed such intense enthusiasm as these short, crude films evoked in audiences who saw films for the first time. At one hall, at Halstead in Essex, we had fifteen re-engagements, counting the repeats when we were asked to stay over for a second showing on the following day, which of course were actual repetitions of the same programme. The re-engagements strained our resources rather badly for then we were expected to supply new material.

But if the films were terrible faulty, as they certainly were, the projector was little better than a nightmare. I soon had to do something about it. Charles Urban had just come over from America bringing with him a new projector mechanism called the 'Bioscope,' which was of good and substantial design. It was reputed to be flickerless, which it was—because it had no shutter! But a shutter is absolutely necessary in order to cover the momentary change from one 'frame' to the next. The black moment on the screen, sixteen times a second, causes the distressing flicker. It is obviated in modern practice by having two or three extra unnecessary blades to the shutter. The consequent forty-eight or sixty-four interruptions are too many to be seen and the picture

appears to be flickerless. But without any shutter at all the 'rain' on the screen is far worse than any flicker—the whole idea was a bad mistake. I bought one of these otherwise excellent mechanisms, fitted it with a shutter, a 'gate' which did not scratch the films, and a 'take-up' to rewind them as they came from the machine, instead of letting them fall into a basket or on to the floor, which was the very reprehensible custom of the time. Then I adapted the machine to my change-over device and I had a good and reliable apparatus.

But though my first attempts at the travelling show business consisted of half a dozen forty-foot films from Paul's junk basket, plus a little music and a hundred or so lantern-slides, it required considerable ingenuity to spin that material out to an evening's entertainment. I showed the films forwards in the ordinary way and then showed some of them backwards. I stopped them in the middle and argued with them; called out to the little girl who was standing in the forefront of the picture to stand aside which she immediately did. That required careful timing but was very effective. But with it all I very soon found I must have more films and better ones.

So I collected from Fuerst Brothers, in Dashwood House, some Lumière films, and some others from Paul. There is a little story that I have told so often that I have almost come to believe it. Maybe it belongs to the *si non e vero* class: I will admit that it is perhaps a little exaggerated. I was ready to begin my show in a crowded hall built beneath a chapel. I do not know its denomination and that doesn't matter. The apparatus was set up, as was quite usual in those days, in the very middle of the audience, quite regardless of fire risk or panic. Everything was ready to make a start when the pastor came and sat down beside me. He said that, of course, he was quite certain that there would be nothing in my programme which could possibly be offensive to any of the pure young people who formed the majority of his congregation, but, as the pastor of his little flock and merely as a matter of form, he would ask me to show him a list of my titles. I handed it to him and watched him reading slowly down and nodding approval until he suddenly frowned and said he couldn't possibly allow a vulgar music-hall actress to be shown in his hall. It was my *chef d'œuvre*, a beautifully hand-coloured film of Loie Fuller in her famous Serpentine Dance. It was completely innocuous, and I told him so with some heat. He was adamant and

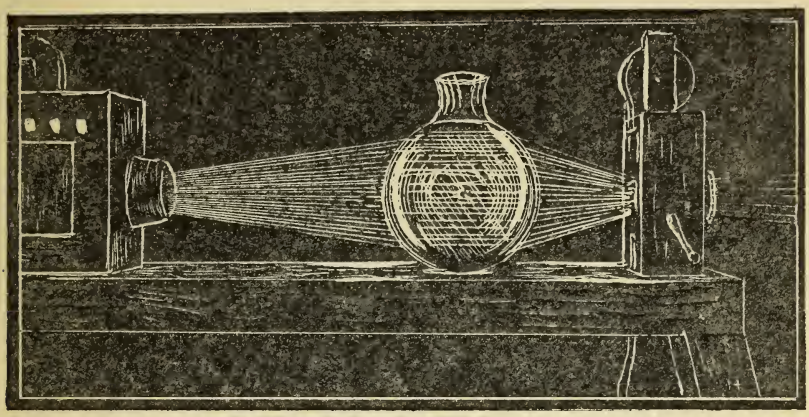
absolutely insisted that the show must be abandoned altogether if, as I had told him, the film could not be omitted. For the unfortunate picture, besides being the best of my series, was for that very reason occupying the place of honour as the last but one on my first reel. There was no time to cut it out; no chance to bypass it, for I felt quite certain that if I attempted to run it through with my hand over the lens, the pure young persons all around me would protest with anything but their expected docility. So, feeling rather like Abraham going up the mountain with his son for a sacrifice, I proceeded with the show and hoped against hope for the best.

Then, just before I came to the fatal film I had a brainwave: I announced it as *Salome Dancing Before Herod* and everyone was delighted—especially the parson! He said in his nice little speech at the end that he thought it was a particularly pleasant idea to introduce a little touch of Bible history into an otherwise wholly secular programme. And then he added that he had had no idea that the 'Cheenimartograrph' had been invented so long ago!

Talking of fire risk, I was one of the first to point out the danger of using celluloid in a lantern without proper precautions. This was in a weekly article I was writing for the *Amateur Photographer*. A large firm of photographic dealers sent a letter to the editor in which they claimed that celluloid was no more inflammable than paper. Whereupon I experimented: I put pieces of paper and pieces of celluloid in my projector in turn and noted carefully the number of seconds which each took to ignite. I published the results. The firm notified my editor that if he valued their advertisements he would be well advised to get rid of this contributor. The editor notified me, regretting that he had no alternative but to take the hint. Thus I got the sack from *that* job.

There occurred about this time, 1897-8, a rather strange interlude which I cannot place in exact order of date. This was the incursion into the incipient cinematograph world of Messieurs Lever and Nestlé—surely an odd combination of soap and Swiss milk—to exploit the possibilities of the film for advertisement purposes. The impact was a big one for those days, for they purchased no less than twelve complete Lumière projection outfits for a start. Each consisted of a limelight lantern together with all its accessories, a condenser which was a large spherical bottle of water, a Lumière mechanism, being camera, printer and projector in one, and a suitable objective lens, all mounted on a strong

wooden stand. Their operator and general manager for film purposes was a man named Spencer Clarke who was my contact in the matter, though where I came in I cannot at all remember. In my recollection it feels as if the whole fantastic outfit burst upon



me in a day and dropped out of my life again a few weeks later, though I seem to have travelled about with Spencer Clarke quite a lot in the meantime. And I have in my possession now two Lumière mechanisms which, I think, can only have come to me somehow through that connection. It is certainly very strange that two such important businesses should have joined hands and plunged together into the almost completely undeveloped sphere of the 'pictures'—and plunged in such a big way too—apparently without any idea of what they meant to do about it. They faded out just as quietly as they came in and I never heard another word of them.

It was during our tenancy of the shop in Cecil Court that I conceived the idea of adding to the interest and value of a film show by improving the presentation of the films—setting the picture in a coloured frame or similar device on the principle that a jewel is improved by setting it in a splended mount. It must be remembered that although there were a larger number of films available they were all of about the same length and took a little under one minute of running time. I built up a sort of multiple projector—four machines, two above and two below—each with its own arc-lamp and all converging upon the same screen. One projected the film, another threw around it by

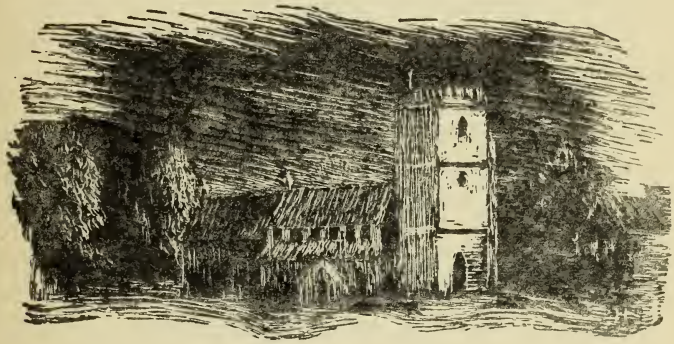
lantern slide a brightly coloured proscenium; a third showed the title of the picture just underneath and the fourth had another film ready to dissolve from the first when it was nearing its end. This was probably the first time that titles had been associated with films and the last for a long while until titles came into general use some years later.

At the big Alhambra music-hall in Leicester Square, R. W. Paul was giving his film show by back-projection through a transparent screen from a little cubby hole at the very back of the stage. This device of ours was supposed to improve upon it. So we invited Alhambra impresario, Alfred Moul, to come down into our cellar and have a demonstration. He wasn't very much impressed. He said it was always the subject, not the presentation, that mattered. Subject, subject, subject he kept on saying. And he was dead right. The only thing that really matters is the subject; that is the story: it has been dead right ever since. If the story does not ring true, neither artists nor scenery nor colour—nothing can save it.

I was writing at the time for the *Photographic Dealer*, whose editor was my associate, Arthur C. Brookes, and on the advertising staff of the paper was J. Brooke-Wilkinson, who afterwards became one of my very dearest friends. Arthur Brookes invited me to give a film show in a Congregational chapel in which he was interested. I set up my apparatus in the centre of the front row of the gallery and got to work. About half-way through, I became aware that the 'take-up' was not working and that, while much of the film as it came out of the machine was sliding over the gallery-rail into the hall below, the rest of it was accumulating round my legs. Realising the danger that a spark from the lime-light might at any moment drop upon it, I instantly extinguished the light and began in the dark to wind up the loose film. Brookes was at the back of the gallery and he kept calling out in a loud stage-whisper, 'Tell Cecil not to strike a match—don't strike a match—' I was feverishly trying to continue my lecture while hauling in the film from below, hand over hand, when the heavy brass spool which should have been winding it up, fell off its spindle into the body of the hall. I whispered to a small boy to go down and retrieve it and when he brought it back he reported that it had cut two good tramlines on the bald head of an old gentleman, who was very annoyed and intended to apply for damages as soon as the show was over.

It will no doubt have been realised that a great many important things had all this while—and for some time before I impinged upon it—been happening in the growing industry. They are not mentioned here, not because it is not recognised how very important they are, but because this writing has no pretension to be a record, or in any sense a history, of cinematography but merely an account of the doings of one man connected with it. Moreover, it is very incomplete and often wrong in chronological order, for it is based upon memory and generally without the support of any archives.

Here, then, we come to the end of what may be called the 'showmanship' side of this personal history, for though the showing of films continued to the end to be occasional and sporadic events in my life, the main interest now shifts to the actual photography of them.



CHAPTER 4

THE new period begins with the coming to Cecil Court of the great Charles Urban to see what I had done to his 'flickerless Bioscope' projector. He was sufficiently impressed to commission me to alter several of his mechanisms as I had altered mine, and after a little while he offered me five pounds a week to go over to his place and work for him there. I promptly accepted on condition that he found a position for cousin Monty Wicks, too, and we shut up and went. And so the trap closed upon me and never again was there a chance to escape.

It is not to be assumed from this that there was any desire to escape. On the contrary there was then, and there still is, so much fascination about the film industry that practically no one being in, has ever voluntarily come out again. But we are a race of inveterate grumblers and it is considered the proper thing to curse the industry and stay put. I never had the slightest inclination to get out.

Maguire & Baucus of Warwick Court, Holborn, were our new masters with Charles Urban as manager. I do not remember meeting Maguire, but Baucus I remember well as one of those urbane and very nice Americans whom you feel you can absolutely trust. The style of the firm was shortly changed to the Warwick Trading Company Ltd., with Charles Urban as managing director. My first job in connection with it was to film the Oxford and Cambridge boat-race of March, 1898, which I did from the top of a factory building giving a long view of the course and consequently a very distant view of the boats. 'Panoraming' the camera was first used a long time later. Then, according to instructions, I proceeded, as the policemen say, to Alfred Wrench's shop at 50, Gray's Inn Road (Lanterns and Accessories), and in the cellar there I developed the negative, using Wrench's primitive outfit. This consisted of a metal frame, carrying a number of upright pins on which the film could be wound spiral-wise—in

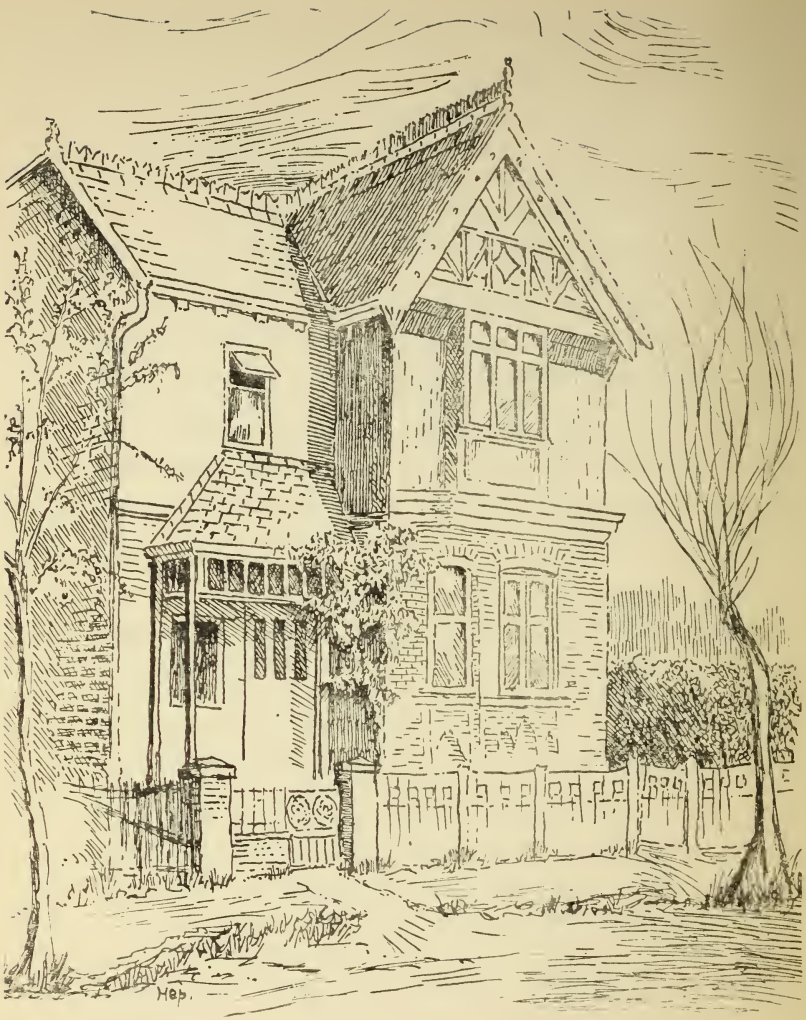
the dark-room, of course—and subsequently immersed in the developer in a suitable dish and then rinsed and fixed in the same way. So I made my first film ever, and it was the only film of mine ever to be developed in this primitive manner. For with my usual egotism I enunciated the theory that that static method was not the proper way to process a continuous thing like a fifty-foot film. I said it ought to be passed continuously through troughs of the several chemicals in proper order by mechanical means. Then I proceeded to construct a machine according to this plan, using sprocket-wheels and other parts of two or three Edison 'Kinetoscopes' pulled to pieces for the purpose. When the first machine was finished and tested I showed it to Urban and told him I thought it ought to be patented. He agreed and said that he would like his name associated with mine as co-inventor, and that was done.[1] A printer was added in a little while so that the positive stock, in contact with the finished negative, was passed into the machine at one end and came out at the other, finished and ready to be dried. At a much later stage, a drying bank was added and then the process was complete.

Printing and developing machines to this pattern and covered by the same patent were in sole use in my laboratories until the end of my film-life. It was not, however, until the advent of talking films, pointing to the importance of continuous processing to do away with the necessity of making joints, that the film trade woke up to the desirability of printing and developing by machinery, and of course, the patent had expired long before that. I was too early. Sometimes the tortoise is also wiser than the hare.

The machine was fitted up in the dark-room cellar at Warwick Court, and although it spoiled a lot of film by unforeseen faults which came to light from time to time, it did, on the whole, a great deal of good work and earned good money for the firm.

A conspicuous member of the staff was the genial Jew, Joe Rosenthal, who was sent out as special correspondent to South Africa where the storms of war were brewing. He and his sister, Alice, a plump and pleasant lady, and Miss Lena Green, a thin one, were, with Mont and myself, the whole staff below the principals. Between us we developed and printed and listed and sold all the stuff Joe sent home. One way and another there was a lot of work to be done. I nearly always, and Mont very often, stayed on till eleven at night, and Urban and Baucus, being

[1] Patent No. 13,315. June 14th, 1898.



First Laboratory and Studios at Walton-on-Thames

Americans, used to talk till about that time, and then we repaired to the pub at the corner of the court for a meal.

I came to the conclusion that the idea of American hustle is just an unconscious bluff. They don't work any faster than we do but they talk about it a great deal more. It seemed to me that they talked the whole day long and then worked feverishly for an hour or two in the evening to make up.

I have no regrets about Warwick Court. On the whole I had a very happy time. I was with nice people and doing the sort of work I have always liked; doing it fairly successfully and being fairly paid. True, I had no other actual film to my credit but the one of the boat-race but I had the handling and printing of Joe Rosenthal's work and I picked up a lot of knowledge of the film business. I was the most surprised person you can possibly imagine when, one Monday morning, I found on my desk a short note enclosing a week's wages in lieu of notice and saying that my services were no longer required. Monty Wicks had a similar note.

I saw Urban and pointed out the unfairness of such a sudden action and tried to discover a reason for it. He could give no reason but did agree to allow us two weeks' salary instead of one. Then the question of the patented machine came up and he said he didn't want it, and I could have it and the patent too if I liked to reimburse the company for the patent fees so far incurred. Thus I got the sack from *that* job.

I have often wondered since what was the reason for that curt dismissal and the only one I can think of is that some time before I had asked for and been given—apparently without grudge—a royalty of a farthing a foot on all good work turned out on the machine. It would be a fairly big charge on modern machines but did not amount to much at that time. Or maybe Urban had been persuaded that the old method was better and cheaper in the end.

My young colleague and I decided that we would start again on our own. I went that same day to Thames Ditton where I had been the year before for a holiday and knew there a factory worked by electricity. I hoped to be able to buy a supply from them to run a small film-processing plant. They wouldn't or couldn't co-operate, however, and I walked on, abandoning the hope of buying electricity, to Walton-on-Thames. There in a little side-road with a dead end I found a small house which a gardener-landlord was willing to let for £36 a year. We took it. That was in 1899—probably early summer.

The whole idea in taking up this little house at Walton was to start again to do the work we had been doing in London for the past half-year or so: cinematograph film-processing, that is developing and printing. We proposed to work for the trade, although to be sure there was very little of that. It had been half-suggested to us, for instance, that Urban himself might give us some to do and we felt that it was likely that other firms would be

glad to put out work of this description. It was just taking in other people's washing, of course, but what of that? We hadn't the faintest idea at first that we might ever come to make pictures on our own account.

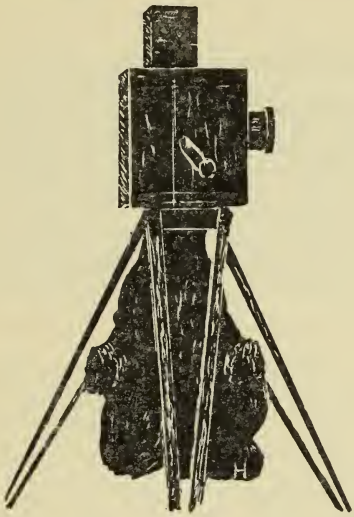
We needed several things and our tiny capital had to be very carefully laid out. There was a funny little central electricity station near Clapham Common, all run by strange little vertical gas engines direct-coupled to dynamos, and there were also some for sale. We bought one and rigged it up, with its fifty-volt dynamo, in the scullery of our little house, where it made a terrible noise when it was running. We bought a second-hand battery of twenty-seven accumulator cells from a man at Burgess Hill. We wired the whole house for electric light, moved the developing machine from Warwick Court and re-erected it in the drawing-room, rigged up the two bedrooms as film drying-rooms and the front sitting-room as an office. That left the kitchen and bathroom for general domestic use. It is not true that we ever contemplated taking in a paying guest. Indeed, I don't remember *how* we arranged our private lives. I know we prepared and ate our meals in the kitchen and I suppose we must have slept somewhere.

Somewhere about the middle of the summer of 1899, a young lady from Weybridge came in daily to do our secretarial and office work. She was a Miss Worley, and she stayed with us and was very helpful for many years. But the work didn't flow in as we hoped it would, and after a while, for lack of other occupation, we began to take a few little fifty-foot films and then we started a List with 'Film No. 1, *Express Trains in a Railway Cutting.*' That was the very first of the Hepworth Films, but, like many another important baby, its birth was scarcely noted!

Then a young girl named Mabel Clark joined the 'staff' as what would now be called 'cutting expert' and we decided to carry on with the making of these tiny films until Fortune turned her face our way and sent us a few orders. But Fortune knew better. She only smiled a little and turned her face away, so we were left with the baby.

Thereafter there followed at short intervals a small number of fifty-foot films of a very simple and elementary character, such as *Ladies' Tortoise Race*, *Donkey Race*, *Procession of Prize Cattle*, *Drive Past of Four-in Hands.* All simple little things obtainable locally at no cost save that of the film-stock, and of very little interest to anybody. The fact that we took them and sold them, is proof that

the interest in mere movement in screen pictures had not yet completely faded out. Then came one which showed some slight perception of scenic value; a 'Thames Panorama' from the front of a steam launch. Then, evidently, we went to a cycle gymkhana, which is described as 'so familiar a sight as to need but little description.' It would appear that even bicycles in those days were still so new that the riding of them attracted attention and people flocked in quantities to these gymkhanas to see a *Musical Ride by Ladies* and *Comic Costume Race for Cyclists*. Nine of these epics, each of fifty feet, of course, take up numbers 12 to 21 in our first catalogue. Then we went further afield and bagged four little sea-side pictures at Blackpool.



My camera at this time was a curious contrivance, for remember, photography for us then was still only a side-line. I have already mentioned the possession of a couple of Lumière camera-projector mechanisms. One of these we fitted up on a camera-stand and so arranged it that the film, as it was exposed, dropped through into a light-tight bag slung between the legs of the tripod. The bag was made with light-tight sleeves into which I could slide my hands—one with a box in it—wind up the exposed film in my fingers and put it into the box. Then it only remained to attach another box with fifty feet of fresh film in it to the top of the camera, and all was ready for the next scene. One of the 'Ladies' Gymkhana' films I still have and use, with many others, in my

lecture of *The Story of the Films*. The other Lumière mechanism was used as a printer to duplicate these early masterpieces and they were processed on the developing machine brought from Warwick Court.

Perhaps it was lucky for me, and for some scraps of posterity, that the idea of taking in other people's washing fizzled out and never came to anything, for hard circumstance forced us into attempts at film production and so started a business which afterwards became interesting. It happened something like this. We got together a small collection of such puerile efforts as those I have mentioned, made a little list of them and managed to sell some prints to fair-ground proprietors and others of that sort. Being young and keen, a very little encouragement served to fire our enthusiasm, and though most of our customers couldn't even sign their names and were wont to pay us in threepenny bits culled from the roundabouts and swings, they were absolutely honest and never cheated us for a penny. The exhibitors of a later date did not necessarily inherit this propensity.

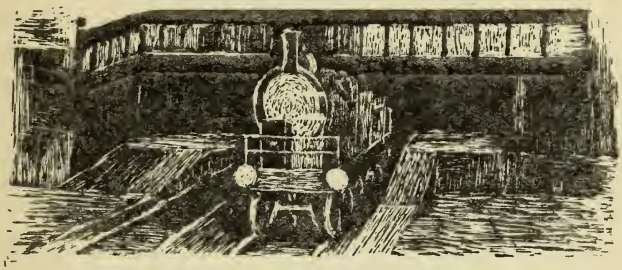
And so we gradually went on to better things. I find that Henley Regatta of 1900 attracted our roving attention for seven scenes and that perhaps suggested the possibility of taking two or three 'scenics' on the upper Thames, punctuated with a river panorama of a Cornish mining village. Then we became patriotic and immortalised some modern warships and contrasted them with old sailing frigates used as training ships for the Navy.

Then around 1901, we came to a definite milestone in the shape of the *Phantom Rides* which became tremendously popular about this time. These were panoramic pictures taken from the front of a railway engine travelling at speed. The South Western Railway Company whose line ran through a great deal of very beautiful scenery, especially in and around Devonshire, possessed some engines particularly suitable for this work in that they had long extensions between the front of the boiler and the buffers—iron platforms looking as though they had been made for a camera to be strapped upon. I approached them with the idea of gaining publicity for their line through a number of *Phantom Rides* and they agreed to put one of these engines at my disposal on certain sections and gave me a station-to-station pass all over their system for as long as was necessary to complete the arrangements.

But first I had to obtain a suitable camera—it was no use tackling that job in fifty-foot driblets and I determined to

construct a camera big enough to take a thousand feet of film at a time and take no chances. What eventually emerged was a long, narrow, black box, rather like a coffin standing on end. It had three compartments. The centre one contained a 'Bioscope' mechanism, modified to do duty as a camera instead of a projector, and the top one held a thousand feet of film on a spool, while the bottom compartment held a similar spool on which the film was automatically rewound as it came out of the camera.

It was a fairly easy matter to lash this contrivance to the rail which had been fitted for safety to the front of the engine extension, and the box-like seat contrived for me and a station-master to sit upon completed the arrangements.



I think it was the American Biograph Company, during their long run at the Palace Theatre, London, who started this fashion of *Phantom Rides*, but it was rather strange that the public should have liked it for so long. Before the craze finished, however, it was given a new lease of life by the introduction of an ingenious scheme called *Hales' Tours*. A number of small halls all over the country were converted into the semblance of a railway carriage with a screen filling up the whole of one end and on this was projected from behind these panoramic films, so that you got the illusion of travelling along a railway line and viewing the scenery from the open front of the carriage. The illusion was ingeniously enhanced by the carriage being mounted on springs and rocked about by motor power so that you actually felt as though you were travelling along.

The Biograph Company had none of these fancy touches, of course, at the Palace Theatre. Their work was very interesting from another aspect, however, for they used film over *four times the*

usual size. Partly because of this their pictures were far better than anything the rest of us could obtain and it rather looked for a time as if their method would have to come into general use. But the clumsy size and great cost proved their undoing in the end, and the smaller films, constantly growing brighter and better, soon had the field to themselves.

The American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, to give them their full name, seem to have started with an ingenious viewing device in opposition to the 'Kinetoscope' of Edison. It was an attractive-looking instrument for a drawing-room table, not at all large or clumsy. A long series of pictures in consecutive movement as in a cinematograph film, but all separate paper photographs mounted on cards, was arranged to be 'flipped' over one after another when the handle of the instrument was turned. I am only guessing now because I did not come on to the scene until later, but I imagine that in order to produce these paper pictures a long multiple negative was made upon film and the paper prints made from it. When the popularity of the 'Mutoscope' began to wane it would be natural for the company to turn their attention to the 'projection' of transparent films made from these negatives and to design a projector for that purpose. However, that is what they did and that, I suppose, is why they used so large a film: for their negatives had to be large enough to make the paper prints of suitable size for the 'Mutoscope.'

That, as I see it, is how the 'Biograph' came into being as a separate entity. The film was unique in having no perforations to steer it through the camera or projector, but used an ingenious device which I described and illustrated in my book, *The A.B.C. of the Cinematograph*, published in 1897 by Hazell, Watson and Viney. Don't ask me to lend a copy for I haven't got one. It has been out of print for half a century and I lent my only copy years ago to a 'lady' journalist with several valuable photographs and other things, none of which she ever returned in spite of my pleading.

I must, however, I think, venture upon one point which was of some importance in this connection. The original Edison films, used, it will be remembered, only for peep-show purposes and not for projection upon a screen, had four pairs of holes for each picture or 'frame' and were drawn through the apparatus by sprocket-wheels engaging in these perforations. The pictures were not steady because the perforations were not very accurately

spaced and the teeth on the sprocket-wheels were not very accurately cut. Lumière had a better idea. He used only one pair of holes to each 'frame' and a claw, engaging in those holes, to pull the film through the mechanism. Remember, too, that he used the same mechanism indifferently as camera, as printer and as projector, so that if the holes were not accurate, the error cancelled out and the picture on the screen was remarkably steady. The trouble was that this method could only be used with very short films; the inertia of a larger roll could not be overcome quickly enough by the claw without tearing and destroying the film. Steadiness depends upon 'registration'—upon each successive frame coming into place and occupying exactly the same position as the previous one. Lumière's method died; we reverted to four-hole perforation and, with better workmanship, secured steadiness in the end.

Our railway scenes perhaps led naturally to other scenic possibilities and the catalogue now owns to several fifty-footers of the *Departure of a Steamer* variety, which bring us to No. 68 in the list. No. 69, however, is *Mud Larks*—a number of urchins scrambling for pennies thrown to them, and that argues incipient 'direction.' Then we have a *Macaroni Eating Competition* which is evidently 'directed,' though there is still no trace of a stage. Then the call for comic pictures became insistent. We were quick to respond to it—and the river was just round the corner. Two men fishing from a boat, quarrelling over the jug of beer and finally falling over into the water—shrieks of laughter! Me, in long skirt of fashionable lady's costume, seated at the back of a punt being towed by a steam launch, tipping over backwards when the tow-rope tightens! More shrieks, but it is exceedingly difficult to swim in boots and trousers and a long skirt over the lot!

Then when each 'epic' of this sort was finished we went on the road and tried to sell it, came back and printed the copies for which we had taken orders, posted them, and then sat back and said, 'Well boys. What about another subject? How would it be to—?' and so on. Always we were glad that we dealt in a trade whose product was small and light, like jewellery, and presented no difficulties of transport. I often think of this when I see a store-room filled with hundreds of iron transit-cases and the many tons of films a dealer must handle today.

CHAPTER 5

Now dawns a most significant and important departure in the story of the films—the awareness of their news value—the value of news to the films; the importance of films to the news. News pictures became and remained for very many years the backbone of the 'pictures.' It is probable that they will remain the sinews of them for as long as the pictures last.

So far as I am concerned it began with the South African War, and the formation of the City Imperial Volunteers and their departure to take an important hand in the conflict. In January, 1900, I stood on the deck of the *Garth Castle* and photographed the men coming up the gangway. Then followed an Animated Cartoon, *Wiping Something Off the Slate*, and afterwards a trick film, *The Conjurer and the Boer*. Only the first, of course, was a 'news film' in the proper meaning of the words but the other two were at least topical.

Queen Victoria's Visit to Dublin in April, 1900, is news unqualified in three films totalling 250 feet. And the *Arrival of H.M.S. Powerful* with the returning heroes of Ladysmith is certainly another news film.

The solar eclipse of May, 1900, was a somewhat remarkable 'actuality' film. I went out to Algiers on the steam-yacht *Argonaut* with apparatus which I had carefully constructed at home before leaving. This was a very strong oaken stand to hold the camera at ground level, a fourteen-inch focus, large-aperture lens, a motor to drive the camera steadily at slow speed and a storage battery to work the motor. On the auspicious morning the astronomical party drove out to a spot near Algiers where the duration of the eclipse would be at its longest, and there on a large concrete platform we all set up our respective gear.

I so set my camera that in the time at my disposal the diminishing image of the sun would enter the top right corner of my picture and leave again in about fifteen minutes at the bottom

left. The lens was stopped down to its very smallest and had, in addition, a deep red glass screen covering its hood. Although there was only a little crescent of the sun showing when operations began it would have been fatally over-exposed without these precautions.

Then when the instant of totality arrived I whipped off the red screen and at the same time opened the lens aperture to the full extent, reversing the operations directly totality was over and the sun's rim began to re-appear. By good luck, everything happened according to plan and I secured an excellent picture of the beautiful corona with enough of the before-and-after to give it point.

Naturally I seized the opportunities to take street scenes and so on in Algiers and Tangier where the ship also called, and some pleasant views of life aboard the *Argonaut.* These last have very particular significance for me, and that was in this wise. A young and bony Scot named John McGuffie had been elected as a sort of games master for the cruise—a task which evoked my horrified admiration. But he had no shyness and he did the job well. He did not try to drag me into the games, for he was a master of tact, but to my surprise and glee he singled me out for particular friendship. In the sequel I invited him to Walton to share in the joy of my newly purchased motor-car and he responded by taking me to his home in Chapel-en-le-Frith in Derbyshire, where I met his delightful family, including his sister, who afterwards became my wife.

I want to treat this matter at a little greater length than might seem to befit a film story, for this gracious lady not only had a profound influence on my life but she also had a very considerable influence on the films I was making. She was one of the four perfect women who have come into my existence. I don't want to appear sentimental but it has often seemed to me as if some power occasionally put angels in the form of women on this earth to leaven the ordinary lump of humanity. All of these four women, except one, married quite unworthy men, and that one was she who married my father's favourite brother—a replica of him in many ways.

During the happy summer of 1901 when I was visiting A. D. Thomas in Manchester on business and the McGuffie family at Chapel-en-le-Frith on pleasure, I invited brother-in-law-to-be John to come to Walton, drive in my crazy 'car' to Southampton,

there hire a boat and go cruising. All of which came to pass. We found a small sailing boat called *Sunflower*. We insisted upon having a dinghy with it so that we could land when we wanted to—it was a very small canvas dinghy which we were assured would hold two—with care. We didn't know it leaked. We sailed off into the blue, right down Southampton Water and out into the Solent and made for Cowes.

In my ignorance I had always thought that the water got gradually deeper as you left the shore, was at its deepest half-way across and then again gradually shoaled till you touched on the other side. Nothing of the kind; there are hills and dales under water just as there are on land. Utterly astonished we ran on to the Bramble Bank; most improperly placed half-way across to the Isle of Wight. So I bought a chart-book of the district—my dearest possession for years to come.

Next day we set sail for the west and the wind and spring tide were with us. All was well for some hours. Then the breeze dropped and the tide grew stronger as we swept into shallower water. We could see the beach stones beneath us rushing backwards and gradually rising closer to us. The wind failed completely, the boat was out of control and turned sideways. The stones rose nearer and we could do nothing but wait. Suddenly we scrunched upon them, lifted a little and then dropped over into deep water on the other side, and the wind breathed again. So did we. It all seemed most uncanny but when we thought it over afterwards we realised how it came about.

We made Poole Harbour on that tide—pretty good going—and anchored off Brownsea Island, which I afterwards thought of trying to buy to build film studios on. A glorious idea. Then we rowed in the canvas dinghy to Sandbanks, and found the leak! We stretched luxuriously on the sand—the houses were not there then—and studied the chart-book. Suddenly I realised that the wind had freshened a good deal—there were white caps on the wavelets, and if we didn't start at once we shouldn't be able to. We just managed it but there was nothing to spare. We looked for the chart-book to go on with our studies, and remembered we had left it on the sand and the tide was rising. That sacred chart-book! I said I would go back and fetch it; there was no risk for one in that crazy cockle-shell but it was a different matter for two. But John said *he* would go as he was lighter than I and he couldn't risk having to take a dead fiancé back to his sister. But I wouldn't

chance taking her a dead brother either and while we were arguing the wind was rising. Pair of fools that we were, we went together, and the special providence that looks after fools must have had quite a job.

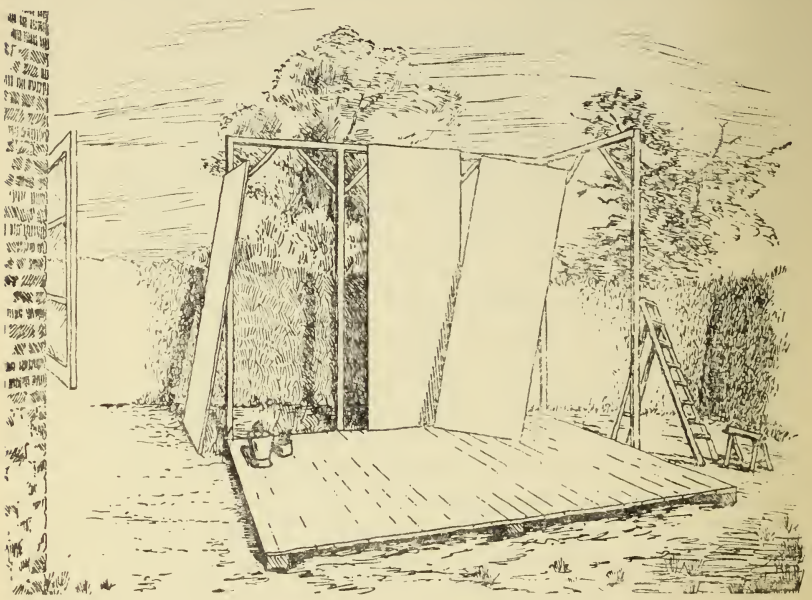
Perhaps I should jump here past half a dozen or so of inconspicuous films of scenery and 'made-up' outdoor pictures to one which marked something of an epoch in my film life. *The Explosion of a Motor-car* (No. 130) was one which attracted a great deal of attention at the time, for it was typical of the public attitude towards 'horseless carriages' in those days, and had, for an alleged 'comic,' quite a germ of genuine humour in it. The car was steered by means of a little arrow-shaped handle in front of the driver. It was driven by a horizontal gas-engine in the back, which you started by putting on an old glove and pulling round the very dirty fly-wheel. It was belt-driven, like a small factory, with fast and loose pulleys which were engaged by means of a lever ready to the driver's hand. The carriage was of dog-cart design, completely without protection, and so balanced that if the occupants of the front seats got out first the whole thing tipped up and pitched out the others. In suitable conditions it would run for five or six miles without requiring filling up with cooling water, but in that time it generally shed a journal-box, which you had to walk back along the road to recover and refit. It had no reverse, but that didn't matter for if you wanted to turn round in a narrow road you just got out and lifted up the front wheels and turned it round. The sales of *Explosion of a Motor-car* were the biggest we had had up till then.

Soon we began to feel the necessity of indoor sets, for the ideas for outdoor comics began to wear thin. So we set up a sort of stage in our little back garden. It measured fifteen feet by eight and had a few upright posts against which scenery flats could be propped. It faced due south so as to give us the longest possible spell of sunlight. This was progress indeed, but it was a long time before we began really to contemplate making many films of much greater length than the almost standard fifty-footers.

To people who are familiar with the general appearance of small theatrical set-ups—and who is not in these days of amateur theatricals?—this short description will probably convey all that is necessary, or if not, my drawing will fill in most of the details.

The little stage was in the open air because we were completely

dependent upon daylight for our photography; also we had never heard of anyone using a covered studio for film work—probably no one ever had. All we wanted was a bit of floor for 'actors' to walk on and some scenery flats to set up against a suitable support to give the appearance of a room, kitchen or drawing or what-not.



The possession of a stage brought many other difficulties with it. Scenery had to be made and painted. I am no artist but I remembered my childhood's nursery efforts and so the job fell to me. As the little vertical gas-engine soon blew itself to bits, a more orthodox horizontal one was installed in the kitchen and so freed the scullery for scene-painting purposes. It is on record that we had our meals in the kitchen beside the gas-engine and that the smell of the size from the scullery formed a welcome addition to our meals and saved us the cost of cheese. Up to this time, and indeed for some while afterwards, no thought of employing professional actors had ever entered our heads. The mere idea of films was abhorred by all stage people and it is doubtful whether any would have come to Walton if we had asked them. So we played all the parts ourselves and anyone who wasn't acting turned the handle of the camera.

The position of the gas-engine in the kitchen reminds me that an aunt—Aunt Bella, a third sister of my mother's—took pity on our primitive ways and came to keep house for us for a while. She was a kind creature and though she admitted she didn't like the gas-engine going while we were at lunch she agreed that it enabled us to keep our eyes upon it and let us get the battery charged with less interruption to our ordinary work. Where on earth she slept, or indeed where any of us slept, is a complete mystery to me, for I have no recollection at all of ever sleeping anywhere.

It will probably have been apprehended that we practised a degree of economy in those days somewhat in excess of that which is to be encountered in most modern studios, but even so, we could hardly have survived if kindly fate had not interposed a finger in our pie. I am quite unable to fix a date for this occurrence or even to find its proper place in our catalogue. All I can say is that it occurred and had its due and considerable influence on my affairs. I can, however, say it was before my marriage and after the eclipse of the sun which, indirectly, led up to it. That puts it in 1901 or the latter part of 1900.

An old gentleman—we thought he was old—came to see us at Walton for some reason which is now buried in the mists of forgotten things. He looked around at everything we could show him, asked a good many questions and at last asked me if I would sell half the business as it stood and take his son, H. V. Lawley, as my partner. We discussed terms, settled upon a price and made some suitable arrangement for Monty Wicks and that was that. The new money was a very great help, for we were down to our last fiver. It is some little consolation to realise now that that condition is not entirely unknown in modern studio practice.

Partner Lawley soon picked up our peculiar ways and, being no snob, settled down at once without demur to our primitive household habits. It did not take him long to acquire enough knowledge of cinematography to make him a useful operator. Soon after he arrived I took on another very useful man named Percy Stow who developed a great aptitude for ingenious trick-work in films, and as both of them were well able and willing to take their turns at the developing and printing machine, turn and turn about with me whenever necessary, we all got on famously together.

I have only been really drunk once in my life. I daresay you

are wondering what on earth that has to do with developing machines. Well, it hasn't very much—it just came into my head when I was thinking about the three of us getting on so well together. For we all three got rolling drunk one evening without having a single drop of anything to drink! We were very interested at that time in the problem of getting our news pictures upon the screens in the shortest possible time. Now the two great sources of delay are the necessity of washing the films thoroughly, which takes time, and of drying them afterwards, which takes much longer still. It's the gelatine that's the trouble. It takes a long time to wash the chemicals out of the gelatine and much longer still to dry it afterwards.

But I happened to remember a little-known process which does not have gelatine in its make-up. It is called collodio-bromide and, as may be imagined, collodion takes the place of gelatine and a rinse is sufficient to clean it and it dries in a minute or two. Its drawback is that it is terribly slow—wants a very long exposure to the printing light. However, it can be accelerated tremendously by treating it with a little eosine, which is the dye from which red ink is made. This process had been used for glass lantern-slides very successfully and I determined to experiment with it. But directly the dyed emulsion was coated upon celluloid a strange thing happened. Every particle of the sensitising dye was sucked out of the collodion by the celluloid and all the valuable extra speed went with it. It appeared that celluloid had a tremendous affinity for eosine and stole it from the collodion. It dyed the celluloid red and left the collodion white, and so insensitive to light that it was impossible to do anything with it.

The drunkenness? Well, that happened this way. Collodion is made by dissolving gun-cotton in a mixture of alcohol and ether. The sensitising agent is added to it in the dark-room. We three, in the dark except for a red lantern, and looking, I should think, like a trio of witches, were stirring the stuff for a considerable time and the vapour had the same effect upon us as though we had been drinking heavily. Anyhow, we finished off the job and then went out for a walk to Shepperton, singing loudly and rolling arm-in-arm all the way.

So far as I can gather from the printed catalogue of 'selected' films which was issued later, we do not appear to have had much use of the stage now that we had got it. Almost every picture was taken in natural scenery and the great majority were deliberately

selected for their essentially English character and for the peculiar beauty of the countryside of this land. I don't think there was any specially patriotic consciousness about this at the time—it was probably a matter of personal taste. But much later on, when it became the practice of English studios to ape the methods and style and treatment of American films, in the vain hope of winning some of the success which had only too obviously passed to them, I did consciously rebel. It seemed to me then—and it does still seem to me—that the best hope and the most honourable course for every country is to be true to its own culture, to produce the pictures which are native and natural to it, and to try to tell of the things which are good and worthy about it and its civilisation. Certainly not to try to poach upon the natural preserves of other lands. Not only because that is rather dishonest but also, and chiefly, because it is certain to be unsuccessful.

Natural, open-air scenery could not, of course, meet all our needs and the first use of the new stage was in No. 132, *The Egg-Laying Man*, a trick film in which the head of the actor (me) fills the whole screen. It has often been stated that D. W. Griffith, the great American producer, who appeared, and had such astonishing skill, several years later, was the originator of, and the first to use, the 'close-up.' That is not so. One of the first pictures ever made, *The Kiss*, used it with great success. It was tremendously popular in its day and found its way into nearly every fair and circus in the country. The way the two huge faces nuzzled into one another was just a little nauseating in its intimacy, but it was mild in comparison with what we get in nearly every love-story film nowadays.

Soon there followed *The Eccentric Dancer*, in which the device later known as 'slow-motion photography' was used, probably for the first time. I remember we had to hand-turn the camera at tremendous speed to get the effect, which was exceedingly comic until continual use dimmed its infinite variety. Two other novel effects come next to one another in the list, *How it Feels to be Run-Over*, and a reversing film, in the second half of which the action is shown backwards and the bathers dive feet-first out of the water and on to the diving-board.

Then there are several more of these alleged 'comics' whose only interest now is that they seem to show gradual progress to better work, and then we come to more news pictures of the return of the C.I.V.s from South Africa, and to no less than nine

films of life in the British Army and thirty similarly devoted to the Navy—all, I think, taken by our new recruit, H. V. Lawley, who had, by then, been with us long enough to learn how to use a camera, and use it to good effect.

But it will be tiresome if I continue to quote the titles of successive films which have already brought us up to No. 220 in the catalogue; and I will skip to a very important date in English History and in my own film-life. This was January, 1901, the death of Queen Victoria. We took the funeral procession from three positions including the one I had at Victoria Station. I cannot do better than quote from the description written at the time. 'This photograph was taken from such close quarters that everyone who takes part appears life-size and has his portrait faithfully recorded. A very remarkable feature about it is the splendid portrait which it includes of the King, the German Emperor and the Duke of Connaught. They are following close behind the gun-carriage which turns the corner right in front of the camera, so that it appears to fill the entire view. The King holds up his hand to stay the further portion of the procession for a while to allow more room for the earlier part, and while he and his companions rein up in the centre of the view, he leans over and talks to first one and then the other. The result is a most delightful group of the three august personages.'

That is how it appeared to the public: this is how it seemed to me:—I had a wonderful position just inside the railings of Grosvenor Gardens opposite Victoria Station. My camera was the coffin-like construction which had been made some time before for taking the *Phantom Rides*. When it was used on the front of an engine, I did not realise, or care, how much noise it made. In the great silence and hush of the most solemn funeral in history it was a very different matter. That silence was a thing that closed in everything like an almost palpable curtain, not broken, but only accentuated, by the muted strains of the funeral march. Then at its moment of greatest tension I started to turn my camera, and the silence was shattered! If I could have had my dearest wish then the ground would certainly have opened at my feet and swallowed me and my beastly machine. But the noise had one curious effect. It caught the attention, as it must certainly have done, of the new King, Edward VII, and I believe that is why he halted the procession so that posterity might have the advantage of the cinematograph record.

Alma Taylor and Henry Ainley in 'Iris'

Violet Hopson and Henry Ainley in 'The Outrage'

Mary Brough, Frank Stanmore, and (front) Henry Edwards, Chrissie White in 'Simple Simon,' 1915

Alma Taylor in 'Tansy'

But, so far as we were concerned, photographing the funeral was only the beginning. My friend, A. C. Bromhead, representative of Léon Gaumont of Paris, had collected for us many orders for the films of the procession and we had many more on our own account. We hurried back to Walton to develop the negatives and to start making the prints. We worked all through the night and the next day and the following night to fill these orders and the others which kept coming in. Then early on the morning after that, when we thought, thanking God, we had finished, we went up into the drying rooms (bedrooms you will remember) and found to our horror that all the prints, except those already despatched, were spoiled. Through some fault in the material the film stock had all turned milky-white. We phoned Bromhead as soon as we could, but he said print them over again as soon as possible but in the meantime send up the spoiled stuff—I have any number of further orders. It seems that our negatives were better than others and very many people wanted prints. Before that job was done I had worked for eight days and nights with only nine hours off for food and sleep and the others did not fare much better. One of them, John Whitton, who had not been long with us, was found fast asleep on the floor of one of the drying rooms when Lawley and I went up to see how he was getting on before snatching an hour or two off for ourselves, and although we tried everything we could think of to wake him we just could not do it, and we had to leave him there.

I remember staggering home after one of these long spells of work and wondering at the continual pealing and chiming of the church bells all around me. It was early morning and there was only one church within miles, and that was silent. It was just illusion, a result of fatigue. But, never mind, we made a good deal of money and topped up our reputation quite a bit.

Although we had a stage of sorts and, between us, a considerable experience of film-making, we seem very seldom to have attempted pictures with more than one scene in them. One of the first of this kind we made had, about 1901, a rather curious history, but it was some time earlier than the events of this chapter. It was the story of a burglary, in three scenes. I was the burglar with a full black beard—I suppose we felt that a burglar couldn't possibly be clean shaven. The first scene, set up on the stage, represented the outside of a house with a window through which I—the burglar—climbed. We struck that scene and set the next, the

inside of the house with the burglar coming through, seizing coats and things and starting to go back. Then we had to strike that scene and reset the first one to see the robber climbing back out of the window and getting away with his haul.

It was a very simple little work, but it had three peculiarities. 1. It was a story of undetected crime and would never have passed the censor in later days. 2. It showed delightful unsophistication in taking the scenes in that order instead of doing the first and third together in one go. 3. In the excitement of resetting the last scene, in which work, of course, I helped, I entirely forgot my beard and came out of the window clean shaven! But if we were unsophisticated, what about the showmen and the public? We held an inquest on the picture as it stood and decided to let it go out with all its imperfections on its head. And although a number of copies were sold we never received a single complaint!

As it happened—luckily for me as I thought at the time—I had then a good deal of business in Manchester, and as that grim city is within twenty miles or thereabouts of some very beautiful scenery, including Chapel-en-le-Frith which held so much charm for me, it is natural that I did not refuse to attend to that business when it came my way. It came in the form of one of the most remarkable personalities of the entertainment world of that or any other time.

He was an utter scamp, a very lovable fellow and one of the greatest showmen who ever lived. He was very actively, extremely actively, engaged in the cinematograph show business. His name was A. D. Thomas, which for purposes of enhancement, he soon changed to Edison-Thomas and then, later on, to Thomas-Edison, and if people got it into their heads that he was *the* Edison, the great 'inventor' of moving pictures and many other things, well, that was *their* look-out. He didn't do anything to disillusion them. He plastered the whole town wherever he went, and he went nearly everywhere, with tremendous posters in brilliant colours describing his wonderful shows and his still more wonderful self. He had something in the nature of a more-or-less permanent address in Oxford Street, Manchester.

He bought several of our better films—he knew how to choose—but more especially he employed me to take particularly local films for him. These were generally of workers leaving some large factory in the neighbourhood of places being visited or about to be visited, by one of his travelling shows.

The turn-out of the local fire brigade, all smoke and sparks and perspiring horses, was one of his favourite subjects, and I must have taken well over fifty of them for him. Less honestly (honesty was his long suit—his Sunday suit, always left at home), he would parade the town in person, mounted high on an open lorry, actively turning his camera on every little knot of people he passed. As the lorry was plastered with his colourful posters telling them to come and see themselves at such-and-such hall tonight, it left the people in no doubt as to what he was doing. Unfortunately for their hopes the camera had no film in it; it was merely a dummy, and, if they failed to see themselves on the screen, it was just too bad. The hall was filled and they had a good show for their money, so what's the odds?

There was another showman about that time who afterwards became more prominent in the trade than A. D. Thomas. He was not so clever and more dishonest, but wild horses will not drag his name from me, for fear the information that came to me about him may have become exaggerated on the way, as sometimes happens. According to the story, his method was very simple. He engaged the principal hall in several towns, spread his posters for a one-night show all over the place, stayed long enough in the hall to collect the money as the people came in and then quietly took his leave by a side door. No pictures, no machine, no anything! But then, as I say, the story may have been exaggerated.

The first time I went to Chapel-en-le-Frith at the invitation of my new-found friend, John McGuffie, he casually suggested that I had better take my evening clothes with me. When I arrived and was introduced to his two sisters and his younger brother—the parents were both dead—I learned to my horror that we were all to go to a dance in a neighbouring village. It was, however, a fresh and very pleasant experience when I got over my first dismay, for a dance in those days and in a little out-of-the-way village was utterly different and remote from anything to be even guessed at now. Remember, it was long before the first world war. Jazz and the saxophone had never been guessed at and ways and customs were very different.

We five packed into a hired carriage, wrapped ourselves in many rugs and drove as fast as the horses would go—which was very slow indeed—over the ups and downs of Derbyshire country roads—of which, of course, I could see nothing in the dark—and arrived at length at the village hall. Then there was quick

unrobing so as to get into the 'ball-room' quickly, for if you did not get your programme filled up early, you were lost. The McGuffie girls had each allotted me two dances before we left their home, and were most assiduous in finding me partners for all the others, whose names I jotted in if I could hear them correctly, otherwise the colour of their dresses. I learned that two dances was the maximum allowance for any one girl—it was considered 'significant' if that number were exceeded. It was a very pleasant and happy little affair. The dancers in that village were not of the village girl and hobbledehoy class but mostly the neighbours and friends of the people I was staying with, quiet, moderately cultured, very happy and not at all noisy.

Afterwards at their home I found that they still retained a curious old-fashioned custom which rather surprised me; they always dressed for dinner in the evening. I admit I came to scoff but remained to praise, and when I was married and my wife came South with me we brought the quaint old Northern custom with us and kept it up. I believe that it did help me to retain what little sanity I have in spite of the disturbing worries of film-making. If you can force yourself to shut down your business sharp at six o'clock, go home and throw off your working clothes and shed your worries with them (and that is what it really feels like), put on a boiled shirt and a smiling face, and meet a nicely dressed and happy wife, you need never give your troublesome work another thought until tomorrow morning.

We were married at Buxton on February 11th, 1902. There was a heavy snowstorm the day before and I hurriedly cancelled the carriages and ordered sledges instead. It was taking chances on tomorrow's weather but luckily it played up to me and both protagonists and guests all enjoyed the novel experience. It even earned me my first bit of publicity in a London paper. If they had known I was a film man I shouldn't have had it, so differently were we regarded all that time ago. Nowadays it would be 'Film Producer Weds Country Girl in Snow,' or something of that sort. Incidentally, why do people in newspapers always 'wed,' never 'marry'?

All the remaining three of that happy little family married within a few months of that time and that happy house was emptied. I have never seen it since, and now, all but one of those people are dead. And shortly after the time of my marriage, A. D. Thomas, 'Thomas-Edison,' played his last few tricks and

played himself out. His various debts crowded around him. I was slow to realise what was happening, or shut my eyes to it when he pleaded for a little more time, and I parted from him in the end his creditor for nearly five hundred pounds. This was a sad blow for a little business like ours, but we weathered the storm and though we shipped a good deal of water we were not wrecked.

One more showmanship note. Quite early in my film-life I was commissioned to photograph a young lady taking off all her clothes while she swung and hung on a trapeze. The trapeze was rigged up on the roof of the Alhambra so that I could have plenty of daylight, but it was very disappointing. When she had taken off her last 'shimmy' she was found to have on a perfectly respectable bathing-dress. But that is not what I mean. It was disappointing because in my effort to keep the whole swing of the trapeze in my picture I had taken the camera so far away that the figure was very small indeed and you could hardly see what was going on. Or should I say, what was coming off?

I do not think that film ever appeared before the public and even if it had it would not have been questioned, for there was no thought of a censorship then. Indeed, there was little need for one for it was only very occasionally that a film appeared to which objection could reasonably be taken. But later on there came a small but apparently growing quantity of short films which were said to be intended for 'smoking-room' exhibition. They were only a few at first but, like the small black cloud no bigger than a man's hand, they seemed to some of us to be ominous.

CHAPTER 6

Now let us go back to the little story of film-making at Walton-on-Thames, which I had left awhile to dip into the cognate subject of showmanship. We can skip a number of films which were a little more varied and a little better made as time went on; we can turn over a few more pages which describe films of much the same kind as before, we come to a sad moment in our country's history and a very sad one in my own. We had mustered together every possible camera, settled the position of every man at our disposal, and indeed, had all our gear ready waiting on the stairs of our little house, ready to start to photograph our biggest effort, the Coronation of King Edward VII, when the news came through that the King was seriously ill and the whole ceremony postponed.

The only thing I could think of to do was to go up to London and see what the people seemed to think of it. I found them all wandering about rather aimlessly looking at the decorations. And I took some views of *Disappointed London*—London without a single motor-vehicle. But there were many thousands of Indians and Colonials who had come over for the coronation and they could not stay here indefinitely, so the Queen and the Prince of Wales held a wonderful review with Lord Roberts and a host of foreign princes, which gave us the chance to take half a dozen films of more than the usual length.

Then when the King was happily recovered, to the great joy of the people, the actual coronation took place and was duly and faithfully recorded by our cameras. We were, in fact, very successful in all our work of this description and served the country well with cinematographic news until the news-reels came into existence and took it over. In a sense the early film people were more 'Fleet Street minded' than the news-reel people when they followed later, for they went to extraordinary lengths to get their news pictures on to the screens on the day of the event. A railway

van would be chartered and the negative of the Grand National developed while it was rushing to London. Or a motor-car would carry the wet film hanging out in a streamer behind to get it dry by the time it reached the theatre. I had no hand in any of these doings and do not quite know how far they were true. But we did do all that could reasonably be expected of us to put our pictures on at the earliest moment without spoiling them.

Our success with the Coronation seems to have inspired a spate of news-realism, what with Lord Kitchener at Ipswich, the procession of the King and Queen around London in October, the arrival of the German Emperor, Joseph Chamberlain's departure for South Africa, the state opening of Parliament in February of the following year, 1903, and the launch of the third *Shamrock*. All these, of course, and many others were interwoven with the usual little comedies and the like, and then we come to a more ambitious effort in *Alice in Wonderland*. This was the greatest fun and we did the whole story in 800 feet—the longest ever at that time. Every situation was dealt with with all the accuracy at our command and with reverent fidelity, so far as we could manage it, to Tenniel's famous drawings. I had been married about a year and my wife, broken-in to film work, played the part of the White Rabbit. Alice was played by Mabel Clark, the little girl from the cutting room, growing exasperatingly larger and smaller as she does in the book. The beautiful garden was the garden of Mount Felix, at Walton; the Duchess, the kitchen, the mad tea-party, the Cheshire Cat, the royal procession—all were there. The painting of the whole pack of cards human size was quite an undertaking and the madly comic trial scene at the end made a suitable and hilarious finale.

And so the story goes on. We had by now definitely broken away from the fifty-foot tradition and our films took whatever length, in reason, that the subject demanded. The great majority of them varied from 100 to 200 feet at that time (1903) though the fifty-foot idea persists in the system of numbering. This is because we had a lingering feeling that we might have to cut some of the 'long' films down to make them saleable to a few of our more prudent customers and then it would be convenient to have numbers in reserve to know them by. So Alice was numbered 430 to 446, but *The Duchess and her Pig Baby* could be purchased separately as No. 438. So when I jump from 450 to, say, 531, as I now propose to do, it doesn't mean that I have skipped as many

as eighty individual films but only that I am trying to avoid too many tedious details.

Indeed, I am only stopping here to mention one little effort which is probably unique even to the present day as it certainly was in its own time when it was said; 'the Cinematograph has been used to burlesque a popular application of itself.' The Warwick Trading Company under Charles Urban, building up its own excellent series of films, began to include microscope subjects under the title of *The Unseen World*, *The Urban-Duncan Micro-Bioscope*. So we produced a burlesque called *The Unclean World*, *The Suburban-Bunkum Microbe-Guyoscope*, in which were shown, among other things, a number of horrible-looking beetles crawling about in the circular field of a microscope, and they continue to thrill the spectator until a couple of human hands come into view to wind up the animals, now obviously clock-work.

Still resisting the temptation to stop and comment upon the procession of films as they pass in memory before me, I come to one (No. 612) which I think should be mentioned as it points to our occasional allusions to the questions of the hour. It is three hundred feet devoted to *The Great Servant Question*: 'Fine photography with all the scenes dissolving into one another.' We did not realise that before this book came to be written the whole 'question' would have 'dissolved' and left us with scarcely a memory that it had ever existed.

Some time before the production of *Rescued by Rover*, we came to a rather important change in our affairs. A. C. Bromhead, as Gaumont in Cecil Court, had been our chief selling agent at the time of the *Funeral of Queen Victoria* and for some while afterwards, but the time came when I felt that we were too much out of things at Walton and ought to have our own direct representation in London, especially as we had by then several items of apparatus to sell as well as our films. So it seemed natural to drift back to our original hunting ground and we rented a couple of shops in Cecil Court, which, because there were so many of us there, was becoming known as 'Flicker Alley.'

We had a rather disastrous first year which led to the ignominious retreat of the first manager, and a young fellow named C. Parfrey, who had been looking after our accounts there since the beginning, undertook to give more time and pull our affairs straight, which he did very successfully.

My partner, H. V. Lawley, and I, who had all along been the

Alma Taylor in 'The Forest on the Hill'

John MacAndrews and James Carew in 'Helen of Four Gates'

best of friends, began not to see quite eye-to-eye on several matters of very little importance in themselves which assumed, as they heaped up, considerable significance. To show how little they were really, here is a typical example. I had been to London and used the opportunity to buy fifty rolls of negative film each of fifty metres, about 8,250 feet. In view of our growing requirements, that seemed to me to be a quite reasonable investment, but Lawley thought it was gross extravagance—and said so. There was a suggestion that I was squandering the partnership funds to satisfy my own opulent ideas. There was nothing more to it than that but these little things mounted to a growing irritation between us, and in the end we decided to dissolve the partnership.

In order to pay him out—no, that doesn't sound right! In order to refund to him his half of the agreed value of the business at the time, I formed a little private company among a few of my father's friends, who agreed to take shares. The Hepworth Manufacturing Company Limited was registered April 25th, 1904, and C. Parfrey was appointed London Manager. He carried on to everyone's complete satisfaction until the Great War flared up in 1914. He was in America then, arranging and opening our agency there, and he came back in spite of much strong American advice to stay there and help gather up the valuable pieces when the fools this side had fought to a standstill.

Parfrey had, and I suppose he still has, an excellent head for business. In 'Flicker Alley,' under his auspices, we sold projectors, resistances and accessories, most of which had some stamp of originality upon them and, of course, my original arc-lamp. And from here we sold our films and made not perhaps a fortune but enough to carry on and to continue improving our products and repute.

At Walton there came in from time to time several people, some with a little theatrical experience and all with a burning desire to become film-producers. They had what chance we felt able to offer them and they did from time to time produce a few films. These were not altogether their fault, for I butted in in many cases, especially when there were interior scenes to be dealt with. They made their little marks upon the archives and faded gradually away to pass, I hope, into easier atmosphere and opportunities for better work.

I do not wish to appear ungrateful, for these wishful 'producers'

did undoubtedly fill in a time when we were beginning to enlarge our ideas. Some of them were worse than others and some better than the average but it would be very invidious to sort them out and that is why I do not wish to mention any names at this point. They all had one peculiarity in common which I did not like at all. They harangued and abused the poor little tame actors and actresses who were working for them and spilled their unpleasant language all over the place. I felt that I knew nothing about these things, but I protested. They all informed me then that it was perfectly usual, the invariably common practice on the stage, and, in fact, that it was the only way to get any good work out of stage people.

It may have been the usual behaviour on the stages they came from—though I doubt it. It was certainly not the way of things on the theatrical stage when I became better acquainted with it several years later. Nothing of that kind goes on in the theatre of today or in any studio. I am quite sure it was never the best way to get good work out of any actors, whatever their station in life.

It appears from the silent evidence of the catalogue that it must have been about early 1905 that our little company was joined and refreshed by the coming of Lewin Fitzhamon, whose original and sprightly ideas had a considerable effect upon our work. *The Press Illustrated*, parodying the titles of a number of popular journals, shows his puck-like humour to much advantage.

The next film that catches my eye after a procession of comics, scenics and general interests, is a long 'dramatic' called *Falsely Accused*, which had a considerable vogue in spite of its extortionate length of 850 feet. And 1905, introduced by *The Derby*, *The King of Spain's Review*, *The Royal Wedding at Windsor*, and some other topicals, as well as many 'made-up' films, brings us to the most notable for many years, *Rescued by Rover*.

I had been dropping out from the actual making of films and devoting myself more to the supervision of the work of others and to scenic photography which has always been my hobby, but *Rescued by Rover* was a particularly family affair. My wife wrote the story, my baby—eight months old—was the heroine, my dog the hero, my wife the bereaved mother and myself the harassed father—though why in the world I should have thought it necessary to play the part throughout in a frock coat and tall hat is more than I can understand.

This was the first occasion in which professional actors were

employed at Walton, Mr. and Mrs. Sebastian Smith playing respectively the flirtatious soldier and the wicked old woman who stole the baby while the nurse's back was turned. *They each received half-a-guinea which included their fares from London!* The nurse's part was played by Mabel Clark. For some reason this quaintly simple little film has found its way into the National Film Library and has been instanced again and again, either as an example of most praiseworthy economy in cost or, alternatively, of budding genius in production. It was enormously popular and financially successful in its time and we had to make it all over again a second time and then even a third, because we wore out the negatives in the making of the four hundred prints to satisfy the demand. It was my biggest thing ever, since *The Funeral of Queen Victoria.* Its cost was trifling by today's standards.

Meanwhile our little company was slowly gathering to itself the sort of people who fitted in, shared our feelings and ideas, reinforced our abilities and turned out the kind of work we wanted and could be proud of. First among these, both in time and in quality, were Stanley Faithfull and, a year later, his brother Geoffrey. Never has any name been more justly worn. They came when they left school, each at the age of fourteen, about 1896 and 1897. I have known them intimately ever since and never for one second in all that long time have I known either of them to falter in the perfection of good faith.

Tom White was Stanley's school friend. His father asked me to take him on and unconsciously did me the best of good turns, for he is another of the same order of knighthood and his name also suits him to perfection. He is at this moment of writing the General Manager at the Pinewood Film Studios, and if you want to hear the highest praise that any man can win, ask anyone what they think of him there.

Lewin Fitzhamon, too, was a rattling good sort—one of the very best. He introduced the two little girls, Dolly Lupone and Gertie Potter, and made with them several bright and pleasant little films. He brought along, too, a little later on, the two little Ginger Girls whose flaming hair lighted up the roads and lanes of Walton for a considerable time. They were the protagonists in a number of 'shorts' which again were full of that gaiety and sprightly happiness which was the hall-mark of all Fitz's work. His greatest triumph was with the *Tilly Girl* series, with Alma Taylor and

Chrissie White, who were soon to become the most important members of the famous Hepworth Stock Company.

Now I want to make it quite clear that all and any of these young people were liable to be called upon, the girls specially, to take on various jobs in the process of film-making other than acting. They came gladly and worked with a will, drying, sorting, labelling or boxing, or even running errands. And never was there a sound of grumbling—never any that I heard anyway. Contrariwise, as Tweedledum would say, anybody anywhere, carpenter, electrician, dark-room hand or clerk might be roped in to act a part at any time, and all were willing and glad to obey.

But our crowd were not the only ones imbued with this spirit. Even the horses in Walton village had the same idea. There were only a few of them and normally their job was to run the small omnibus to or from the station to meet the trains. Abnormally, they had to turn out with the fire-brigade when the call came. Then the bus was hastily abandoned wherever it might be and the horses galloped off to the fire-engine house, and the passengers in the bus could jolly-well walk. This happened to us sometimes, for casual actors came down by train and if they were stranded they arrived very late for their parts in the film. Good old timers like Thurston Harris were among those who fell victims to this capricious habit. The bus drivers were great local characters named Bert and Fred Stowe.

A notable effort from the Fitzhamon basket, about 1908, was a trick and chase film in one—a combination of two very popular styles at that time. It was called *The Fatal Sneeze*. Gertie Potter was the mischievous 'boy' with the pepper pot who caused all the trouble. There were dozens of scenes in which the unhappy sneezer, whose every orgasm caused dreadful wreckage, was chased from one scene to another until his last effort set the whole visible world swaying from side to side and he himself exploded and disappeared in smoke. It was a crude performance, but I have kept it in my film-lecture as an example and it always provokes more laughter and mirth than many a modern comedy.

We strayed far afield at times. One of our fellows, named Scott-Brown, went to Egypt and brought back many short negatives, one of which was tremendously popular, *Moonlight on the Nile*. Half its effect was due to the staining and toning which we gave to the prints. This is something which is necessarily quite unfamiliar to laboratory workers of the present day. The

prints were made individually and to a great extent by hand. But they could be, and were, very greatly enhanced by having certain of the scenes stained with an appropriate dye—blue for moonlight, red for firelight for instance. There was another post-printual process, too, which often added real beauty to the scene, called 'toning.' In this case it was not the base of the film which was coloured but the photographic image itself. So it was possible to have the picture-substance of a deep brown-red colour on a background of light blue. All these effects could only be obtained by elaborate after-treatment of the otherwise finished print. It was difficult and expensive but it was worth while at the time, and was only abandoned as work became more commercialised and it is never even heard of now.

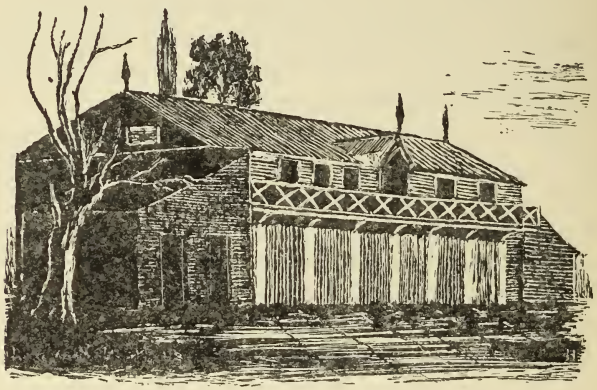
On another occasion I sent Scott-Brown to British North Borneo with the strictest injunctions to send every bit of film home just as soon as it was exposed, for I knew that tropical conditions had a nasty trick of dissolving out the latent image on the film, if it is under their influence for long, undeveloped, and leaving it almost as though it had never been exposed. Unfortunately he didn't do it. He developed a test from each roll and finding that was all right, brought the whole lot back *with* him. It was all spoilt; scarcely anything of an image could be developed. And all his tests showed really brilliant photography.

Among the few unpleasant things that happened about this time was the rascally behaviour of a well-connected man in London who certainly should have known better. He bought two or three copies of nearly everything we produced, but he sold *ten or fifteen prints* of each! It was horribly artful to buy more than one of each and so cover up his nefarious practices.

After *Rover*, there is not very much in our immediate catalogue which calls for special notice. There is a very ambitious film, which bears the stamp of Fitzhamon's peculiar gift—*Prehistoric Peeps*, based upon the work of E. T. Reed of *Punch*, for which all the resources of the works were devoted to the building and painting of the wildest of wild animals; and there was a film on the *Death of Nelson* which was intended to synchronise with the playing and singing of the well-known song. Then there was a bright idea for depicting the growth of scandal from mouth to mouth, with the title of *What the Curate Really Did*, and then the first of a series of political pictures which was called *The Aliens' Invasion*. A pantomime picture and a melodrama, each of 700 feet,

a horse picture called *Dick Turpin* and then the catalogue comes to an undignified end with a few short and quite insignificant nonentities.

For with the apparently important number of one thousand and ninety-five, we had realised that the time had come to drop the making of short films, such as can be sold on a catalogue description, and to start making pictures on a very different scale—the sort that were afterwards called 'feature' films.



Well, that is how it appeared to me at the first glance. But looking back rather more carefully I begin to perceive that it could not possibly have happened like that. There must have been a period, probably a long period, during which the transition very gradually took shape. I should think it kept step to some extent with the changes which were occurring in the showmanship side of the business.

These changes were probably epitomised in the similar changes in our own village. The occasional fairs which visited us at regatta time did not come to us to buy their films, if they had any, which is doubtful, and I don't think we had a converted shop either. We did have a small village hall in the High Street for dances and bazaars and so on, and this was early converted into a sort of picture-house which had the field to itself for several years. Then a slightly larger hall was erected in Church Street and that became our 'Electric Palace.' Soon that was conquered in turn by a large picture theatre at the other end of the town—it could no longer be called a village—and then that in its turn

was compelled to share its audiences with the largest one of all —up to this present writing.

This sort of thing was going on all over the country. First the fair-ground and the travelling exhibitor at the mechanics' institute and the like. Then the converted shop or two shops knocked into one, with benches for seats and very little ventilation. Next, the small hall rigged up as a palace; followed by the specially-built theatre, and then a much larger competitor; and finally a 'Super.' As all the earlier ones were infested by fleas—and infested is a mild word—they soon became known as 'flea-pits,' and some of them retain that pet-name still.

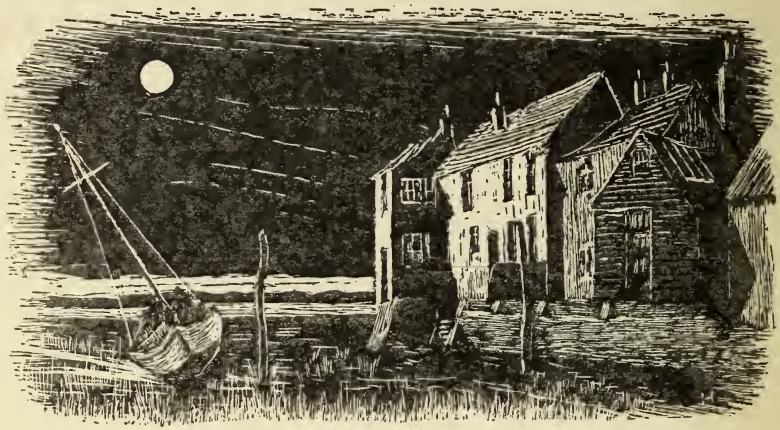
There must have been a peculiarly voracious variety of flea, specialising in picture-houses, a *Pulex Irritans Pictorialis*, breeding with great exuberance in the cultural atmosphere of their chosen habitat. Luckily they have disappeared now from all except the least reputable of their haunts.

It was outside the village hall at Walton, before it was raised to the status of a picture-house, that there occurred a little incident which is worth recording. We were filming some sort of story in which a street accident was concerned, probably a running-down by a motor-car, for that was the usual butt in those days. A dummy of a man was lying propped up against the wall of the building and there was a large crowd watching, for our activities were the great free entertainment of the day.

A local doctor—a rather unpopular man as it happened—was cycling down a side-street and he quickened his pace when he saw the crowd. Then, noticing the injured man, as he thought, for he was a little short-sighted, he jumped quickly off his bike, unstrapped his bag of instruments, pushed aside the two 'policemen' bending over the body and—realised his mistake! He saw the camera but he tried to look unconcerned and at his ease as he mounted and rode away, followed by the laughter and cheers of the unsympathetic crowd.

It was, I think, while the small picture-houses were gradually giving way to larger and ever larger ones, that our films—and those of our competitors too, of course—were slowly growing longer and bigger. I don't think we consciously visualised this change in advance; it marched so slowly and insidiously upon us that we scarcely noticed its coming. The half a dozen smaller producers continued to be small and to turn out small pictures. Fitzhamon was bigger and made bigger and longer films as he

felt the need of time to develop his ideas. Percy Stow also needed room to expand his few but difficult trick pictures and Gaston Quiribet ('Q'), the clever Frenchman who had recently joined the gang, contributed longer films which we were very glad to welcome. All that was noticeable on the surface was that there was a steady, if diminishing, flow of small films with occasional bigger ones coming to the top and demanding attention.

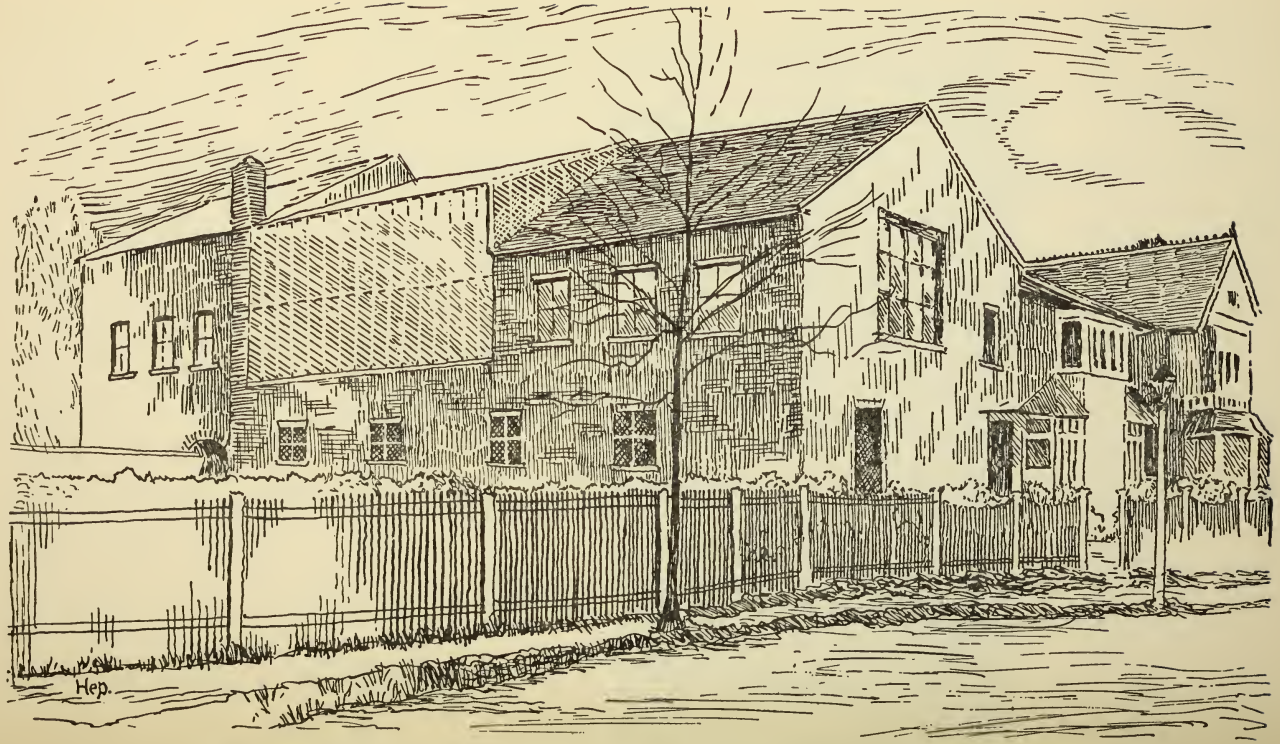


CHAPTER 7

But I have allowed my story to gallop far ahead of my facts, and I must take you back nearly three years to the time of *Rescued by Rover.*

It was shortly after *Rescued by Rover*—and perhaps because or on account of it, for it brought considerable grist to the mill—that I began to contemplate building an indoor studio for film-making. This was in the summer of 1905. I had nothing to go upon because, so far as I knew then, or indeed, so far as I know now, there was no studio in existence and working at that time. So all the conditions had to be envisaged and the details thrashed out in my own mind. There was no thought at all of a 'dark' studio; what I wanted was one that would let in as much as possible of the daylight while protecting us from rain and wind, but it must not cast any shadows. Ordinary window-glass would let through the maximum of light, but in sunshine there must always be the shadows of the wood or iron bars in which the glass is mounted. So I set about looking for a glass which would diffuse the sunshine and so kill the shadows but without greatly diminishing the amount of the light. After considerable experiment I hit upon Muranese glass which exactly fulfilled these conditions. It gives beautifully smooth flood-lighting but cuts off no more light-value than ordinary glass.

But I realised, of course, that sunshine cannot be relied upon and I wanted to avoid the inconvenience of having to wait upon its vagaries. So I rigged up in our back garden—where all of this sort of thing had perforce to be done—an electric arc-lamp and tested as well as I could what additional help we might expect from this source. The result was our first studio. It was so shaped that the daylight could reach the acting floor from every reasonable point, including the space over the cameras, and, in addition, there was a row of hanging automatic arc-lamps and some more on stands which could be wheeled about into various positions.



First covered Studio at Walton-on-Thames. The original Villa is at the extreme right

It was some very considerable time after this that all the principal American producers abandoned New York and shifted three thousand miles across their continent to Los Angeles so as to have almost continuous sunlight, and then, as soon as they got there, dug themselves into dark studios to keep the sunlight out! I couldn't make sense of this at first but I came to realise that what they really wanted to avoid was the hourly *shifting* of the sunlight, constantly altering the values of their pre-arranged scenery. Still, they could have accomplished all that by remaining on the East side, where all actors, technicians and supplies were ready to their hands. Expense is wrought by want of thought as well as want of art.

Our studio was built at first-floor height so as to be that much above the level of surrounding houses, and the space underneath was devoted to three printing and developing machines—same old pattern—drying-rooms, mechanics' shops and so on. One small room in front between the main dark-room and the road was the perforating room with half a dozen motor-driven Debrie perforators, for it was not until considerably later that the film-stock makers took over the perforating as part of their responsibility.

It is curious to note how little faith is put by builders and folk of that sort in the ideas of people who are young and inexperienced but not necessarily silly. I designed this small building, made the plans and all necessary drawings and submitted them for an estimate to a local builder of good repute. His first response was to say, 'That roof won't work; it can't be built; it will 'wind'.' I didn't agree but in the end I had to make a scale model in cardboard to prove that I was right.

Then again, I had allowed a space of six feet square for a staircase turning three right-angles to the first floor. He made no comment on this but just altered the measurement to six-by-*eight* feet. But a staircase of this description, whatever its size, must be square at its base. When the building was up he found this out and had to put in an additional inner wall in accord with my measurement, and that two foot of wasted space is there to this day.

When the studio was built and ready for work I put down a sort of railway for the wheeled camera-stand to run on, to make what are now called 'tracking shots,' which had not by then been heard of. Also we used a panoramic head so as to follow the actors

as they moved about the scene, until we were informed by America —then our biggest customer—that Americans would not stand these movements and we must keep the camera stationary. Think of American films today when the camera is scarcely ever still for two seconds at a time!

I don't say the Americans learned anything from us for that is not at all likely, but I do say that we learned a very great deal from them, though I for one admit that I learned too slowly. Brought up in the stage tradition it seemed to me for years that in all general views you must photograph your actors as they appear on the stage, full length from head right down to feet, and only in admitted close-ups could you omit unnecessary limbs. But the American films unblushingly cut them off at the knees or even higher when they could show important details more easily that way. It looked all wrong to me at first but I soon gave way and adopted the new technique. The American films which were beginning to come over in quantities about then, showed also far better photographic quality, particularly in definition, indicating much better lenses than we were using. So we had to hunt around for better lenses, which soon brought us to the German opticians and their wonderful Jena glass.

We were still printing the third edition of *Rover*, for beside fresh demands from new customers, earlier buyers were wearing out their copies and demanding reprints. Also the demand for our short films was increasing in many other countries in various parts of the world, and a large share of our attention was necessarily devoted to the growing demands of the dark-rooms, apart from the need of producing a steady stream of new subjects.

Some of the best of the small films in production at this time—early 1906—under the aegis of our producer, Lewin Fitzhamon, were expanded into series and so came to have the significance of big ones while retaining the cheapness and saleability of 'shorts.'

A notable series of this class started with *Tilly the Tomboy*, in which the name part was played by Unity More. It was an instant success, but for some reason this clever little dancer was not available when we wanted to make another. But we had two other little girls, just as clever and already on the fringe of our stock-company, Chrissie White and Alma Taylor. Which should be chosen to carry on the good work? They were both thoroughly mischievous by nature and equally suitable. Choosing became too invidious. The Gordian knot was cut by taking them both and

they kept the series going (and 'going' is a very mild way of putting it) for several years.

Perhaps it should be explained that the great aim and object of these Tilly girls, in their pictures, was to paint the town extremely red, and the joyfully disarming way in which they thoroughly did it was the great charm of these delightful little comedies. Mischief without any sting in it is the one unfailing recipe for child-story pictures. Fitz, who loves children as much as I do, knew just exactly how to bring it out.

When, long ago, a certain bright spirit cried out, 'Oh that mine enemy would write a book!' he was obviously inspired by an impious longing to tear that book to pieces. I may paraphrase that cry here with one just as heart-felt, 'Oh that my friend had kept a diary,' for I am up against the greatest difficulty, indeed, impossibility, of fixing the dates of a lot of the things I want to write about. Consequently, mine enemy, when he gets down to it, will have much to get his teeth into, and my friends are so much the poorer.

I would like to write about the different makes of film-stock, for instance. Film-stock is the one absolutely essential material of film-making, just as paper is the raw material of making books. Negative-stock is the highly sensitive film which is used in cameras —the 'paper' that the author writes upon—and the less sensitive positive-stock is that upon which the many copies are printed from the original negative; the 'paper' the book is made with.

It is primarily upon the quality of these raw materials that the technical quality of the finished pictures depends, and, since film-stock has been growing steadily better for fifty years, it stands to reason that it could not have been nearly so good in the beginning. The first piece of American negative-stock I bought was extremely thin at one end and four or five times as thick at the other. It was seventy-five feet long. Early Lumière positive-stock frequently suffered from the same fault and had, moreover, the distressing peculiarity of turning deep yellow after a little while. Later on the Pathé negative-stock had greater speed than any other at the time, but was rather too 'contrasty' for my taste.

The film-stock makers had their own troubles, no doubt, and one of them was the difficulty of finding a suitable substratum— an undercoat upon the celluloid to make the gelatine emulsion adhere to it properly. One of the first of the film-stock makers to come into contact with me was a nice chap named Haddow, I

think. He belonged somewhere up north and his product was marketed with the name of the European Blair Camera Company under the management of Cricks, who afterwards became prominent in the film-picture world as the moving spirit of the firm of Cricks & Martin.

Another was Birt Acres, who, many years earlier, in 1893, had given the show of films at the Royal Wedding at Marlborough House when I helped him with the electric-lamp arrangements. He swam into my orbit again when we opened a second time at Cecil Court and he had long conversations with me about all sorts of things, including his film-stock which, on the whole, was quite good though sometimes unreliable.

There was one dreadful time which I shall not easily forget. I am not sure but I think it must have been in the long, long week when we were printing day and night to meet the great demand for copies of our Queen Victoria Funeral films. Anyhow, I know it was after a whole night of printing, when in the dawn, we went up into the drying-rooms to have a look at our night's work before we went home to bed. According to our practice at the time all the thousands of feet of film was hung up in crowded festoons from hooks on wires along the ceiling. And we found that for the whole of its length, every foot, every inch, the gelatine with the pictures on it had parted company from the celluloid as it dried, and the two were hanging separately in the festoons—two loops instead of one! The substratum had failed, or perhaps by an accident, been omitted. We slunk down to the dark-room and started all over again.

All the very early film-stock makers in this country, except one, have now faded out of the picture. That one, by sheer effort and by insistence upon quality and fair dealing, has attained and retained the premier position both here and in America. We owe much to Kodak for the very sustenance of our career.

There was another very curious failure which occurred very occasionally in these drying-rooms but I don't think it had causal connection with the film-stock. The trouble took the form of hundreds of thousands of little faint white spots which appeared all over the film when it was drying. This only happened two or three times, but each time it affected the whole roomful of film at once, and when that was cleared it did not recur in any form until the next time, and then again the whole roomful was spoilt.

I gave a lot of thought to this puzzle and reviewed very carefully the conditions in which it happened. The drying-rooms were

heated by ordinary gas-stoves in the fireplaces, with the elementary safety provision of wire fire-guards—a very shocking and blameworthy practice when you are dealing with celluloid, but that had nothing to do with the present puzzle. As I saw it the air was warm and damp, there was moisture everywhere and there was moist gelatine with a small quantity of glycerine in it to keep it pliable. And the symptom never occurred in small doses: either there was no sign of it or the whole shooting match was affected.

Should I have said *in*fected, I wondered? Here were all the optimum conditions for a gelatine culture of micro-organisms—and in the air there are bacteria everywhere. The films were suffering from a disease which attacked them like an epidemic. If this suggested deduction were correct the cure was obvious and easy. Any bactericidal disinfectant which would not harm the film ought to scotch the disease. So I added a trace of formaldehyde to the final bath of very diluted glycerine and water, and the trouble disappeared, never again to return.

While the films were young and still short enough to be easily handled, we introduced the staining of various scenes to enhance the effect as I have already mentioned in the case of the Scott-Brown films—blue for night, red for firelight and so on. Then we sometimes added toning, quite a different *chemical* process which often gave very attractive results, and this sort of work continued until a foreign film-stock maker, Gevaert, I think, began making film with the stain incorporated in the celluloid, which saved us a lot of trouble, but added the difficulty that we had to sort out the film-stock into colours before we started printing.

When I visited Rochester, New York, I tried to persuade George Eastman—a delightful personality, by the way—to let me have film-stock in thousand-foot lengths, instead of my having to join up the short rolls to suit my developing machines. But he said that although he made and coated in that length it was more convenient to cut to the four hundred and two hundred foot lengths that other people wanted and he could not make special arrangements for me.

It was quite early in his career that Stanley Faithfull, despite his manifest inexperience, was sent up to Glasgow and other places in Scotland to sell films—his first long journey ever, and one that brought him a rather unhappy experience. In the train coming back, an old Scotsman, drinking heavily, suddenly missed

his money and loudly accused Stanley of having robbed him. The guard was called and eventually the train was stopped at a subsequent station to take a detective on board. Then it was that the old man, sobered a little, found the missing money in his waistcoat pocket. His abject and slobbery repentance was more difficult to bear than his false accusations. So the Scotch Express was stopped to vindicate Stan's honour.

I am in fact a most law-abiding person, and do not willingly break the smallest rules. But I hate the *law* and loathe actions at law. I would do almost anything rather than embark upon one. It was in the law-courts that I first met Will Barker. Whether it was the atmosphere of the place I do not know but I took an instant dislike to him. It cannot have been instinctive because I found out that I was utterly wrong. In fact, he became a very good companion and latterly one of my dearest friends. He came to my rescue once and took shares—which I now believe he guessed were worthless, though *I* didn't know it—in a little company I had started and was trying to keep alive. We were competitors almost from the beginning, friends from when we found each other out, volunteers together in the war of 14-18, and competitors again when we had finished with films. He may have been a rough diamond but he is diamond all right, through and through.

The law case I am alluding to was one brought by, or against, Charles Urban concerning his exclusive use of the word 'Bioscope' to describe a film projector he was marketing. I think he would have succeeded if he had not been, ill-advisedly, calling his machine the 'Urban-Bioscope.' It was held that he had been, in effect, declaring that there were other Bioscopes and he could not now turn round and claim that his was the only one.

One law case proverbially leads to another so I may be excused, perhaps, for jumping ahead to one in which my own company was involved. Phillips Oppenheim had written, among many others, a novel called *The Amazing Quest of Mr. Ernest Bliss*, from which Henry Edwards produced a film for us. In the book and film, there was described a rascally theatrical agent of the name of Montague. Certainly there was no thought of pointing to any existing individual. But there was one individual of that name who chose to think that the cap was intended to fit him and he took action against us for libel or slander or defamation—I forget how it was worded. The great Marshall Hall was briefed

Alma Taylor playing two parts in 'Anna the Adventuress'

Gerald Ames and James Carew in 'Mr. Justice Raffles'

for the plaintiff and he paid us the compliment of publicly declaring his very high opinion of the Hepworth films.

His junior, in outlining the cause of complaint, listed the many wickednesses of the mythical Mr. Montague and among the other evils he said, '—he even seduced his typewriter.' Phillips Oppenheim was sitting next to me in the court and I heard him mutter in a loud stage whisper, 'Typist, my dear fellow. Typist. You can't seduce a typewriter.'

Luckily, not only for us but for all other film-makers, the case was lost. If it had succeeded we should all have been at the mercy of anyone, honest or otherwise, who chose to consider himself defamed by some description in a film.

Here is another film case which, unluckily for us, we lost, but whether it was fortunate or unfortunate for the film trade as a whole is a moot point. If we had succeeded it would certainly have had immense and far-reaching effects throughout the whole industry.

We were employing, for the most part, completely unknown artists in our films and of necessity publicising their appearance and skill. When the time came when we wanted to advertise them, both on the screen and in the press, by posters and by 'stills,' I foresaw that what was beginning to happen to other firms would certainly happen to us. An actor had the value which was due to his own good work. He also had a fortuitous value, not contributed by him, and due to the money spent in advertising him. That accumulated value he was free—unless, and only for so long as, he was under contract—to sell to any rival firm for as much as he could get. His new firm would, of necessity, add to that increased value and the process would go on, higher and higher, until the producers were impoverished and the actors near millionaires. That, indeed, has largely come to pass and it is one of the reasons why the film production industry is nearly always in difficulties.

My panacea was probably not a good one. I suggested that unknown actors should receive a nom-de-guerre, a pseudonym, which should be our property and under which we would advertise him without risking the loss of all we spent on him if he should migrate to a rival firm. The suggestion was submitted to the unknown actors who seemed to consider it fair, and also for counsel's opinion, which also was that it was fair and could be upheld. Consequently John McMahon became John MacAndrews, Kaynes became Jack Raymond, Wernham Ryott

became Stewart Rome and so on. When he came back from the war Ryott went straight to Broadwest and we took action against him and lost.

I do not wish to quarrel with the verdict although it was suggested that I was trying to do the actor out of his living. That, of course, was a gross exaggeration. What I was trying to do was to prevent the actor, unintentionally and perhaps against his will, being used as a pawn in a game which might lead to the destruction of the industry which was providing that living. My suggested method may have been quite wrong but I am convinced that if the something that I was striving for could have been brought about by another and perhaps more equitable method, the industry would today be far more healthy than it is and the actors collectively much better off. For see what happens now. Mr. A is an actor: Mr. B is, say, an electrician. Both do some particularly good work and hope, as we all should, that they will get better pay because of it. Mr. A is in the limelight, or rather the electric light thrown upon him, literally by Mr. B, and he catches the eye of the public—Mr. B does not. A gets his rise, but a rival firm comes along and offers him double. That is doubled again when another firm steals him, and in a very little while he is getting a thousand pounds a week—Mr. B is still getting ten. Then someone says B is quite right, he ought to have at least twenty, yes, and all his colleagues' wages should be doubled too ; never mind what they would be getting in another trade—they are in the film industry. It does not take much prescience to see what is happening; has indeed, happened already. Wages and salaries have risen so greatly, so far in excess of the natural rise due to money depreciation, that it has become an uneconomic proposition to produce picture-plays. America is in like case, but the market there is four times as large as ours and they may be able to win through.

It seems that here there must be something in the nature of a complete revolution to put the industry on its feet. It would be better to have all wages and the like reduced to half than have them cut out altogether but that, I expect, would be politically impossible. Perhaps the whole system must collapse to the ground, and then there may be a chance to begin all over again on sounder lines. I am certain that, given the right conditions, good films—as good as any we have had—could be produced at a fraction of their present cost.

It is not only the amount of the wages but the very large

number of people drawing them that is throttling the production business. Here is a list of the technicians engaged in one unit of a modern studio. The names are omitted :—

> Producer, associate producer, production supervisor, studio manager, unit production manager, director, second director, first assistant director, second assistant director, third assistant director, continuity, assistant continuity, lighting camera-man, camera operator, camera focus, camera loader, clappers, art director, assistant art director, set dresser, sound supervisor, sound mixer, sound camera, boom operator, assistant boom operator, editor, assistant editor, make-up supervisor, assistant make-up, hairdressing supervisor, hairdressing assistant, wardrobe supervisor, wardrobe master, wardrobe assistant, wardrobe mistress, wardrobe assistant mistress, chief electrician, floor electrician, property master, floor props, assistant floor props, construction manager, stand-by carpenter, stand-by stage hand, stand-by rigger, stand-by painter, stand-by plasterer, stand-by rigger (grips)!

'So all fleas have lesser fleas upon their backs to bite 'em.' We mustn't, however, blame the fleas; they are the products of a system which they have done nothing to create. Consider the case of a thoroughly competent camera-man—used to the job from his boyhood. Suppose he is engaged by a modern studio and is told he will have for assistants, a camera loader, a camera unloader, a camera operator and a man to focus the camera for him. You could not expect him to say, 'Oh, rubbish! I can do all those things myself and *then* have time on my hands.'

Go into any studio you like, anywhere, and you will find twenty to thirty people standing about in the set, apparently doing nothing; and you will more often find, to your sorrow, that the studio is empty—lifeless and cold.

But this consideration of latter-day studio conditions is very far ahead of my proper chronological position, from which I was lured by taking three law cases together although they were really several years apart. The last one led me naturally to consider how modern conditions might have been modified if that case had ended differently. I dislike law cases intensely and I thank my generally cheerful guardian angel that there are no more to be recounted. Now I must get back to the time when Stanley Faithfull had only recently joined the staff.

I tried very hard to run the business on decent and human lines and never has any man been more loyally and faithfully served than I was. Everybody in the place was expected to be ready and willing to do any mortal thing and there was never a thought of overtime and never a trace of disinclination to take on a job which, in these days, similar workers would think 'beneath them.' Only in the studio would there sometimes be a feeling that a lady who had played 'lead' in one film ought not to have to 'walk on' as a servant-maid with a single line in the next. But the motto in the studio was 'Walk on—or Walk off,' and it came to be understood that people who were too good to play small parts as well as bigger ones were altogether too good for us. Before Geoffrey Faithfull became chief camera-man he was asked to 'stand in' for Dolly Lupone who was frightened to throw herself down in front of a swiftly approaching horse and trap. He did it with such abandon that he cut himself pretty badly on the stone road.

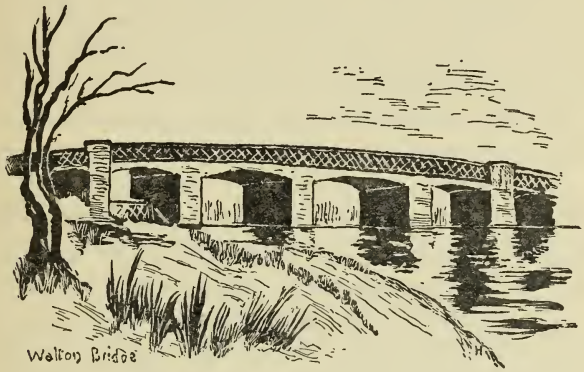
Sometimes when we were not busy and the weather was fine and warm there would be a sudden unexpected half-holiday so that we could all go swimming together or do what else seemed preferable. In the winter on the few days when the ice was bearing, a half-holiday, not expected or asked for, was doubly welcome. Holidays, planned beforehand, wet or fine, and doled out almost as part of one's wages hold nothing like the same happiness and welcome.

Of course boys being—as by tradition they are supposed to be—boys, got up to a good many larks which only came to my knowledge in much later years, though sometimes I knew more than I was supposed to know, but kept my own counsel. A recurring feature was a trick played upon every new boy when he first arrived. He was told to hold out the front of his trousers as far as he could. Then with his head bent backwards a penny was balanced on his nose and if he could tip it into the trouser-front he could keep it. But in the meantime another boy tipped a jugful of cold water into that receptacle—which must have been very uncomfortable.

Stanley and Geoffrey Faithfull, already mentioned, were too wise for these amusements, or perhaps too wary to be caught. If I have mentioned them a little before their proper time it is probably because they have always been such staunch friends to me that they are constantly in my thoughts.

Stanley joined in the early spring of 1906 and Geoffrey just a

year later, each at six shillings a week. They have solemnly assured me lately that they both thought that was excellent pay for learners and that all the rest of the staff considered themselves very well paid too. I do hope they were right but it seems rather dreadful to look back at now. I am perfectly certain, however, that all the people in the employment of the firm were really contented and happy. We were none of us financially well off—for my own drawings were small too—but I think there is no doubt whatever that we were all really happily engaged in work which we loved.



CHAPTER 8

SUDDENLY, in 1907, out of the blue, came disaster, bringing grief and dismay to all of us: cutting sharply across our lives, leaving a dreadful memory which for most of us will never be effaced. The thing which is feared above all others by those who work with celluloid, if they have any imagination at all. Fire! Fire, so swift and terrible that it is almost an explosion.

I had left a little early that evening in order to call at a club quite near to my house. One of our men came by on a bicycle and called out to me across the hedge that the works was on fire. I rushed and got out the car and drove as quickly as I could, but even as I started I could see the column of smoke rising above all the houses. I hadn't wasted much time but the fire was half over when I got there. All the staff were crowded in the road in front of the blazing building, and to my first frantic question they assured me that they had accounted for everyone. But then, when to make sure, I ran over the names of all the people engaged at the time, it appeared that one, William Lane, was not among them. He was presumed to have run off home in terror, for it was in his room that the fire started. With that, I had to be content for the moment, but I sent a messenger at once to the lad's home to find out whether he was there.

Strange how in moments of deep distress, tiny utterly unimportant things will insist upon thrusting themselves into your consciousness and will not be silenced. The dark-rooms were nearest to the road and every developing machine had an electric alarm-bell to give notice when attention was needed. The fire had burnt these machines away and set all those dreadful bells ringing. In the dread silence, broken only by the hiss of the water from the fire engines, that horrible shrill tinkling went on and on as if it would persist to the very end of time. The batteries should run down, we hoped, and prayed, but still the maddening sound went

on. Then the messenger came back and said that William Lane had not been at home.

As soon as the place was bearable for entry, I went in with the local policeman and the first thing we did was to stop those bells. Then we crept through the slush of the blackened rooms and made our way into the little perforating-room where the poor lad had been working and where the fire, they all said, had started. I still clung to the slender hope that he had not been there, but we found his body leaning back in a corner, a black cinder, shrunk to half its size. Only one foot was left with any likeness to human flesh, where it had been protected by the boot.

We lifted him out as tenderly as we could and laid him far away from the desolation where he had died. Then I had to go and tell his mother and father what had happened. They were already fearing it must be so, for they had heard nothing since the messenger had left them. There was nothing I could do except try to answer their questions and show a little of the sympathy I so wretchedly felt.

And when I got back there was still nothing I could do. The fire was quenched, half the people had crept away to their own homes and even the firemen were packing up their gear. Truly the thread of all our lives had been cut right across.

The next day was the first of several dreary days, in which we tried to measure what we had lost and how much we could rescue from the ruins—what chance we had of starting again. I won't dwell any further on this unhappy time, but will try to tell of the many gleams of sunshine which struggled through the gloom now and again and began to point the way to some recovery.

There was that wonderful gesture from a man I scarcely knew —I think I had only met him once. His name was Jordan and he lived with his family in one of the little houses just opposite the studio. He came up to me when I was looking at the wreck next morning and he said that he knew how a calamity like that might easily catch a man very short of money for a time. He said that he had two hundred and fifty pounds doing nothing at his bank and I could have it in a few minutes and that he could raise as much again in two or three days if I should need it. When I went home later and told my wife about it, we felt that things could not be finished when there were people like that to help. As it happened I did not need money but that does not alter the fact that this was a most amazing and heartening gesture.

I received a lot of advice, too, of course, not always very wise or good. One thing that all sorts of people kept on dinning into me was that insurance companies always beat you down in your claims and that the only way to get your due recompense was to increase your claim by twenty-five or thirty per cent. I thought this over carefully and then I made up my mind. I would not add a penny on to anything. I would claim only the actual cost or value and I would make them pay my just claim.

Our policy was with the Royal Exchange Insurance Company. When they received the claim they sent down an assessor to check it. He was a very wise and careful man but very strict and painstaking in his methods. He spent several days on the job and this is how he began:—There were very many windows and the glass had been blown out of all of them. I had claimed for fluted glass at tenpence a square foot. He picked up some tiny pieces and said this is not fluted glass; it is ordinary window glass at twopence-halfpenny a foot. I said it *is* fluted glass and he said it wasn't. So I suggested he should talk to some of the workpeople about the place. He did and they all confirmed what I had said. The pieces he had found were all too small to show the fluting but I think he grubbed up a little larger piece somewhere. Anyhow, he gave in.

And this is how he finished. The last single claim was for just over a thousand pounds for a large quantity of raw film-stock which had been stored in the perforating-room ready for use. There was nothing to show for it but some hundreds of crumpled tin boxes smothered in the black ashes of burnt celluloid. He looked at the few invoices we were able to produce, gazed at the black cinders which we said had been film—and passed the claim in full.

You will ask, as the coroner did, how it came about that the young fellow could not make his escape the instant the fire started. This is the more extraordinary when it is realised that by stretching his arms he could, without moving, touch both door and window and that both door and window were only lightly latched and one opened outwards.

I have tried so often to reconstruct the fatal moment and the best I can arrive at is that he had matches with him, though that was forbidden; that one dropped on the cement floor and he trod on it by accident and so ignited some bits of loose film that had fallen there; that he then tried to stamp out the flame and so lost the couple of seconds in which he might have made his escape.

Never, never try to deal with burning celluloid. I hate to see

any kind of fire-extinguishers standing about in places where film is used, for I know that if people try to put out a film fire they will almost certainly fail, and in the attempt, may lose their only chance of saving their own lives.

This tragic fire was a staggering blow from which we only slowly began to recover. There was, of course, a tremendous amount of rather sickening work to be done; work which was not productive in any way but was merely directed towards the salvage and repair of anything which could possibly be saved. The outer walls remained standing and part of the roof, but most of the flooring was destroyed. All the perforators and their motors had gone completely and there was very little left of the developing machines. It was a miserable time and the only bright thing about it was the cheerful willingness with which everybody set about the doing of everything that was possible.

Meanwhile, plans for the future had to be gone into and considered. Before the fire we had already begun to feel rather cramped not only in studio space but in the matter of such subsidiary things as extra dressing-rooms and a 'green-room' for the artists, extra drying-rooms for the films and a whole lot of other things which we had wanted but had had to do without. I began trying to scheme out how we could turn as much as possible of our ill-fortune into good and decided to build a bigger and better studio. So while the old one was being rebuilt so far as was necessary to put it into thorough repair, and all hands were turning to replacing and reinstating the damaged and burnt-out machinery, I was making plans for the extension of the whole plant.

The new studio was to be just like the old one only larger and was to be placed parallel with it but at a sufficient distance away to leave a kind of square or courtyard between them. The square was to be completed by connecting the two front ends with dark-rooms and drying rooms and the two rear ends with a mechanics' shop below and a scene-dock above.

As soon as the old dark-rooms were ready again we started in to complete such of our orders as had not been cancelled and also to prepare as far as possible for future business. We had a large export trade at that time including a standing order from America for either thirty or forty copies—at our discretion—of every subject that we produced. This meant not only a great deal of printing but also a very large amount of work after the actual printing was finished. For all the films by this time had

The Final Stage. Left to right: Garage with Inspection Theatre over; Drying Rooms (with escape balcony around) and No. 2 Studio behind; Negative Assembly, tail end of No. 1 Studio; Offices beyond, with original Villa at end

come to consist of a large number of different scenes most of which had a title in front or an inserted title of spoken words. These titles could not be inserted in the negative because in the case of foreign orders the titles had to be in the language of the country in which they were to be shown. There was, therefore, for every picture negative, a roll of negative titles for *each* of the countries who ordered prints. A quite elaborate system of signals painted on the negative where each title was to come had to be evolved, for you could not expect an examining-room girl to know how to insert, say, each Russian title in the proper place or even right way up.

The same applied (only more so!) to films which were printed in different sections on variously coloured celluloid. For convenience the sections of any one colour were grouped and printed together. They had to be separated afterwards and assembled according to a similar signalling system. It required some thinking out, but, once established, the system worked without any difficulty.

I have now got to a place—its date is somewhere in 1908—where my reconstituted diary shows a jumble of events with very little sequence and several completely blank pages. It could perhaps be taken apart and its contents fitted together again in order of time and little watertight compartments, but that would, I think, rob them of both significance and interest. Order of date is all very well for people with 'catalogue minds' but order of events is much more important, for dates are stupid things; they merely follow one another like convicts walking in line, but events act and re-act together and flash their influence to and fro almost endlessly.

It is most likely that the blankness of the pages is due to the hiatus which must have occurred at this time. The original studio and all the work-rooms had been destroyed by fire and were now being rebuilt; the second studio, nearly double its size, had had its foundations cut out and its walls were going up as rapidly as could be expected, but the little ants' nest had been badly disturbed and with all the industry in the world it is clear that there must have been considerable interruption in its output.

There must have been a time when from the present point of view, nothing of importance was happening, and from the scanty records that I am able to piece together, I can find very little except trivialities, which are scarcely worth recording here. We

were, of course, rebuilding our walls and workshops and, in a sense, rebuilding our own lives. Looking back upon that time I think there must have been a subconscious urge in all of us to cling together as people are apt to do after a shipwreck upon an unknown shore—an instinctive response to an unrealised need of mutual support.

I had, a little while before the fire, tried an experiment which many other employers have tried without great success. It was to form a little games and social club for the staff to meet in the evenings and enjoy one another's company. For we all lived in what was then little more than a village and there was small opportunity for recreation. I might have anticipated the result. However much people who meet and work together all day may like each other, they naturally prefer a change when they are not at work. The idea started off well enough but it gradually petered out. The only part that survived, and that probably because of my own enthusiasm, was the group of unaccompanied glee-singers.

I have a vivid recollection of this little company around the open grave of their comrade who had perished in the fire, singing a hymn as a simple requiem to his memory. It was two or three years before this that I had started to get together a little choir of our workers for unaccompanied part-singing once a week during the winter. One or two friends were roped in later to swell the choir and we all enjoyed those weekly rehearsals very much. We were sixteen strong by 1908. One of our first ventures was carol singing at Christmas time. We all carried chinese lanterns which were lighted up outside the gate of the house we were going to attack. Then we marched slowly up the drive singing the 'First Nowell.' I think it sounded good and it certainly looked good. Arrived at the front door we changed to another carol or two and then we were sent away with a sixpence or shilling, or perhaps we were invited in. After the first year people began to expect us and to welcome us, and we came to know which houses were better avoided.

At one house we visited there was a large evening party in progress and as soon as we were heard approaching, the front door was flung open, the lights in the house were put out and we were ushered into a large room where the only light was that from our lanterns. We went through our repertoire of carols and more difficult part-songs and there was no doubt about the pleasure of

our hosts, who gave us a couple of pounds for our selected charity and champagne and cakes for ourselves. This part-singing enterprise was continued for several years and, indeed, led afterwards to much more ambitious efforts in the shape of light operas with orchestra and dresses and scenery and all the rest of it, but that is another story which I may touch upon later.

To get back to the film work (which I submit was none the worse for these happy interludes) I find that Fitzhamon had been with us for more than two years at this time. He was very busy and his curious Puck-like mind kept on evolving strange ideas which were often quite successful. In one letter he writes under date December 3rd, to an actor: 'If there is a heavy fall of snow this month I shall be glad to continue that sleigh picture commenced two seasons ago.' I could not in a hundred words give so good an impression of the times we worked in then.

One of our first attempts at publicity was the regular production of 'stills'—ordinary still photographs of selected events which, in the course of the film, occur in movement. We were a little late in adopting this comparatively easy way of publicising our activities, because I have always been rather against the use of stills. To say that one of these frozen pictures stands for and represents an intricate play of movement seems to me like taking a single chord from a musical score and saying that that represents a symphony.

Although I never ostensibly occupied the position of producer until a much later date, feeling that such special work should be entrusted to those who had been brought up to it as stage-managers or the like, I did take a very considerable part in supervising all that was going on. To this, I suppose, must be attributed the fact that all the films that came from the house of Hepworth had a certain likeness or style by which they were recognisable, in spite of the vastly different character of their subjects. The subjects, indeed, varied very largely—comics, dramas, news, actualities, comedies and stories of all kinds from books and plays.

In *Rover Drives a Car* (though I don't think that was really the name of the film), a dog steals the kidnapper's car and actually drives the baby home! That car was a wide open one with no such thing as hood or windscreen, but it had a fairly deep apron in front under which I was just able to conceal myself and put up an unobtrusive hand to hold the lower edge of the steering wheel.

The dog sat on the driver's seat with his paws on the upper side of the wheel and the baby sat beside him, thoroughly enjoying the novel experience. I wonder what the police would say if we attempted that on the public road today! *Baby's Playmate* came soon after this and then a second fine film dealing again with the *Black Beauty* theme, in which that sagacious horse calls a fire-engine to save the baby from a burning hay-rick. And then, near the end of the year that blessed infant was being rescued again, but this time by an elephant!

None of these films was very long and it must not be supposed that we were producing no others while all this was going on. I am just picking these out because they seem to me to be sufficiently unusual to be interesting. What with me and my dogs and Fitzhamon and his horses—and even elephants—we were doing quite a good trade in animal pictures. At one time we even had a snake! I was told he was quite harmless but he was over four feet long and it took me quite a time to get to like him well enough to wear him round my neck and to caress him for the encouragement of the actress who had to fondle him. His end was untimely for we lost him one day in Ashley Park and never heard of him again. We thought it better not to make enquiries.

In the following year, the animal theme continued with further variations. In *A Plucky Little Girl*, a rather older child this time, with the help of her dog, is successful in capturing a criminal —always a safe bet—and the same theme in different forms persists for some years later, but here we will leave it and change the point of view entirely to take a peep at what was happening to our films on the other side of the Atlantic about this time.

It was in or about the year 1909 that the internecine film war in America culminated in the formation of a trust whose object, so far as we were concerned, was to put a stop to the import of English and other European films. It was met by the formation of a counter-trust in the shape of the International Projecting and Producing Company who arranged for the introduction of foreign films on the same terms as those paid by the members of the trust for *their* privilege; half a cent per foot. So that we continued to export to America for some considerable time.

It was at about this time that the news-reels actually got into their stride and took their very important share in the making of entertainment for our picture-theatres. It is interesting to remember that the Hepworth Company had once been, and for a long

time, the acknowledged best in the production of news pictures, but we willingly relinquished that position when we were able to transfer the same credit to the gentler art of story-telling. But I had always held the view from the very start that news films were destined to become, and indeed very shortly did become, the backbone of the moving pictures; and it may be that if and when story pictures should go into a temporary decline—which is by no means impossible—news-reels, and particularly their bigger brothers, the so-called documentary films, may step into the breach and hold the fort until a better type of story-picture comes to be produced. And after that, I should think, they will never give up the place they will have so fairly won.

It was said at one time, and it is still largely true, that cinema audiences were of an average mental age of eleven to thirteen years. Ordinary human beings of that age inevitably grow up and as they grow their tastes mature and their contentment in mere story books gives way to a desire for more serious reading. It may happen; it may, perhaps, be beginning to happen even now, that picture audiences may evolve along similar lines and come to desire some sterner material among that which is merely entertaining.

Such ideas are looked upon as revolutionary by most people in 'the Trade' and the holders of them regarded as rebels, but I find them interesting to talk with and I like to hear their views. Several such people swam into our orbit about this time and many of them continued to revolve with us for a considerable period, while others shot off into space again after a little while. Among these latter was a very nice Dutch actor-producer named Bauermeister, whom we were very glad to have and sorry to lose. I suppose there was no particular niche into which he fitted but his presence was a welcome influence while it lasted.

Another who had a much more far-reaching influence upon us was the genial American, Larry Trimble, but of him I shall have much more to say a little later on, and there were several others who cropped up in my life from time to time who will, no doubt, crop up in these pages as I come to them.

Words of wisdom may flow at times from unexpected sources. A man in a high position whom I know very well, worked himself up into a rage over something jocular I said to him, meaning no offence. I know that when he is in a temper he is much more likely to speak the truth than at other times so I listened atten-

tively. He said, 'You ought to keep a better guard on your tongue, Heppy. You are offending people right and left. That is why you don't get on in the world—that's how you have lost all your friends.' There was a lot more in the same strain, and much of it, though basically true, was considerably exaggerated. The real reason why I don't get on in the world is that I have never really sufficiently wanted to—and I have many friends. But it is certainly wiser to make sure that your hearer has a sense of humour before indulging your own. There is nothing a man dislikes so much as a possibly comic allusion which he does not understand —and consequently fears.

CHAPTER 9

SEVERAL years before the gift of tongues descended upon the silent screen and robbed it of its one golden virtue, a curious little chirruping was heard from the pictures and was hailed by super optimists as the beginning of talking films. In a sense it was. But it was a very long way from real sound films as we knew them afterwards, for Sir Ambrose Fleming had not yet invented his thermionic valve without which no amplification and therefore no satisfactory volume of sound was possible.

The chirruping emanated from an old-style gramophone with a horn, placed upon the stage beside the picture and, by one or other ingenious contrivance, keeping some kind of synchronism with the picture on the screen. I want to describe one way by which this synchronism was attempted, for all of them had the basic idea in common.

Will Barker's method, the 'Cinephone,' was one of the simplest and I believe he did very well out of it. Having selected a suitable gramophone record he played it through several times to the actor or actors who were to take part in the picture. When they were letter-perfect, could sing the song in strict accord with the record and fit appropriate action to the words, he placed the gramophone in the corner of the scene where it would be photographed as part of the picture. Then he mounted a kind of clock-face upon the instrument with a hand geared to the spindle so that it would turn slowly as the record played. The scene was photographed and the index-hand with it.

When the picture was exhibited, a similar gramophone with a similar clock-face was placed on the stage beside the screen. The record was started at the same moment as the picture and all the operator in the box had to do was to keep the dial in the picture on the screen exactly in step with the dial on the stage. If he succeeded exactly the film would be in synchronism with the sound, but it wasn't easy. The trouble was that the whole of the 'kitchen

arrangements,' so to speak, was right before the eyes of the audience. If the synchronism went wrong they could see why. They probably got more fun watching the race between the two little clocks than they did out of the picture, but at least they were amused either way.

I originated a method which I thought was better.[1] It was a private electrical connection between the machine and the man in the box. A simple commutator, laid on the gramophone when the record was in place, sent electrical signals through a wire to a synchroniser in the operating box. The synchroniser had a little lamp behind a slot, which was normally covered by a movable hand just wide enough to hide the light. That hand had two little windows of gelatine attached to it, green on one side and red on the other. The signals from the distant gramophone tended to pull the hand to one side and thus show a green light. A similar commutator on the projector tended to pull the indicator hand in the other direction. As long as the picture was in exact synchronism with the gramophone the needle covered the slot and no light showed but the moment the two machines got out of step, even by an eighth of a second, a red or a green flash warned the operator and he varied his speed at once to bring them into step again.

All methods of this kind, however, were at the mercy of the man in charge of the gramophone, for if he did not start the needle on the record at the right point all hope of synchronism was lost. In some cinemas a programme boy was given the job—and a lot of things went wrong!

These of course were not 'talking pictures' in the proper meaning of the words. They were an interesting little side-line—perhaps an ingenious attempt to peep into the future and see whether picture and sound were likely ever to get married. It was a little flirtation which might or might not lead on to more serious things.

We called our instrument the 'Vivaphone' because we had to call it something. It was installed in a considerable number of small halls—the gramophone's gentle bleating was too faint for anything larger—and we supplied them with a steady stream of films, two a week for several years. You wouldn't have liked them even if they had been good. For the 'talkies,' properly so called (if anything *can* be 'properly' called by such an outrageous name),

[1] Patent application No. 10417. April 28th, 1910.

must be simultaneously photographed—generally on two films, the 'track' and the 'mute,' and the marriage is consummated when they are combined in the prints which go to the cinemas. The metaphor must now be dropped or questions of morality might arise when half a dozen tracks are united with one mute, which is quite usual practice.

The 'Vivaphone' was sold or leased in complete sets consisting of synchroniser, gramophone attachment, projector handle, coil of wire and a four-volt battery. Anyone could rig the arrangement up, or call upon us to show him how. One of our men once took a set to a customer by train; it was in a bag by itself and he put it on the luggage rack. Suddenly it caught fire spontaneously, sent out dense clouds of evil-smelling smoke and had to be pitched out of the window—luckily in open country. The railway company recovered it and, naturally, asked us what it meant. I went to see them—and it—but couldn't suggest any explanation. We were all nonplussed. Then I went back and did some furious thinking. The bag had contained only the four-volt battery, some wire and a tin box with the film in it—the customer already had the other parts. At last I tried putting a film-box on the top of the battery, the metal touching both the terminals. Almost at once the mystery was explained: the metal short-circuited the current and became red hot.

Nobody had thought of this possibility beforehand, but evidently what had happened was that in placing the bag on the rack, or in the jolting of the train, the tin box had got into position on the top of the battery, and then further jolting had caused it to make contact and fire the celluloid.

Although the 'Vivaphone' had only a short life of three or four years, it had its moments of glory. One of these was when that important politician, Bonar Law, made a gramophone record specially for us, but with an eye, of course, to the value of propaganda. He had to make a journey to The Gramophone Company and deliver his speech into a long funnel—there was no electrical recording then—and then come out to our studio and re-deliver it word by word in step with his own record on the gramophone attached to our camera. This is now called 'post-synchronisation' and it isn't at all an easy thing to do. Truth to tell he was not very good at it. But it was good enough to pass with people who were not too critical and I have little doubt that it served its purpose.

F. E. Smith, who afterwards became Lord Birkenhead, made a much better job of the same sort of thing. His speech was much better to begin with, and he seemed as if he were quite at home with the big funnel; and then, when he had to come to the studio to repeat the whole performance before the camera, while the gramophone threw his speech back at him, and he was expected to put in all the lip movements and expressions in exact time to every word, he never turned a hair. His performance was really excellent and I hope it did some good.

Several other Cabinet Ministers came in turn to a room in St. James' Square, which I fitted up as a studio, and appeared before my film camera and afterwards arrangements were made by which we were to have photographed, although not in synchronism, an actual Cabinet meeting in full session. We rigged up our apparatus in the Cabinet Room at 10 Downing Street with a large number of Westminster arc-lamps, for which the power was supplied to us from somewhere in the basement, and when all was ready we had nothing to do but stand about and wait for Lloyd George and his ministers to troop in and begin their show. Instead, there came a short message that the whole idea was off, and we packed up and went home again.

We were not told the reason and were left to guess whether it was a sudden attack of stage fright or what it was. It was a sad disappointment to us for a film like that would have been something of a triumph at that time. However, our grief was assuaged by the authorities setting aside for us a room in St. James' Square where many of the members of the Cabinet came and sat for me to be filmed. The 'Vivaphone' had nothing to do with this. An unaccustomed silence was settled upon all these important personages, and I wondered if they, so different in appearance, had anything else in common besides their rank as ministers of the crown. I found it, to my delight. They all had a keen sense of humour, that rarest and best of the human senses, binding them together and linking them to the country.

That is my memory, after thirty-four years, of a very curious incident, but the incident is really much more curious than that. I had completely forgotten that at the time I had been asked to set out a full description of it for the *Kinematograph Year Book*, but as it was published under my portrait and over my facsimile signature I am bound to admit its authenticity.

Here it is:—

THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE CABINET FILM

By Cecil M. Hepworth

You ask me to write you a brief article for the new edition of the *Kinematograph Year Book*, giving the real inner history of the Cabinet Film about which there was so much talk last summer. Without betraying any confidence, I think I may say that the first thing that happened was an application from a lady, well known in social circles, for aid from the kinematograph industry for a charity in which she was very much interested. Her suggestion filtered through to a gentleman, who, though not connected with the trade, has been interested in several kinematograph ventures on the sporting side. This gentleman took the idea to Mr. W. G. Barker as a typical representative of the industry in this country, with a view to learning what the exhibitors of kinematograph pictures would be likely to do. He, with characteristic vehemence, said they could do nothing, and gave as his reasons that exhibitors were at the moment in a state of being very hard hit by the war and the conditions contingent upon it, such as the Amusement Tax and the Daylight Saving Bill, and so on.

The gentleman of sporting proclivities was by no means inclined to take No for an answer, and Mr. Barker at length suggested that he had better apply to Mr. A. E. Newbould, the Chairman of the Exhibitors' Association, who was the best man in England to speak authoritatively for the exhibitors. Mr. Newbould's answer was very much the same as Mr. Barker's, but with this proviso, that if any scheme could be evolved which would enable the exhibitors to get some sort of boom which might help in a small measure to counteract the depressing influences already mentioned, they would certainly be willing to do everything in their power to help the charity in question. It was not a case of giving them a *quid pro quo* for their assistance, for the kinematograph exhibitors have shown, over and over again, their willingness and anxiety to help every worthy cause to which they could be of any possible assistance. But here they were faced with a situation which simply did not permit them to think of helping any charity on such a gigantic scale as was suggested in this instance. Give them some means by which they could make a little money, and that money could certainly be at the disposal of the charity. Thus Mr. Newbould.

The British sportsman, nothing daunted, asked Mr. Newbould, with sparkling eyes, what he would suggest.

That gentleman thought awhile and then said, 'Well, get us permission to take a photo of the Cabinet assembling in the historic Cabinet Room, and we will probably get you all you want.'

Thus he spake, thinking that the dauntless one would be crushed for ever by such a problem. Not so, however. Within a week or two, the telephone rang, and the report came through: 'It's all fixed up. You can photo the Cabinet whenever you like.'

Mr. Newbould now had to go ahead. He had asked for the moon and got it. He had no excuse for drawing back. Not that he wanted to do so, for his own enthusiasm was aroused, and when Mr. Newbould is enthusiastic things get done. Much of his keenness percolated through to the exhibitors, and arrangements were soon on foot for making this charity not only the biggest thing in charities which the kinematograph trade had ever touched, but incidentally, one of the biggest booms for the trade itself. A gala performance was to be held in a big representative kinematograph theatre in London, and there is very little doubt but that the King himself would have been present, and thereby set a seal upon the British kinematograph industry, the influence of which would have been permanent and far-reaching. At this gala performance the opportunity would have been taken of proving to immense numbers of British people who still need a proof that English films are being made today which are equal to anything the rest of the world can show. Only British-made pictures would have appeared upon that programme and in the very nature of things they would thereby have invited comparison with the very best of the rest of the world's productions.

Meanwhile, Mr. W. G. Barker was calling a meeting of British manufacturers and producers, to discuss the best means of carrying out the work involved, and a committee of three, consisting of Messrs. W. G. Barker, G. L. Tucker and myself, was appointed to make all the necessary arrangements, and take the Cabinet Film. It was at this first meeting of this committee that I let drop a bomb, which kept the said committee quiet for a considerable number of minutes. All the time these negotiations had been going forward, I had been nursing a guilty secret which I could no longer keep to myself. It was this. For many months I had been quietly taking a series of what we technically call 'close-ups' of these very Cabinet ministers, whom it was now proposed to photograph *en masse*. I had, in fact, already got this Cabinet picture in detail, and in far better detail at that, than could

possibly have been obtained in the conditions that would be involved in the Cabinet Room itself.

Nearly all of these ministers, as well as a number of other distinguished people, had sat specially for me in a studio I had fitted up in one of the Government offices, and naturally, working in conditions of my own choosing, I had obtained good results. This series of 'Kinematograph Interviews' was an old idea of mine, started as far back as five years ago, when such people as the Right Hon. F. E. Smith and the Right Hon. A. Bonar Law came down to the studios at Walton to be 'kine-interviewed' on the subject of Tariff Reform. I had similar interviews about this time last year, but I found that the numerous engagements of these important people made it too difficult to get them out into the country for photographing, and so I postponed further pictures until last winter, when a Government office was placed at my disposal, and specially fitted up as a studio.

There is little more to be said on this point. The committee were in a quandary. My pictures were ready, and if I put them out, the success of their Cabinet film was in jeopardy. On the other hand, they did not feel prepared to ask me to abandon the fruits of many months of work, and let them get their film out first, and so queer mine. The sporting gentleman came forward with a sporting offer of a £1,000 if I would stand aside, and let the charity film come out first, which offer I naturally refused with as much politeness as I could muster. The better suggestion was that I should merge my film in with the other, and make one thoroughly good and complete picture for the benefit of the charity, and incidentally for the trade as a whole. This appeared to me to be the only course, and I gladly adopted it, and I was asked to undertake the whole of the arrangements, and take the Cabinet film myself, so that, as far as possible, there might be one supremely good film for the good of the cause, instead of two incomplete ones.

Then came that unfortunate and ill-advised premature publicity. Somebody got hold of the knowledge that the members of the Cabinet were to be filmed. Somebody else, with a sense of humour more strongly developed than discretion, saw only the funny side of it, and how easily it could be ridiculed. That sense of humour ran riot through the newspapers, and the British public laughed. Cabinet Ministers do not like laughter. Perhaps it takes a strong man to be ridiculed. However that might be, the project was

suddenly abandoned and a great opportunity lost—killed by ridicule.

It is often urged against Englishmen that their great failing is lack of imagination, and my experience over this abandoned Cabinet film leads me regretfully to the fear that there is something in this. I recall how the newspapers, which admittedly reflect public sentiment, only a few short years ago were laughing at the possibility of flying machines ; and then a little later were weeping tears of sorrow over the risks which men ran in going up in these gimcrack affairs for the amusement of spectators and the getting in of gate-money. And now these same flying machines are winning the war! There was the same outcry against motor-cars, well within my own memory, and I can hear the echo of the indignation which was expressed at the mere thought of a Cabinet Minister imperilling his dignity by riding in one of these 'stink machines' as they then called them. I believe there was the same outcry against railway trains when they were first invented, and I can imagine the horror with which the equivalent of a Cabinet Minister in Caxton's day would have regarded the idea of his well-rounded speeches and noble thoughts being recorded upon artificial papyrus in a greasy ink.

How the people of a few years hence will laugh at a dignity which was afraid of being sullied by contact with the kinematograph, the greatest and most powerful vehicle for the conveyance of thought which the world has ever produced!

The 'Vivaphone' petered out in the end as it was bound to do, for the novelty wore off, and the frequent failures because the boy was careless about putting the gramophone needle in the proper place on the record brought all these devices into ill-repute after the lack of synchronism ceased to be amusing.

But before I leave the subject I must record one incident which was rather significant. At the first little picture-hall in Walton which I described some time back, an early 'Vivaphone' picture was introduced. It was received with such intense enthusiasm that an encore was vociferously demanded and could not be refused, although it meant delay while the film was rewound and the gramophone reset. Then the people refused to allow the programme to be resumed until they had had a second encore and even a third. So much for this little foretaste of 'talking pictures.'

A 1910 'news-reel': The 'Funeral of King Edward VII at Windsor'

In readiness for 'Hamlet,' Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, Lady Forbes-Robertson, and on left: Geoffrey Faithfull, Cecil Hepworth; on right: Hay Plumb, Bill Saunders

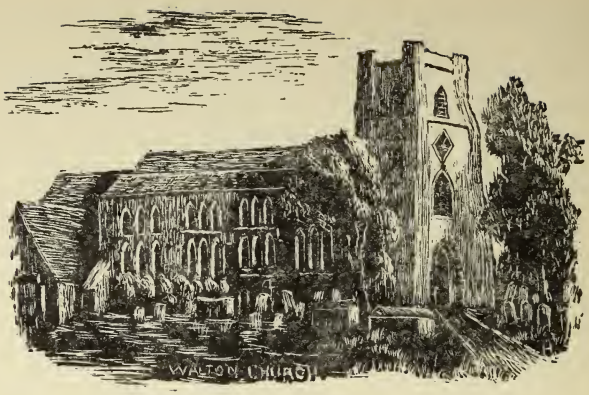
The 1913 'Hamlet' played at Walton Studios and Lulworth Cove

Leslie Henson in 'Alf's Button,' 1921

Although I invented the 'Vivaphone' I never really liked it. I had said all along that it was easy to do and not worth doing, for at the best it could only be a sort of disreputable ghost of what 'talking pictures' would certainly become in due course. But I was overruled by the business interests, in the shape of Manager Parfrey, who had his finger on the pulse of things more closely than I had, and I am bound to admit that from that point of view he was undoubtedly right. For out of it we made a lot of money which was available for worthier purposes.

Incidentally, the principle of the 'Vivaphone,' after the thing itself was dead, was used very greatly to improve the technical quality of an important device in the making of one type of picture which we came upon later. This I will deal with in its proper place, for I am still trying to be true to my promise of chronological sequence.

And in that order, I must apologise for having been a little premature in according to the news-reel people all responsibility for every future picture of news interest. For almost immediately we came to one which was of so much national importance that we were bound to serve it with all the skill and devotion at our command. If this was to be our swan-song so far as news was concerned it was a really worthy effort. It is safe to say that for beauty of photography and vital interest it remained unbeaten for many years. It was *The Funeral of King Edward VII* on May 20th, 1910. I took my camera, with Stanley Faithfull to help me, to Windsor Station to photograph the arrival of the funeral train with all that marvellous assembly of English and foreign mourners—all the very numerous crowned heads of Europe. It was a very remarkable sight and the film, taken in perfect weather, does full justice to it. I am glad indeed that I have a copy of it in my possession still. There were very many more crowned heads in Europe then than there are today or, I suppose, ever will be again. And most of the people there then must be dead by now. The Prince of Wales, a young slip of a lad, walks just behind the German Emperor, and the kings of nearly all the countries on our side of the world are there in full state. Geoffrey Faithfull had another camera in London where the procession passed near Marlborough House and secured an equally valuable picture. Between us, and with the help of unusually fine weather, we set a standard for the news-reel people which must have taken them a long time to surpass.



CHAPTER 10

On the day of the Walton Regatta of 1910 I went in a punt with some friends and we happened to pull up a little way from another punt where the occupants surprisingly burst into song. They were 'buskers' recently returned from some seaside town at which they had been performing in a local hall, or perhaps on the beach. Anyhow, their work was obviously very good and it was suggested that I might find them exactly suitable for further productions for the 'Vivaphone,' then in the heyday of its popularity. I took the hint and got them to come round and see me. Their names were Hay Plumb, a jolly young fellow beginning to show incipient rotundity, which is supposed to be but isn't always, a sign of good living, Jack Hulcup and his wife, Claire, afterwards Claire Pridelle, who were both much too slight to imply any such suspicion.

They proved to be a good acquisition both for acting and production of 'Vivaphone' subjects and for other things as well. For though they did not set our near-by Thames on fire, their work was sound and good as far as it went and they were decent and friendly people, several cuts above some of those we had been scratching from the boards of the smaller theatres. Hay Plumb in particular was a very useful man and he soon came to take important parts before the camera and afterwards beside it.

In the autumn of that year practically our whole company migrated to Lulworth Cove, armed with a number of suitable scripts and a firm determination to make as many good small films

as it possibly could, and to enjoy itself into the bargain. I could not spare the time to be with them for long but I went down there very frequently and helped where I could and hindered where I must. Once when with my camera I was up to my knees in sea-water, and Fitz was nearly up to his waist in it, directing several girls who were in it too, he began to get a little ratty trying to hear my suggestions over the noise the sea was making. I called out to him to get one of the girls a little nearer. 'Nearer to *what*?' he said crossly. 'Nearer, my God, to *thee*!' I shouted back, and they all recovered their tempers in the gust of laughter that followed.

In the following year, 'Plummie' was on contract—on two pounds ten a week, and very happy on it he has since assured me; and he and Gladys Sylvani, who joined us about that time, did a lot of very good work. Gladys Sylvani was a very beautiful young woman of striking colouring and she became our leading lady for several years. Her work was so good and her appearance so effective that if our films had been of the importance and calibre to which they afterwards attained she would have left a very significant mark upon them and made an even greater impression upon the industry.

The tangible results of the excursion to Lulworth that year were good enough to warrant a similar trip in the autumn of the following year, and among others there was an attractive story of *Grace Darling* to be attempted. Now the script in this case called for a cottage on the beach so that the heroine could go straight from her front door, so to speak, into her boat without wasting any time. But at Lulworth Cove there was no cottage built upon the beach. We did not want to *build* a cottage so we selected a suitably attractive one in the village and proceeded to carry the beach up to it. There was no pavement in front of it of course, only a gently sloping green bank which made a very good support for the beach stones. When we hauled up a boat on it, ready for Grace to push off into the putative sea, you would never have supposed that there was anything artificial about it.

By 1912 we were coming in sight of a more important period of our work in which we were destined to recover all the ground we had lost in the thin years both before and after the time of the fire. I cannot account for that thin time except by supposing that I was not sufficiently alive to the many changes which were occurring in the industry; not aware enough of the great possibilities which lay in the future. It is perhaps charitable to assume that I

was lured by the apparent security of our trade with America and other countries, into the feeling that change and progress need not be too seriously contemplated.

Perhaps the first small step in the right direction was asking Blanche MacIntosh to write a script for us instead of relying upon our own puny efforts. She, too, began very humbly, for her first scenario only earned her a guinea. It was called *In Wolf's Clothing* and I am afraid that is all I know about it.

A very important event in the story of English films was the appointment of a film censor. I mentioned near the beginning of this book that there occasionally appeared unpleasant little films which were ostensibly for 'smoking-room' use, and that, though some of us took a little fright that they might spread and become a danger to the trade, they did not then grow beyond being 'no bigger than a man's hand.' But in these later years, when there were fifty 'producers' for every one there was before; when there were fifty times as many markets with the temptation to make a little quick money and hang the consequences, the danger was certainly growing. Although there was as yet no overt evidence of it, we felt it might flare up at any moment.

We remembered hearing what happened to the stereoscope in the days when our fathers were young. That very attractive instrument, showing beautiful scenery in natural deep relief, was to be found in nearly every ladies' drawing-room, until in an evil day some unprincipled persons began selling indecent photographs for use in it. That was its knell. It speedily acquired such ill-repute that it was totally banished and never again came back into favour.

And some of us took fright. We visualised the possibility of a like fate overtaking our cinematograph. It was Will Barker who took the first step. He called Bromhead and me and one or two others into consultation and we put our heads together and agreed that the best safeguard would be to set up a censorship and somehow compel all film-makers to submit all their films to its judgment. It was rather a large undertaking but it was a big danger with which the whole industry of film-making was threatened. I need not go into details. There was in existence the Kinematograph Manufacturers Association to which we all belonged, and it was arranged that that body should inaugurate the scheme. Its very capable secretary, J. Brooke-Wilkinson, entered heartily into the arrangement and as secretary of the

British Board of Film Censors carried on the affair so very excellently that not only did the whole body of film-makers (after a little struggling) come into it and support it heartily, but it became the example to other censorships everywhere, in spite of the fact that it belongs to, and is supported by, the very people who have to obey its edicts.

If ever the true story of the British film industry comes to be written it will be found that there is one name which streaks along it like a bright ray of light, from near the beginning, and on through its most important years. It is not to be found on any advertisements, scarcely appears in any trade paper, was never seen on any programme or list of important people. Yet there is no name better known through all the industry than that of Brooke-Wilkinson.

I met him first in the offices of the *Photographic Dealer*, run by my friend, Arthur Brookes, for whom I occasionally wrote some semi-technical articles. Mr. Wilkinson as we called him then was a dapper little man, without obvious personality or any hint of the skill and extraordinary tact which he displayed in after years. He was on the advertising staff of the *Dealer* and was understood to possess considerable knowledge of photographic and chemical apparatus, and he had a quietly genial and pleasant manner.

When the Kinematograph Manufacturers Association was formed I was, I think, its first chairman. Anyhow, when its work began to accumulate and we came in need of a secretary, I remembered the dapper little man in the office of the *Photographic Dealer* and suggested he should be approached. He duly accepted the job and held it to the end of his life.

Thus it came about that when three or four of us, in a little informal committee with W. G. Barker, began to discuss the matter of a trade censorship to keep undesirable elements out of the films, it naturally fell to the K.M.A. to father the scheme and to Brooke-Wilkinson to be its secretary. And then he began to unfold. He pointed out that we must have a prominent and well-known man to be its head and at a salary which made us gasp. But we felt he was right and T. P. O'Connor was approached and he accepted the post of first film censor.

But for all practical purposes Brooke-Wilkinson was himself the censor. It was he who suggested 'Tay Pay' and he who approached him and fixed it all up. He did the same in the case of each succeeding official censor and it was he who selected and appointed

the staff of the board of examiners. It was he who received and dealt in the first place with any complaints—and at first there were many—discussed them between the complaining film dignitaries and the examiners concerned, and in the last resource put the case before the official censor.

I remember when, very many years later, he told me in confidence that he had found a beautiful old house which he believed he could secure; one which would be a worthy home for the British Board and be a credit to it not only in the eyes of the film trade in this country but also of all the visitors from other lands who came over here, as they occasionally did, to study our censorship methods. He took me to see it. It was a kind of furniture repository at the time but even so I could see that it was a wonderful old building, a beautiful house built by Christopher Wren and the Adams. I shared his enthusiasm though I wondered a little where the money was to come from.

However, he bought it himself at a very moderate price and the old furniture was cleared away. Then people began to hear about it and almost immediately he was offered a price which would have showed him a tremendous profit on his outlay. He refused. He furnished the whole place in keeping with its style and antiquity, got his staff installed—and then turned it over to the Board at exactly the price he had paid for it.

I think that was the proudest moment in his life, and I know that his very heart was in that building; the crowning monument of his whole career. It was called Carlisle House at the end of Carlisle Street, Soho Square. Incidentally, it was the house selected by Charles Dickens as the home of Dr. Manette in *The Tale of Two Cities.*

One night, in the middle of the war, a bomb dropped upon it and smashed it to a mere heap of rubble: not one brick was left standing upon another in its proper place. I heard about the calamity early next morning and hurried round in the hope of intercepting poor old Brookie and breaking the news to him before he came upon it unawares. I thought it would kill him for he was an old man by then. But I was too late to help him. I found him seated on a kitchen chair at the corner of Carlisle Street, calm and gentle, waiting to give directions to the staff as they arrived to 'work'!

I sometimes wonder whether it would be any exaggeration to

say that Brooke-Wilkinson was, by and large and from beginning to end, the best-known man in the British film industry. He had the most difficult job of all and he held it down with such gentle forceful dignity that he was loved by all and was the friend of every man who might so easily have been his enemy.

That sincere appreciation of a very honourable man had to come in in its proper place at the point where the Board of Censors was appointed, but as it also concerns the greater part of a man's life it has carried us far beyond that proper place and indeed beyond the scope of the whole of this book. I must, therefore, call back your attention to the point where it left the main stream. So we are back again in the day of the very short picture.

But if my company had not yet begun to make the long and important films which were to make future years memorable, it was certainly industrious in the making of short ones. 1912 was extraordinarily prolific, for, apart from the two 'Vivaphone' subjects every week without fail, there were also three or more 'shorts' of anything from five hundred to a thousand feet long, mostly with Gladys Sylvani and Alec Worcester or Flora Morris, Harry Royston, Marie de Solla, Harry Gilbey, to quote a few of the stock-company names which come to mind.

The year was also memorable for some delightful productions in quite a different idiom by Elwin Neame, for instance *The Lady of Shalott* with Ivy Close who was for some time a member of the stock-company, and *The Sleeping Beauty* by the same two people.

A less artistic but commercially more important venture was *Oliver Twist*. I think I have mentioned that my father was a popular lecturer when I was a youngster and that one of my greatest joys was to go with him and work his 'Dissolving Views' for him. His most successful lecture was *The Footprints of Charles Dickens* in which I gloried and heard over and over again. As a result I read every book that Dickens wrote and got myself thoroughly saturated with him. So when Thomas Bentley presented himself to me as a 'great Dickens character impersonator and scholar,' my heart naturally warmed to him and I was readily receptive when he offered to make a Dickens film for me. In the end he made several, but I think *Oliver Twist* was the first and its length was nearly four thousand feet. It may not have been outstandingly good but it was very successful and it marked the beginning not only of a Dickens series but also of a long range of

increasingly important pictures from other popular novels and plays.

Gladys Sylvani was our very popular leading lady all through 1911 and for the two or three following years. She frequently appeared with Alec Worcester or with Hay Plumb in films of what was then the considerable length of over a thousand feet, but there is little use in quoting titles which must of necessity be quite meaningless now that the films themselves are forgotten.

There was a curiously interesting adaptation of the cinematograph to the legitimate theatre which was introduced about this time by a man named Messter, who called it 'Stereoplastics.' It was an ingenious combination of the old 'Pepper's Ghost' idea with films instead of living actors. In the 'Pepper's Ghost' illusion, as everybody knows, a very large sheet of glass was stretched across the stage at an angle so that it would reflect a white-robed actress standing in the wings. She would appear to the audience as if she were standing in the middle of the stage. The crux of the illusion was that the 'ghost' would be invisible until a bright light was shone upon the figure in the wings and would gradually fade away again when the light was slowly extinguished.

In the 'Stereoplastic' illusion the white figure in the wings was replaced by a sheet upon which a picture could be thrown from a projector out of sight on the opposite side of the stage. Both lantern and screen were invisible to the audience, until the specially devised film was thrown upon the screen, when the figure or figures appeared in the centre of the stage among the real people and the coloured scenery and furniture. There was no trace of the screen and the figures certainly looked very round and solid; or they could be made more transparent and ghost-like by reducing the brilliance of the light in the projector.

We had quite a lot of fun in the making of these special films for which we had to follow very carefully the instructions which were given to us. The actors had to be clothed entirely in white and have their faces and hands whitened too, and they had to be photographed against a very dark background of black velvet. The films were so processed that the figure was very white and clear and the surroundings so black and dense that no trace of light could get through and make any part of the screen even faintly visible *as* a screen.

The show was put on at the Scala Theatre in London where it was shown for several weeks. I do not remember that it attracted any marked attention. It suffered, I suspect, from the usual fate

which almost always dogs the steps of any ghost-illusion. Very few people are interested in an illusion of that kind just *as* an illusion. They may think it is clever but do not bother to wonder how it is done; they don't even care. Unless it tells some story, or belongs to some story which cannot well be told without it, it very soon ceases to intrigue them.

That is, indeed, at the basis of all entertainment. The conjurer is no good without his patter, and his patter must be interesting in itself. The cleverness of a ventriloquist goes for nothing unless the story his doll tells is both funny and clever. Radio and television are so amazingly wonderful in themselves that if you think of *that* your very hair stands up on end: but you don't. All you think about is their message, the story they have to tell. So it is with the films. Hundreds of thousands of pounds spent on making them marvellously wonderful go for nothing at all if you are bored with the story. And *how* bored you sometimes are!

One of the most portentous events in my film-life was the coming to England of Larry Trimble, with John Bunny and Florence Turner, to produce *The Pickwick Papers* with John Bunny in the name part. He came to me to see whether he could use my studio and I was honoured and very glad to agree that he should. They were three of the most delightful people, all experienced in modern American practice and quite willing to impart their knowledge. They were polite enough to imply that they found reciprocity on my part which made us quits.

Larry and I became excellent friends and had long discussions on the details and ethics of film production. We found that our views coincided to a very remarkable extent considering we came from and belonged to opposite hemispheres. It was he who persuaded me to try my hand at the actual 'direction' of a film, as they call it in America. Alma Taylor had been appearing in several short films made by Fitzhamon and when I supervised them and did much of their camera work I had been attracted by her charm and growing skill. Blanche MacIntosh had by then written several short scripts for us and one of these entitled *Blind Fate* seemed to me like an excellent medium both for Alma's acting and for my first efforts at 'direction.'

The result was very successful and earned for both of us warm commendation. I think the nicest compliment I have ever had was when the shy little girl said to me afterwards: 'My! You are hot, aren't you?'

CHAPTER 11

THAT short film settled my career from then on. I devoted myself entirely to production and stuck to it ever after until the silent pictures were drowned in a sea of sound and the Hepworth Company went down with them. Not that one was the cause of the other: the two things just happened together. But we must not hint at the end yet, for this is only the beginning—the turning point at which the company really began to find itself—began to think about making important and worth-while pictures.

John Bunny, Florence Turner and Larry Trimble belonged to the Vitagraph Company of America—one of the oldest, if not the oldest, film company in the world. We had a tremendous lot of questions to ask one another as may be imagined. I asked John Bunny, among a great many other things, what they did about make-up. He said, 'Oh. Just fight it, fight and keep on fighting.' I gathered from this that he and I were very much of a mind about that as we turned out to be on many subjects. My practice was then and afterwards to discourage and indeed refuse all stage make-up of any kind except in heavy character parts. Special film make-up had not been invented then and when it began to appear I wouldn't have it used either. This was due to a curious belief I held very strongly then, though whether I should be able to do so now in the case of a 'dark' studio, with its multitude of arc-lights, I do not know.

I held that facial expression, more important in the silent days than it became when sound was added to the pictures, was not a matter of the eyes at all, and in fact the actual eye, so far from being under the control of the actor, is entirely beyond his power of changing in any respect. I know it is a common belief that the eye can be made to show all sorts of different expressions but I hold that that is not so. Except in the matter of tears the actual eye-ball takes no part in delineating any of the emotions. It just doesn't change its shade or colour or anything. It is in the tiny

interstices in the skin around the eyes that all changes of expression are registered. If this is so, it would seem to be bad practice to fill up those tiny interstices and almost invisible wrinkles with grease-paint. It is robbing the artists of their best means of telling the story.

The ban did not, of course, forbid the accenting of such things as eyebrows or even, a little, the lips. But apart from such minor repairs as nature had forgotten, the rule was: leave yourself as God made you; that's good enough for me.

About those tears. I occasionally read of certain mechanical or even chemical means of inducing them artificially—which is perhaps why the effect on the screen sometimes looks rather false. In all the years I worked with Alma Taylor I always found that whenever she had to express an emotion which, in real life, might result in tears she always felt it strongly and the tears came without any urging. It may not be generally so on the stage, of course, for there an actress is night after night re-enacting by memory the emotions she felt deeply in some far-away rehearsal. But in film-making we strive to record that actual rehearsal when the feeling is very real and the tears come naturally.

This was rather too poignantly illustrated once when I was rehearsing Alec Worcester for the film called, I think, *At the Foot of the Scaffold.* Worcester was a very good actor though he was rather a strange fellow in some ways. In one of the scenes in this film, in which he was impersonating a man who had evidently got himself into very serious trouble and become accused, falsely we must suppose, of murder, he had to work himself up, or be worked up, into a highly nervous condition at the thought of his impending fate. He did get worked up so very thoroughly that just at the moment we were ready to take the scene he suddenly went off into a violent fit of hysterics. Just for an instant I thought he was still acting, and then I went for him, hammer and tongs. I called him all the names I could think of, and that was plenty, and finished up with cold-water treatment. When he came round he was no further use that day, and I felt very queasy about the way he might behave on the morrow. He was, however, considerably chastened, and although I do not think he put up as good a show as he would have done the first day had he been able to go on, he did not do at all badly.

Alec Worcester was the husband of Violet Hopson, a good actress and a very nice woman, and they had two lovely children.

Of the few people from the actual theatrical world who floated into our company one of the very best was 'Billy' Saunders. I think his main experience at the theatre was in the 'front of the house'—in the box-office or some similar capacity—not on the stage. When he came to us he acted occasionally, as did everyone else at some time or another, but his greatest ability was more in the nature of what would today be called Art Director. For he was very clever in arranging and setting scenery, making sure of its suitability in every way and decorating and furnishing it appropriately. He was very fond of little 'accents'—a bunch of flowers or similar effective touch right down in the foreground at the corner of the picture. I used to laugh at him and call them 'Billyisms,' but I seldom removed them.

Lulworth Cove was visited again in 1912 and several films were made. We all liked that place for it was good for filming and very enjoyable between whiles. Like many of our contemporaries, we had a stock comic individual—in our case he was called 'Hawk-eye' and played by Plumb. *Hawkeye Swims the Channel* was one of his efforts, and he remembers that on arrival he found he had no passport and was turned back by a gendarme. One of our fellows was very nearly drowned at the Durdle Door and was dragged ashore by Alma and first-aided by the rest of the company. In an exciting cliff-chase picture Fitz had a bad giddiness attack and couldn't get down, until rescued by the coastguards. Plumb stood beneath him as a support. He says he could scarcely avoid this kind office as Fitz began it by standing on his fingers.

One of the first of my important pictures was when I was commissioned by the Gaumont Company to make a film of Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson's production of *Hamlet*. This was a considerable undertaking for those days. I was given a price to work to—I have forgotten how much it was but I believe I kept within it, which was in itself rather unusual. *Hamlet* as a play is almost all interiors and these were staged without much difficulty with Hay Plumb as producer, in our studio at Walton, to which the great actor and Lady Forbes-Robertson and all the other actors in the company made such daily excursions as were necessary. But I wanted something more than that and I decided beforehand to build the Castle of Elsinore on the sea coast. I went with a few helpers down to Lulworth Cove and there, among the rugged little hills and rocks overlooking the sea, we found a spot on which it was sufficiently flat to build the castle.

Next we engaged a small gang of those men who build in canvas and plaster such very convincing structures for big exhibitions as those at Earl's Court and elsewhere; buildings to look exactly like prisons or castles or cathedrals or anything that is wanted. These men took great loads of material down to Lulworth and made no bones about producing a veritable castle, ramparts and all.

In the meantime a rumour went round the village that a 'Sir' was coming to live in it with his entourage for several days. We engaged rooms for as many as could be accommodated at the Castle Inn, appropriately named, although ours was the only castle within a mile or two, and the rest were accommodated in various parts of the village. The whole place frothed with excitement and everybody wanted to know when the 'Sir' was coming and where the 'Sir' would stay and for how long.

The castle, when it was finished, looked as if it had been there for centuries and would stand for as long again. The 'ghost' had real rocks to walk upon, which he said hurt his feet badly, though he looked much too transparent to care for anything so concrete as that—when he has portrayed by double-photography. We all had a very pleasant time at Lulworth during those few days and when I went down there again a year or two later I had the greatest difficulty in finding the site of the 'Castle' for not the slightest trace of it remained. All the people were still asking for news of the 'Sir' and probably a few of them will remember his visit now, for nothing so grand had ever happened to Lulworth Cove before.

But before the castle was cleared away we used it for some of the scenes in a film of the *Princes in the Tower* with little Reggie Sheffield (Eric Desmond) as one of the young victims. However, most of the Lulworth pictures were of a more cheerful, not to say hilarious, nature like *Tilly and the Coastguards*, one of the last of the famous *Tilly* series, and there was another whose title I have forgotten in which Chrissie White played the part of a mermaid with a long fair wig and a plait, and there was a reversing film with a barrel which rolled a long way and smashed itself to bits over a cliff: then healed itself again and sailed right out to sea.

About this time (we are still in 1913), Sir Charles Wyndham, the famous actor-manager, honoured us with a visit. It was really rather sad, for this fine artist, whom I had seen and admired in so many delightful plays, came to Walton to make a film of his

favourite and most successful play, *David Garrick*. We were only too willing to do all that we could to help him but this great old gentleman had lost nearly all of his memory and could hardly take in any of the things we wanted him to do. He had a lady with him who was most patient and helpful but it was plain that he was past understanding the unusual conditions in which he was required to work.

Miss Mary Moore, who always acted with him and was then, or afterwards became, his wife, asked me point blank what age she would look if she took in the film her usual part with Sir Charles. I was obliged to answer truthfully that, in spite of make-up or any other artful aid, she would just look her age or a very little younger. She immediately threw up the part and picked out a pretty young lady from our own company to play it instead. Her first choice was Claire Hulcup but she afterwards changed her mind and asked if they could have Chrissie White instead as she was even more suitable for the part.

The two Hulcups were clever and adaptable people with plenty of resource and very pleasant to work with, for they slipped into our ways easily and soon became an integral part of our community. Claire assumed the surname of Pridelle, and she and her husband and Hay Plumb were the life and soul of the 'Vivaphone' until its end. They played many other parts as well and we were very sorry to lose them when they finally decided to leave us.

Still another actor-knight came to bask in the partly artificial sunshine of our studio about this time in 1913. Sir John Martin Harvey came with his company to make *The Cigarette Maker's Romance*, produced by Frank Wilson.

It is very important to realise that the making of a successful film from an existing stage-play is very far from being a mere photographing of the various scenes as they have appeared on the stage. It is true that a few inexperienced companies did attempt to do it in that way but the horrible mess which was the inevitable result soon proved a sufficient deterrent to others who sought to take that easy path. At that time of our *Hamlet* production for Gaumont I wrote a description which may be quoted now in this connection:—

'Words in the play must, of course, be translated into action in the film. It was necessary to interpolate all sorts of scenes, visualising episodes which are merely described in the play. The Queen's explanation that she has seen Ophelia gathering flowers by the

side of a glassy stream is, for instance, quite useless for the purpose of the silent pictorial version; we had to show the incident in actuality. Wherever possible we took the beautiful scenery painted by Hawes Craven for Forbes-Robertson as our model for the special cinematograph scenery which it was necessary to construct, but, where he had used flat cloths, we had to use solids, including huge carved Norman columns 2 ft. 6 ins. in diameter. Then, as you know, we built a complete reconstruction of Elsinore Castle at Lulworth Cove.

'Some other very beautiful outdoor scenes were taken at Hartsbourne Manor, the residence of Maxine Elliott, Lady Robertson's sister. The orchard scene was enacted in a private garden at Halliford-on-Thames, where the conditions we wanted were found—a beautiful old apple-tree, of such a shape and size as would compose well in our picture, overhanging a smooth lawn such as one would expect to find in the grounds of a king's palace. Ophelia "died" in the stream at Hartsbourne Manor, where, also, she was "buried"—in a dug grave beside a specially built church. The scene showing the Queen watching her gathering flowers was taken by the side of a private lake at Walton-on-Thames, where, of course, all the magnificent interiors were produced in our own studios.'

But although we made several films from stage plays we were by no means convinced that that was the best thing to do. It generally gave the advantage of a well-made plot, which was not at all easy to come by in original film scenarios, but we kept to specially written stories whenever we could get them. *Drake's Love Story* was a quite successful instance. The *Bioscope* of February 27th, 1913, started its description this way: 'One's first sensation on seeing this very fine production by the Hepworth Company is a feeling of gratification that the splendid chapter of English history which it represents has been immortalised in pictures not by a foreign firm but by a company essentially and entirely English. For too long we have been forced to endure the ignominy of having our first literary masterpieces and our noblest historical passages flung back in our faces, as it were, by people of another land, and apart from other considerations, we must all be ready appreciatively to recognise the laudable efforts of Messrs. Hepworth to remove this ancient reproach and to establish the art of film manufacture on quite as high and as national a basis in our own as in other countries . . .' Hay Plumb took the name part

in this film, and very well he looked and acted it, and the always charming Chrissie White played opposite him.

Plumb and Gladys Sylvani were the principals in a considerable number of the films we made around this time, but Chrissie and Alma Taylor were coming very much to the front, and Madge Campbell was doing good work in many 'Vivaphone' subjects as well as more serious work in several of the larger films.

It was during this general period—from 1910 onwards—that significant and important changes in the aspect of film affairs in this country were seething up all around us and necessarily impinging on our own situation. The same necessity today suggests that I should give a short account of them although—except so far as I may have been actually influenced by them—they do not really concern this story. Indeed, working more or less out in the country, I was to some extent only vaguely aware of what was going on and did not consciously take any steps to adapt our conditions to those of our contemporaries. This may or may not have been a good thing: it was certainly not an intentionally superior attitude, but I am not at all sure that it did not serve us well.

It seems that foreign countries got tired at last of importing English films and were retaliating by making their own and unloading them upon us—naturally enough. The trouble was that many of them were better than ours, but that, too, was better for all of us in the end. Film production in this country had got into a rut and, with very exceptional bright flashes, seemed content to stay in it. I am uncomfortably conscious that in my case there was a feeling that we were doing very nicely, thanks—principally on account of our foreign trade and particularly because of that anaesthetising American standing order, and had no sufficient urge to push out into wider seas. In one way and another that seems to have been true of all the English trade. So the foreigners got a start of us and when we did begin to wake up and rub our eyes it was all we could do to keep our places in the race—little we could do to recover ground we had lost.

It was, I think, the Americans who first began to encroach upon the chosen field of my company—romantic drama (but it was mixed up with any amount of other things). The Italian companies specialised in spectacular subjects—which they handled remarkably well, while a kind of midway place was taken by Nordisk, the great Danish company. The French, who had held

for so long the field of exciting tricks, were nearly out of sight and the Germans had not yet put in an appearance. This, it seems to me, was where we came to life again, but I am bound to confess the vagueness of my outlook and the very faulty memory which drives me to seek the aid of contemporary accounts.

I am on slightly surer ground in the matter of our own productions, when we led the way, so it is alleged, with *Till Death Do Us Part*, with Gladys Sylvani and Hay Plumb, and gave it more publicity than usual. These two artists were very well received, both for their considerable good looks and for their restrained and effective work; and this film was followed six months later by *Rachel's Sin*, with the same principals in the cast, and a greater strength of dramatic incident and action.

Another very important sign of the times was the increasing use of theatrical actors in films, partly, it must be supposed, because of increasing demand for artists and the scarcity of trained film-actors outside the ranks of the regular stock-companies. But their incursion was by no means an unmixed blessing for they were not graciously inclined to a new technique and were over-apt to the opinion that they already knew all that there was to learn. Among things they *had* to learn was the prime necessity of restraint of gesture: they had to learn not to *act*. In moving pictures it is most important to be able to keep still and only to move when necessary and then as little as possible.

A couple of actors doing nothing 'up stage'—that is, at the back—must do exactly *that*, for if one of them so much as flicks a handkerchief the attention of the audience will be immediately diverted to him and away from the figure in front where it properly belongs. This 'direction of attention' is one of the most important qualifications of a producer who knows his job. He can take and hold the attention just exactly where he wants it to be by the deft manipulation of small, quite unobtrusive movements opposed to stillness. Alternatively, think of the dramatic 'attention value' of the only still figure in a ballroom or a moving crowd.

It is, of course, understood that I am speaking only of silent film technique—these things may not necessarily be so important in sound films which have other means of accomplishing the same results. But I have often felt in a modern picture, that the director is sometimes obtaining effects by mere enormity of scenery and properties, which could just as well be attained by better attention to, perhaps knowledge of, such little things as these. Lavish

expenditure of money and wasted time is not a wise substitute for care about minor details: it may even wreck the enterprise which a little greater skill would have saved.

But that is only a parenthesis. To go back to where it began; I hope I have not allowed it to be inferred that the developments I have mentioned are a mere epitome of the occurrences of a single year. On the contrary they represent a crescendo of change which began in or around 1911 and continued for a long time—continued in some respects indeed right up to the year of the Great War. And it is interesting to note that while our pictures, for instance, were all the time growing larger and better, were being better acted and produced by better artists, we were also continuing to turn out a number of smaller films of the kind which had already attained great popularity because of their genuine feeling and appeal. In February, 1910, *Black Beauty* appeared again in a new edition, and at the end of the year in *Dumb Comrades*, there was another heart-stirring rescue of a little girl by a pony and a dog. In February 'Rover' died. Even his name was only an assumed one for theatrical purposes. His real name was Blair in commemoration of his Scottish origin. He was a true friend and a great companion, but my most persistent memory of him is the way every morning in life he jumped up on a washing basket by my dressing-table and waited and longed for a dab on the nose from my shaving brush. Then, with every expression of ineffable happiness, he licked off every trace of soap and waited for more.

During this period, and right up to the end, I used a device which attracted both favourable and unfavourable comment. This was the 'fade-off' of every scene at the end and the corresponding 'fade-on' at the beginning of the next. This gave the impression of a dissolve between each scene into the one following and created a feeling of smoothness—avoided the harsh unpleasant 'jerk' usually associated with change of scene. It was not a dissolve, of course, for that is an actual gradual mixing of one scene into the next, exactly in the manner of the old-time dissolving views.

For the sake of clarity I should point out here the technical meaning of the word 'scene.' A scene is a picture taken from one point of view by the camera without stopping. The camera may revolve (panoram) or even travel in a car or truck, but so long as the scene is continuous it is one scene. If it is interrupted by a

sub-title or other interpolation, it ends as one scene and continues as another.

It was held by some critics that my 'dissolves' wasted time and used up film-stock unnecessarily. On the contrary they very often saved time. For instance, a man walking out of one room and into another. In the usual method he must, for the sake of continuity, be seen rising from his chair, walking across to the door, opening it (change to next scene), coming into the room, perhaps closing door, crossing to the centre where the action is to continue. My double fade covered almost all this; really speeded up the action while seeming to make it smoother, and saved, besides time and footage, the jerky change from one scene to the other. Alternatively in a long smooth sequence, an unexpected jerk may be dramatically important and then it can be used with redoubled effect.

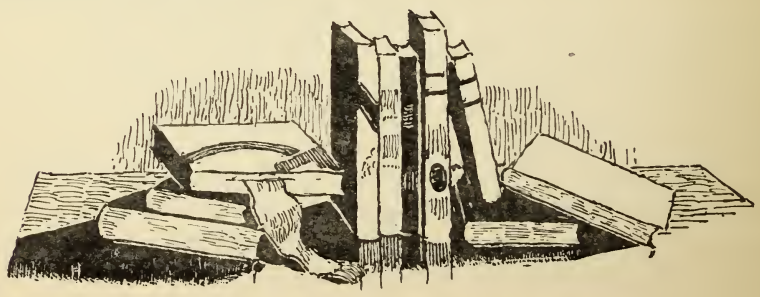
Another favourite device of mine, of which—with the fade—most people left me in sole enjoyment was the 'vignette.' I had found by an early experiment that a soft vignetted edge all round the picture was much more aesthetically pleasing than a hard line and the unrelieved black frame. Once, long ago, when Charles Pathé came to see me and I showed him one or two of my very early films, he said in effect—for he had very little English—'Why need those small houses be so ugly? There is no reason why, for this film, they should not have been pretty cottages.' I never forgot that. Always, all my life since, I have striven for beauty, for *pictorial* meaning and effect in every case where it is obtainable. Much of my success, I am sure, is in the aesthetic pleasure conveyed, but not recognised, by the beauty of the scene and generally mistaken for some unknown other quality in the film. It is like music with modern picture-plays : many people do not hear it at all, but it may add a great deal to their enjoyment, unless it has the opposite effect and does quite the reverse.

About the vignette: it is produced by a carefully adjusted little frame just in front of my lens, which, being so close, is entirely out of focus and merely gives a pleasing soft edge to the picture. But the drawback was that I could no longer use my 'fade-out' in the ordinary way, for stopping down the lens naturally brought the little frame progressively into focus and spoilt the effect. For those who are interested, the answer was a photographic 'wedge'—a strip of glass, black at one end and clear at the other with infinite gradations between them, and this was arranged to slide from clear to black before the lens by just pulling a string, and so

produced the gentle black-out without affecting the appearance of the vignette frame.

Perhaps the greatest menace to the homogeneity of the silent film was the necessity of titles to explain what could not be conveyed pictorially. They should never be used unless it is practically impossible to tell some part of the story without them. They are like what a lie is said to be: an abomination unto the Lord but an ever-ready help in time of trouble. In careless hands the time of trouble happened much too often and it was much easier to slip in a title than do without it at the cost of making the scene again properly.

I know it may be said that the silent film is dead and buried long ago: why worry about it now? But the silent film is resurrected and, in the hands of a thousand enthusiastic amateurs, is going through all the joys and tribulations it suffered with me and my contemporaries before these critics were born. If anything I can say may be of use to the amateurs I am not going to be stopped from saying it. The 16 mm. film may be a most valuable training ground for future 35 mm. experts. It may conceivably even take the place of the larger film in due course. To every 16 mm. camera-man I send my most enthusiastic salutations. Go on and prosper! You are the pioneers in a very valuable enterprise. For the time being you must use titles, but make them as carefully as you possibly can, so that their unworthiness as part of a moving picture may not be too obvious. Never use a title if the meaning can be made clear in film without being long and tedious. Never use a title to state what the scene itself is about to state. Use it where necessary to record what speech would say if sound were at your command, and use it to tell of the lapse of time if that must be told. But *don't*, if you can help it, say '—Came the Dawn.' And don't say 'End of Part I—Part II will follow immediately.' Because it never does.



CHAPTER 12

BEFORE I began on this rough and very incomplete résume of the general condition of the English film trade in the period from 1910 onwards, and was led on from that to a generalisation on the silent films then and their modern counterpart in 16 mm., I was dealing with *Drake's Love Story* at the latter part of 1912. Then the very successful *Oliver Twist*, directed by Thomas Bentley, was the fore-runner, as I have said, of several other Dickens films, most of which, by the way, had already been produced by other firms and were to be followed again by many others. The next one on our list was the dreadfully difficult story of *David Copperfield.*

Bentley certainly loved his Dickens and there is no gainsaying the fact that he turned out a great deal of very good work which rebounded considerably to his credit and also to ours. He was a rum chap but I found him very pleasant to work with. He went to Dover among many other places in the making of this film. When he came back he told me that he had found the very house that Dickens had described. I remember the joyful glee with which he recounted how he had managed to secure *in the picture*, the fascia board upon it saying that it was 'the House immortalised by Dickens as the Home of Miss Betsy Trotwood.' I do not think he ever understood why I received this news with so little enthusiasm.

There came to see me at this time a wonderful little boy with masses of curly hair and a most angelic expression. He was a delightful child with the name of Reggie Sheffield and he was tremendously interested in 'wireless' which had scarcely been heard of then. He had a little 'set' with which he could sometimes pick up morse from some unknown station. With his childish imagination he would picture some great ship in distress, or maybe only making port. He brought with him a slightly older boy, an awkward fellow named Noel Coward whom I disliked immediately. I looked down upon him then: I look up to him now with

veneration and respect as one of the most amazingly clever people of our time.

Reggie Sheffield, under the film name of Eric Desmond, was cast for the part of the young Copperfield in the early part of the film, but direction failed there, for he too often looked at the camera or the producer when he was spoken to. Either of these faults should be the instant signal for the retaking of the scene. There is no excuse for not doing that. Reggie played in several other films for us before returning, to my sorrow, to his native America and he did not again repeat those faults. I hear that he now has a son exactly like he was at that age, playing at present in 'Tarzan' pictures.

'Copperfield' was another success in spite of the great difficulties of dealing with such a complicated and diffuse story, and it was followed by others of the same line which I will mention as I come to them. In the meantime there was *The Vicar of Wakefield* which Blanche MacIntosh cleverly adapted for me in August, 1913. It was a very pleasant little picture of gentle people with no great strength of incident. She also made a very good adaptation a few months later of *The Heart of Midlothian* which was well acted and well received, and then the same lady branched off on her own account with an original scenario specially written for us, with a skilful eye upon the histrionic material available in our stock-company. This was called *Time, the Great Healer*, and it was played by Alma Taylor, Tom Powers, Stewart Rome, Chrissie White and Violet Hopson, the very cream of the company. It was a pleasing story on somewhat conventional lines, but none the worse for that, and it gave ample opportunity for the various players to exploit their strongest capabilities to the best advantage.

Tom Powers came over from America at the suggestion of Larry Trimble who very strongly recommended him to me as a most useful actor of the type which was called on the stage at that time, 'juvenile lead.' Larry thought that both he and I might use him with great advantage. He was indeed an exceedingly nice boy who acted well and proved a valuable acquisition to our company of players. He had a much more powerful part in *Morphia* which was written for him by the same lady and produced by me. I remember it most for the fact that I was able to obtain without difficulty from a local chemist, a tube containing a considerable quantity of morphia tablets, so that the film might be as accurate

as possible in an important detail. That is another instance of the difference between those times and these.

I alluded some while back to the American standing order for our films as being in effect 'anaesthetising.' Appropriately, it came to an end while we were finishing *Morphia*. I once wrote a film scenario myself called *The Basilisk*. The name part was played by William Felton and the thing I best remember about it was the very sinister effect I obtained, as he sat at a table facing the camera, by lighting his cadaverous face with brilliant green light through a hole in the table top. The 'green,' of course, was supplied by stain in the finished print. I haven't mentioned this film before because it was not at all a good one and it was my only effort at writing for the film. But I wrote a story once of which I was inordinately proud. I was very young indeed and I was inflamed by the offer of a prize in some child's periodical. It was to take the form of a bound volume for the whole year in return for a short original story. I got down to it. I chewed the handles off several pens, struggled with the difficulties of plot construction and sentence building and eventually evolved a tragic tale upon which I bestowed the glorious title of *The Tragedy of Trundletown*. I was as proud of this effort as I have ever been of a film since—in fact I should think it must have been very like a rubbishy film in embryo. It was with difficulty I lived through the long days and weeks till the magazine at last arrived. I scrambled through page after page until I came to my story. My glorious title had been changed to *Poor Gertie* and all my joy in life was dead. I have hated editors ever since.

Early in 1914, or perhaps at the end of the previous year, I personally produced for the Ideal Company, a film called *The Bottle*, written, I think, by Albert Chevalier and certainly played by him. Chevalier was an exceedingly nice man and a wonderfully good actor, and although he was temperamental and sometimes difficult he was on the whole a good fellow to work with. I think he liked me and we got on very well in this film which was quite a good job of work and was most enthusiastically received by the brothers Rowson, for whom it was made.

Chevalier was responsible for the plot of *My Old Dutch*, which was based upon one of his most popular songs. It was probably put into script form by Larry Trimble who produced it, with Chevalier in the principal part, for the Ideal Company, to follow *The Bottle*. And I made another film with Chevalier on another

of his stage *scenas*, called *The Fallen Star*, which was full of excellent work on his part. He was a really great artist as well as a thoroughly good fellow, and it is an honour to have worked with him.

In the early part of 1914, I also produced two more films from the prolific pen of Blanche MacIntosh, a powerful and dramatic story with an important lesson in morals, and one with an entirely different theme called *Love in the Mist.* Meanwhile Bentley produced another Dickens film for us, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, with such members of our company as were suitable to the parts, and made what was generally conceded to be the best of his three, followed by yet another in *The Chimes*, before the year came to an end.

It was the fatal year of the outbreak of the biggest war the world had ever known and it heralded, rather curiously, an important increase in film production, though it was unlikely that the war was the cause. It probably just happened that the conspicuous success of a few films made from well-known plays or books led to a general run of productions on the same lines. That, I think, was certainly what happened in our case. I was never pre-disposed to the transplanting of film plots from another and different medium, holding that the course most likely to be satisfactory was the direct writing of material ostensibly and actually for the medium in which it was to be used. But public demand became too clamant to be ignored and I decided further to try out this alien method and see where it would lead us.

One of the many sad results of the outbreak of war, a very sad one from my point of view, was the sudden withdrawal of Larry Trimble and his colleagues back to America. Their presence in this country for the two or three years they were here had been a great pleasure and happiness to me, and, more than that, a real incentive and encouragement. I have no doubt they were right to leave while the leaving was good, but I missed them very badly.

Captain Baynes, who was perhaps more responsible than anyone else for persuading me to devote more and more of our efforts to the making of films from currently popular plays and to splash large quantities of posters and other publicity upon them, had been on the staff for some months when he called upon me at my house one evening. He asked me if I would like a St. Bernard puppy. I said I had always had collies and had no experience of bigger dogs, but when he put his hands in the two outside pockets of his waterproof and pulled out two puppies, one in each hand,

Ronald Colman and Alma Taylor in 'Anna the Adventuress'

George Dewhurst in 'The Tinted Venus'

and said I was welcome to whichever one I chose, my defences all broke down. For they were the most adorable things in the puppy line I had ever seen and my wife fell in love with them on the spot and so did the children. We chose the dog and in due course Baynes put the other one back in his pocket and left 'Sturdee,' as we promptly called him, in his new home. He grew up to be a glorious specimen of his noble race and he was my indispensable companion for many years, and though he did not take any 'star' part in films he often 'walked on' in minor roles or strolled about in the background. I am sorry to say he once or twice disgraced me by hurting children in over-exuberant demonstrations of what was supposed to be affection and got me into trouble with the police on one occasion, when they took me to court and suggested he ought to be destroyed. But while I was dreading the worst and wildly wondering how I could possibly evade it, he got off with a caution and set my spirit free.

The war, of course, played the dickens with most of our affairs and arrangements. For one thing it early drained away the younger members of the staff and although they were less important than many of the others, the work often had to be done by those others or by some different substitute. I call to mind a curious instance of this. I think I have mentioned that our method of drying was to wind up the wet film as it came from the developing machine, take it on its spool up to the drying-rooms and there festoon it on the hooks strung on wires under the ceiling. I had all along been intending to make the developing machines complete by linking them with drying-banks operating in close conjunction with them, but that project had somehow got postponed in the more exciting affairs of making film pictures and running a business. Meanwhile the hand-work was quick and not very difficult, but several youngsters had to be allocated to it.

I saw that they and many others would soon be withdrawn and I determined to make the drying arrangements automatic and linked mechanically to the developing machines. The scheme was easy to work out but it was difficult to get made anything mechanical. I wanted dozens of brass tubes with hundreds of flanges on them for the film to travel along. I obtained the tubes and got 'blanks' of approximately the right size for the flanges. But they had to be machined to exactly the right dimensions and shaped so as to lead the wet film on without damaging it.

Alma Taylor volunteered to do any work she could when she

was not acting. So I set up my big lathe for her, showed her how to 'chuck' the 'blanks' for the flanges, and I set the tools in the slide-rest so that they could only be fed up against fixed stops, and showed her how to get on with it. She turned those hundreds of flanges exactly to dimension and then I heated them up and shrunk them one at a time in position on the long tubes. 'Pretty sort of film star' some people will say, but I thought it was pretty good, and I still think so.

One of the drying-machines was soon set up and it worked well. The wet film came up through a hole in the floor direct from the troughs below, dried without help and wound itself up on spools. Output was quickened and workers freed for other things.

For some curious reason, as I have said, which now seems very difficult of explanation, the onset of the first World War corresponded in time with the coming into fashion of film pictures made from well-known stage plays or from recently published books. Whether it was an understandable desire to cash in on popularity already acquired or only a result of the paucity of original material suitable for the purpose, I cannot be sure; probably it was a little of both. I remember I was very strongly urged by friends whose opinion I valued to look to books or the stage for material.

I realised that that would always mean the rebuilding of the story entirely, for the stage and book technique is necessarily very different from that of the studio. We had a clever scenario writer at hand and that difficulty was easy of solution. After considerable thought and discussion, I took the advice of my friend Baynes, who had first put the idea to me, and very strongly urged that I should at least try it out with that enormously successful book, *Comin' Thro' the Rye*, and I asked him to get in touch with the authoress, Helen Mathers, whose real name was Mrs. Helen Reeves. He did so and eventually purchased the film rights for five years for a sum that did not appear unreasonable. We had, as I have pointed out, dealt with several other books before and made them into films, but these were all books of which the copyright had expired and there was no question of payment for the use of the material.

This was a different matter. Copyright now in any original work 'subsists,' as they call it, during the life of the author and for fifty years after his death, and he, and afterwards his heirs, can do anything he likes with it and demand any price he can get for

an outright or partial use of it. So we acquired the rights of *Comin' Thro' the Rye* for a limited period to adapt it and produce it as a film. Blanche MacIntosh again turned her art to the making of a working script—by no means an easy matter, but she was very successful—and I produced the film with Alma Taylor in the principal part. With the rather reluctant consent of Mrs. Reeves, I dealt with the story as up to the date of that time and dressed the characters in modern clothes; for I did not see the necessity of going to the extra trouble and expense of dating it back some fifty years and making it a 'costume' piece, which the cinema industry was never at all inclined to favour.

Perhaps I was wrong there, for many people objected to the introduction of a motor-car in a story that their children had known and loved very many years before such a thing was invented. But if you have heard at all of *Comin' Thro' the Rye*, it isn't this version of which you will be thinking. A much more ambitious film was produced many years later and of that I will tell when I come to it.

Nevertheless there were thousands of people who had no previous memories to inhibit them, who liked this film tremendously and our first venture into the market-place where sole rights are purchasable was such a pronounced success that there was no difficulty in the future in persuading me to venture again. Helen Mathers, the authoress, was particularly pleased with the film version of her book—I think she was rather inclined to 'see' herself in the part that Alma played so convincingly! Anyhow, she pulled some strings which were to her hand and Queen Alexandra commanded a performance of the film in her presence.

This took place, if I remember rightly, at Marlborough House, the scene of my first glimpse of royalty, when I was only a boy and she, this most beautiful lady—was the Princess of Wales. I do not know directly what she thought of it, but Helen Mathers, with shining eyes, reported that Her Majesty had been very pleased indeed with it. A week or two later I received the special tie-pin which goes to people in royal favour on these occasions, so I was duly gratified and I have kept the tie-pin ever since.

After the undoubted success of *Comin' Thro' the Rye*, which was a complete vindication of friend Baynes' contention about the purchase of film rights in currently popular books, I willingly agreed to the purchase of the rights of *Iris*, a very dramatic Pinero play with an almost unbearably pathetic ending. It

may, of course, be quite properly argued that Iris, who was certainly no better than she should be, had only got just what she thoroughly deserved. But when a clever author and a clever producer, too, and a very charmingly innocent actress have spent the whole time of the play and of the film in building up the sympathy of the audience for the erring girl, she *seems* to deserve something better than a terrible fate.

Alma played the part beautifully and she was most admirably supported by Henry Ainley as Maldonado, though that was a part much away from his usual type. The scenery and dresses were entirely in keeping with the rich elegance in which the story was laid. With Pinero's consent I made an endeavour in the film version to soften the cruelty of the ending of this play. It gave me a great deal of trouble and I am not sure that it was at all successful. I wanted a view of the sea where there was a wide stretch of sand, the idea being that Iris, full of the thought of suicide and half demented, should be struggling towards the water when she sees, or thinks she sees, the man whom she has learned to love too late, and lost. It was not meant for a happy ending—there could hardly be that for Iris—but a kind of suggestion that there might be peace for her in the end.

I certainly would not have attempted it if I had known what trying to take photographs on the sea-shore in wartime would be like. It took very many weeks to get permission and then the nearest place where I could be allowed to take a camera to the sea was on the north coast of Flintshire in Wales. I don't know how many times we were stopped on the two or three hundred miles to the sea or how many soldiers, policemen and coastguards questioned our right and disputed our authority, but we got there at last and my heavy Metallurgique car promptly settled down in the soft sand and looked as if it meant to stay there until the tide came up and buried it for good. But we managed to get it away before the tide reached it, and before we did that we secured the scene, which wasn't up to much after all.

One week-end in the early days of the war there was a big scare in Walton because of great clouds of smoke seen to be pouring up from the side of the new studio or from the enclosed space between that and the old one. People began to rush to Hurst Grove from all sides under the assurance that Hepworths had got alight again. Miss MacIntosh who lived just opposite and had a key of the studios in case of accidents, let herself in and

telephoned to the fire brigade, who arrived much more promptly than they usually did for a real fire. Then the god out of the machine, in the shape of dear old Hales, the handy man, the stove-tender and general fellow-of-all-work, strolled casually out and wanted to know why a man could not trim the furnaces with a little small-coal without causing all that ——— fuss!

CHAPTER 13

For the screen version of Pinero's next play, *Sweet Lavender*, it was necessary to take a few London scenes in Fountain Court, Temple, a typical little garden much frequented by the guardians of the law. Being nothing if not courteous, we humbly begged permission from the powers that were, applying, as is right and proper, to the highest authority available. We were met with a most peremptory 'certainly *not*.' So we held a council of ways and means to consider the various possibilities. First there was a visit in mufti, so to speak, to the sacred spot to observe and report upon conditions there—direction of sunlight at various times, best positions for the camera on the one hand and for the actors on the other in each of the views it was desired to take. Particularly did we want to know how the place was guarded. This last, the most important point, proved to be the easiest, for the uniformed custodian was observed to make a round of all the gardens here, which took him about one hour, before he returned again to any one spot.

It was decided that I must not take any part in the operations as it wouldn't do for me to be caught. So the others, with Geoff. Faithfull at the head, took charge and engaged a room at a nearby pub where the actors assembled and robed themselves for the fray. A couple of cabs were engaged and told to stand by. At the prearranged moment, that is when the keeper had just finished at the spot selected for the first shot, the cabs full of actors streamed on to the place of action. Every scene had been carefully rehearsed beforehand and they were to be dealt with in the order arranged.

Camera-man took up his spot and the actors theirs. The scene was taken and all moved on to the next position, following in the wake of the unconscious keeper. All the scenes were secured in their order and the participants were back in their dressing-room-pub before he got round again to the first position. Nice work, I thought.

Once when I was 'directing' Albert Chevalier and Henry Ainley in a scene from *The Outrage*, a war picture which Chevalier had written, there was a moment when I could not, in words, make them understand exactly what I wanted. In a sudden rush of enthusiasm, I seized one of their swords and struck the attitude and expression I had in mind. Chevalier said: 'Good gracious! The man is an artist!' High praise indeed from him; it covered me with blushes under which I crept back to my camera. *The Outrage* was a powerful short story, laid in a period of chivalry and romance, with a terrible incident which had its reflection in several of the current stories of German atrocities.

Although we produced a large number of war-subjects at the instance of the Government, especially later on, we by no means neglected the needs of the general public for relaxation in this time of stress, as I have already said. But there was one short topical which we made on our own account and without any other prompting than the excitement of the times. It was called *Unfit or The Strength of the Weak*, and we produced it very quickly, for it was written overnight and put in hand the next morning. The principal scene was laid in a part of Walton called Cowey Stakes, appropriately enough, some low-lying land beside the river where the victorious Roman armies were said to have crossed it so many years ago. It was played by Stewart Rome, Marie de Solla and Violet Hobson, and Tom Powers played, very well indeed, the role of a young man, refused by the army and afterwards conspicuously brave in the service of his country at home, a theme very often used as the war wearily continued, due perhaps to our instinctive sublimation of some of our own unconscious hopes. The length of this film was 1,175 feet and it was published on October 15th, 1914.

Almost at the same time we produced *His Country's Bidding*, a drama of 1,750 feet, whose lesson may be deduced from the title. But it is also a very strong love-story with marital duty triumphant in the end over passionate love. Here we had Stewart Rome again with Alma Taylor and Harry Royston. And then, to even things

up a bit, still in the same month, we had a rousing 'comic' called *Simkin Gets the War Scare*, with Tom Butt in the name part and a length of 525 feet.

These three 'Contributions to the War' were described under the flaming cover of a huge union jack, with the important dates of publication, but so well known did we evidently think we were that there isn't even a mention of our address.

But in the synopsis of *The Baby on the Barge*, which came out in the following year (1915), we had sufficiently regained our modesty to submit our full address, '2, Denman Street, Piccadilly Circus, London W.1.' This was another powerful story by Blanche MacIntosh who used a quite different version of the jealousy theme to which she was rather addicted. It is the first time, I think, that the picturesqueness of barge-life and canal scenery was called into play for film work. Alma Taylor, with a baby not named in the cast, played the wrongfully-suspected wife, and Stewart Rome the husband who suspected her on very flimsy evidence. Lionelle Howard, then a rather recent recruit to the company, was her brother, whose suspicious action, after thinking he had killed a man in self-defence, led to the trouble. Also in the cast were Violet Hopson, Henry Vibart and William Felton. The length was 3,000 feet. Vibart, if not exactly in the stock-company was certainly of it, and he was very popular and very dear to all of us.

I am, of course, passing over dozens of films in various stages of production about this time—only mentioning an occasional one here and there which seems to indicate the general trend of our work. It is to be assumed, if you please, that we were always going on as before, but at greater length, and increasing in solid value.

While I was writing this I received a letter from a man who was compiling a series of books for the British Film Academy about films in the early days, and he had been unable to obtain any information about 'editing' silent films. He had been told to ask me if I would be willing to supply it. Then I realised to my surprise that I knew nothing whatever about editing. None of my films had ever been 'edited.' Editing in film production means broadly, cutting out unnecessary pieces and joining in and rearranging others to get the best effect.

I always held the view that the editing should be done in the original script, before ever an inch of it goes under the camera. I had heard of producers exposing ten thousand feet or more for

a five thousand foot film and then cutting the scenes short, or out, to bring it down to the prearranged length. This seemed to me to be all wrong and not merely on the score of economy. When an artist starts to paint a picture he does not select a canvas twice the area he wants for the finished work. On the contrary he spends a very great deal of thought and attention on the arranging of the various parts of his design, the balance of masses, the shape and direction of lines, the light and shade, the contrast of colour and the whole question of what he calls his 'composition' before he puts a brush to his palette. It stands to reason that if he attempted to cut down his canvas after he had painted it he must of necessity leave out something which at first he had thought to be important.

So I gave the same thought and attention to my script. I re-transcribed every word of it myself, chewing over every line in my mind, cutting out and rearranging the pieces as seemed to me to be best and stopping and forcing myself to visualise every little scene as it was to appear on the screen. I even estimated its length and jotted that down on the paper. So when I went on the floor I knew exactly what I wanted, where every actor was to stand at the beginning of the scene, where and at what cue he was to move and, of course, what he was to portray *not* how he was to portray it—that was his business, not mine: I am not an actor. One thing I had to be specially careful about; what I called the various 'boiling points' of the different artists. I knew from experience that some of them come to the peak of their endeavour after, say, ten rehearsals while others boil up after three. Also that if they once pass the peak, you never get such good work out of them again in that scene. So the 'early boilers' had to be tactfully asked to stand aside for a bit while the 'simmerers' were poked up a little and all brought to the boil at the same moment! That is one of the advantages of a stock-company: you get to know these things!

Nevertheless, it did frequently happen that for failure in this or some other respect it was advisable to repeat a scene, and then I wrote on my script which 'take' was to be printed though, of course, the others would be held in reserve.

When I was rearranging the script in the beginning I wrote in every sub-title and every spoken title which was to appear in printed words on the screen. The actors were instructed to use this wording where it occurred; in all other places they were

encouraged to use their own words—any which came natural to them within the emotional framework of the scene.

Here I come to one of my most peculiar peculiarities. I never saw a single 'rush'—never had anything to do with any of the scenes after they were photographed until they were all joined together in their proper order with all the titles and sub-titles in place—in short, the whole thing completely finished. I am not asking you to believe that this is a good plan: I am quite sure it was good for me.

To me it seemed, before I started to photograph a picture, that the whole thing stood up before me as a kind of misty mosaic for which I had to construct the various little pieces to be fitted into it afterwards. It had in my mind a kind of balance which I dreaded to disturb. I felt that if I had physical sight and knowledge of these little pieces as they were finished—bits of the concrete mixed up with what was still abstract—the balance of my mental conception would be upset; I should lose my sense of proportion.

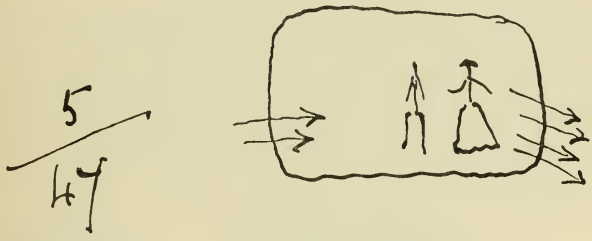
I realise that all this may appear very egotistical, even conceited. I don't care. I am writing this book for my own pleasure and I am getting a great deal of pleasure in chewing the cud of my past endeavours. I am not hoping that it can give anything like that pleasure to you, though I feel very flattered that you should have persisted so far with it. But I think that an autobiography must at least be honest in attempt, apart from what it may achieve in actual fact, and that it is up to the reader to cull from it what he can of interest or information or whatever it may be that he is hoping for and forgive the rest. If I try to hide anything under the bushel of affected modesty it will only spoil my pleasure and add nothing to yours.

I will admit that this stoical refusal to see any 'rushes' of my films, or to look at any finished sequences, was heroic self-sacrifice which was very difficult to bear, for I am only human and never was any man more keen than I to gloat over his work the moment it was born.

I see that Alfred Hitchcock, a great producer, has recently been preaching much the same gospel, from the same text; that the proper time to cut a film is at the script stage before ever it is photographed, but I don't think he would be able now to carry it as far as I did. The exigencies of film work with sound must at times call for close-cutting in the after stages. Two figures arguing

heatedly would probably be best built up in excitement by cutting sharply backwards and forwards from one to the other. Even there I would rather, for the sake of smoothness, keep them both in view in one longer shot and allow the expressions of both faces to be studied together.

Smoothness in a film is important and should be preserved except when for some special effect a 'snap' is preferable. Unreasoned jerkiness is tiring and unconsciously irritating. The 'unities' and the 'verities' should always be observed, to which I would add the 'orienties.' Only the direst need will form an excuse for lifting an audience up by the scruff of its neck and carrying it round to the other side, just because you suddenly want to photograph something from the south when a previous scene has been taken from the north. The preservation of direction of movement is also very important. If a man goes out of a room by a door on the right and goes straight into another room he should, of course, make that latter entry from the left. But the second scene might be taken a month later than the first, so that detail may easily be forgotten. The 'continuity girl' should look after that, just as she should note to remind the actor how far he had smoked down his cigarette in the earlier scene.



The cryptic diagram here indicates that the two characters have entered the scene from the left, and, having been joined by two others in the course of the action, leave it at the end of the 'take' by the right and coming 'down stage,' that is towards the camera.

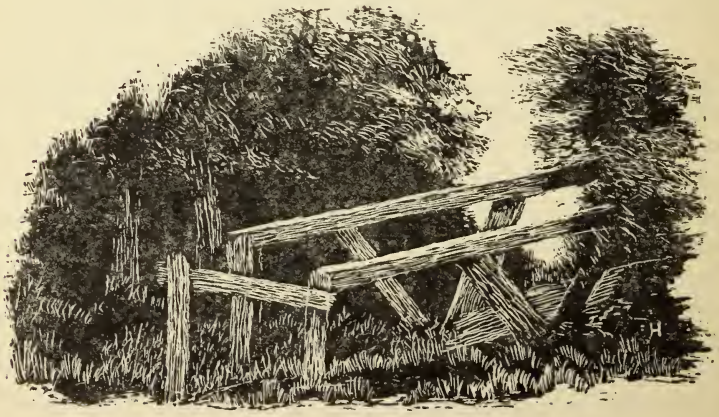
The vulgar fraction in the opposite corner is intended to show that the previous take *in this same set* was scene No. 5 and the next one in this set will be scene No. 47. That reduces the risk of forgetting to take a small but necessary shot and having to rebuild the whole set to photograph it later. Here I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to my excellent script-writer, Blanche MacIntosh (my long-term friend, Mrs. Hubbard), whose

writing I scarcely ever altered as I have said, although I always transcribed it for my own memorising purposes.

I remember once having a talk with Pinero about some play of his which I was hoping to make into a film. He was always wonderfully kind and polite, as really clever people usually are. He said that he need not remind me of the great importance of 'preparation' in play-writing or film-making. I agreed, though I hadn't the faintest idea what he meant. I took care to find out afterwards as soon as I possibly could. And afterwards I always arranged to 'prepare' beforehand—to lay down invisible tracks, so to speak—for the incident or adventure which was to come along later. It was like laying down ground-bait. You will have much better sport with your fishing if you go and attend to that the night before.

There must, of course, be nothing blatant about this 'preparation.' The audience will be entirely unaware of it and will not have the faintest idea what you are up to. When the situation spontaneously arises their minds will all unconsciously be attuned to respond to it, their eyes and ears agog for it. It will seem to come as a far more complete surprise than if you just sprung it upon them out of the blue. It will be much more effective and stimulating.

An autobiography must, as I see it, include some allusion to the author's religion, or lack of it; for either state, positive or negative, must have importance in the development of his life. My own attitude in this matter needs no long description. When I was a youth I took religion seriously. I sang in a choir—though now



I see it was more a love of part-singing than of the church—and I prayed hard at every opportunity. I firmly believed that I should in consequence receive tremendous help in the next world —which is still problematical—and a great deal of assistance in this, which I didn't get. I really needed help at that time and none was forthcoming. My faith fizzled out and I dropped it, deciding that the whole question was beyond my mental powers.

For among all the people I have read of there are hundreds of entirely different religions and all completely convinced that itself is the only true one. If all are wrong in the sight of the others it seems to me to be possible that all *are* wrong. But I am certainly not an atheist. I am, I suppose, an agnostic in what I take to be the true meaning of the word—one who simply *does not know*. I am unable to visualise a personal God, listening individually to the prayers of the millions of creatures struggling on this scrap of dirt called Earth. But that means nothing except the limitation of my own intellect—just as I cannot believe that time goes on for ever *or* that it comes to an end, for in that case what happens afterwards?

My own spiritual need is only by some means to be able to express my gratitude. I have altogether failed in the writing of this book if I have not made it clear that my life on the whole has been a happy and satisfying one. I have had my ups and downs of course, but the ups have been greater than the downs. From the beginning I have had *fun* all through. Nearly everything I have done or touched has been something of a 'lark.' If I die tomorrow I shall have to admit that I have had a square deal and more than a square deal; I certainly have not been cheated. But this tardy acknowledgment is not sufficient. I have to say 'thank you' to someone.

Now I certainly believe in a power, a spirit, a something responsible for all the marvels of the universe, marvels beggaring all description which surely cannot have happened by chance. But you cannot offer thanks to an abstraction, or at least I cannot. That is much too difficult. There has to be some 'name' to whom thanks can be addressed. So I am obliged to fall back upon the simple formula I learned at my mother's knee. And while I am expressing my gratitude—counting my blessings is what it really comes to—I feel I may as well voice my 'lively sense of favours to come' and put up a prayer for some of the little things I need.

It is curious to note that these simple requests are very often

successful, too frequently to be accounted for by the ordinary laws of chance. That however need not imply any extra-mundane influence. The still only partially understood workings of the subconscious mind may take a hand in many of them, leaving chance to do the rest. The mass of evidence about faith healing is too great to be disregarded and our own subconscious minds seem to be the means by which it is accomplished. 'Suggestion,' they say, is the trigger which sets them off. It is apparently difficult to get at the subconscious mind but those little petitions may touch the trigger.

All this has nothing whatever, or very little, to do with picture production, and now I will return to my main theme.

CHAPTER 14

It has been suggested that I should give some short description of my method of working upon a film production in those days, since it differed in many respects from that of my contemporaries—which is not, of course, to hint that it was any better than theirs and merely implies that the comparison might be informative but not odious.

In this connection there is a little incident which jumps to my memory, probably because it tickled my conceited vanity. I was strolling past a partition which hid me from a group of three or four of my producers and before I realised it I overheard what they were saying. One said: 'He is always so beastly cocksure: knows exactly what he wants and jolly well means to get it.' 'Yes,' said another, 'and the trouble is the beast is always right.' It dawned upon me that this was my cue for silent departure, with probably a silly fatuous smile upon my face at the slightly sinister compliment.

But I think I see what they meant. I did always know what I wanted and certainly did intend to secure it. This was roughly the method. When I read a book or saw a play or studied a synopsis, there came into my mental vision a fairly detailed and consecutive pattern of what the film would be like. That pattern stuck in my head and gradually crystallised out into a definite form, while the working scenario was being prepared for me.

The next step was to complete the crystallisation process. I chewed the scenario over bit by bit, suggested alterations and discussed them and finally I took it home and lived with it. At this stage I re-typed every scene, large and small, one page or more to each, wrote in titles and sub-titles by hand wherever they seemed necessary, and *saw* each detail of every set-up just as it was to appear. It was an imaginary picture but it was complete.

Well, having got my personally transcribed scenario in treble form, that is in three books, one for me, one for camera and one

for art director, we were ready to make a start. Scenery and furniture got ready for 'sets'; itineraries prepared for exteriors (location, in modern speech), artists consulted and encouraged, and all the usual preparations made—all this, of course, was common to every studio.

Now it came to going on the floor and this is where my alleged foreknowledge came in. I was able to tell each actor where he was to stand, what his movements were to be and when, and give some indication of necessary gestures. The point I am trying to make is that I did not experiment with my actors, try them out first in one way and then in another and then clear them all off the stage and start over again. That is what breaks their hearts and shows up an incompetent director immediately. Then the scene was rehearsed quietly and gently as often as seemed necessary—I never possessed a megaphone—and when all the people were happy and comfortable in their parts, uncertainties smoothed away and 'inferiority complexes' resolved in confidence, then I set the camera exactly where I wanted it and gave the word to go.

In those silent days the director was able to give a great deal of help to his actors by quiet prompting while the scene was actually in progress, for emotions had to be expressed and reactions indicated without the use of words. That is utterly different now that all the words are spoken and the action suited to them.

But from all this it is not to be assumed that I was generally wedded to an indoor studio. The contrary was usually the case, for I would never work indoors if I could possibly get into the open air. It was always in the back of my mind from the very beginning that *I was to make English pictures, with all the English countryside for background and with English atmosphere and English idiom throughout.*

When the Transatlantic films began to get a stranglehold upon the trade over here it came to be generally assumed that the American method and style of production was the reason for their success, and the great majority of our producers set about to try to imitate them. The Americans have their own idiom in picture making just as they have their own accent in speaking. It is not necessarily better than ours and it cannot be successfully copied. We have our own idiom too which they could not copy if they tried. It is our part to develop along the lines which are our heritage, and only in that way can we be true to ourselves and to those qualities which are ours.

So it was that whenever I possibly could I packed apparatus

Alma Taylor and Shayle Gardner in 'Comin' Thro' the Rye,' at Walton

Another scene from 'The Rye'

and staff into a big car and set off into the country, Surrey or Sussex, Devon or Cornwall, wherever there was prospect of beautiful scenery within the environment of the film to be produced.

I do want to stress this point for it was not only true for me and my time but it is, I believe, always true for all time. We in England cannot make the films of foreign countries as they should be made, not for lack of skill or opportunity or material but for lack of inner understanding; of the sense and the feeling of their idiom. And they cannot make ours as well as they might be made, because they have not and cannot have the inner perception of our spiritual atmosphere.

Still, perhaps I ought to drop the gentle reminder—against myself—that these are, after all, only my own ideas, that I have always had 'funny' notions. I would never use electric light if I could get daylight, would never allow the use of make-up of any description, made the stock-company players do small parts when necessary, however 'big' the parts they had just been taking; and so on.

My earlier memories of the Walton studios, before they began to get entangled with visions of what are later called 'feature films,' are mixed up with all sorts of strangely different personages from Cabinet Ministers and great actors to barrow boys and costers. One very famous comedian came to have a film made of his ever-popular music-hall act—I won't quote his name because he may have some posterity who might not like to hear it mentioned in this way. When we got him on the stage we could not do anything with him at all—his alleged comedy was just a sobbing misery of sheer boredom. Over and over again we tried but he only got worse. Then someone who knew him whispered to me to send out for some brandy; plenty of it, for his friend, he said, was never much good unless he was thoroughly drunk. Much against my will I did so. The gentleman duly got drunk, very unpleasantly drunk, but as he progressed in inebriety his act became increasingly comic until he reached a stage when both his condition and his comedy became too outrageous to be borne.

Another comedian I remember was a complete contrast for though he was certainly not of the upper classes, he was a shy and friendly and very decent chap. He came with his equally nice little wife and it was delightful to see how kind and helpful she

was to him and how much he depended upon her for advice and counsel.

In the middle of one of the rehearsals he suddenly asked her whether she would advise him to wear his hat or not. Her reply is, I think, almost a classic of cockneydom. She said: 'Ow, 'av yer 'at on yer 'ead, 'Enry. Yer made yer 'it in yer 'at.' He did so and as far as I can remember, 'e 'ad another 'it.

As evidence of the infinite variety of the personages who strode for a brief hour upon the studio stage at Walton, let me lift a paragraph from the *Kinematograph Weekly* of 1915. 'Eminent people in Hepworth films:—Henry Ainley, Clara Butt, Hall Caine, Sir J. Forbes-Robertson, Martin Harvey, Violet Hopson, Lionelle Howard, Bonar Law, Stewart Rome, Kennerley Rumford, Sir F. E. Smith, Alma Taylor, Chrissie White and Sir Charles Wyndham.'

It was about this time that a trade paper promoted a popular competition to decide who was the favourite British film player. This was the published result of the voting: Alma Taylor, first, with over a fifth of the total number of votes; then, in this order, Elizabeth Risdon, Charlie Chaplin, Stewart Rome, Chrissie White, Fred Evans.

This was in 1915 which, be it remembered, was the second year of the first great World War. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* was reported as the masterpiece of that year—which it certainly was—but it was also described as Charlie Chaplin's year, but there is, of course, no contradiction in that for they occupied entirely different spheres. A note which marked a most remarkable and important change in the politics of the film world was to the effect that the 'open market' was suffering severely owing to the coming of the 'exclusive.'

These two terms require a little explanation for they have no meaning at the present time. Films were originally sold in the 'open market' to anyone who would buy, at so much a foot, without any reference to quality or value of the subject. First it was a shilling a foot, less 33⅓ per cent. to 'the trade.' This soon dropped to sixpence net, then fivepence—at which there was a firm but ineffectual effort to fix it—and then fourpence, at which it stuck for years. But it came in time to be realised that the value of a film was not really a factor of length alone, but primarily of the interest of its material. That is so entirely self-evident now that it is difficult to realise that several years went by before anyone thought of it.

The open market film, since anyone could buy it, introduced unlimited competition between the purchasers of any really popular subject, reducing its value both to the buyers and to the producer. The 'subject' began to matter more than the 'length.' Thus was born the film with subject value—the 'feature' film as it came to be called. And this, from its very nature, could best realise its value by being sold exclusively to one buyer for each district, or for the nation, or for the world, according to circumstances.

Now it became really worth while to concentrate upon making feature films which were saleable according to their entertainment value and not merely like so much ribbon at so much a yard.

This was a real incentive to the making of good films and it is impossible to over-estimate its result for good upon the film industry as a whole. Unfortunately, however, it also resulted in the introduction of perhaps the greatest evil the industry has ever suffered from. For it was no sudden and complete change-over. Some makers were selling 'exclusives,' many were still clinging to the open market and many more trying to serve both masters—superimposing a few 'features' upon their regular trade of so-much-a-footers. This last was the course which was almost inevitably forced upon me.

But thus it came about that the middleman who had a large stock of small pictures upon his shelves, and bought up a big one to boost his trade, said in effect to his customers: 'If you want my big feature you must also book half a dozen of my small ones at the same time.' This was called 'block booking' and it transpired that booking dates receded further and further into the future until there were none to be had for eighteen months or two years after publication. It was what, I suppose, modern economists would call too many films chasing too few theatres. Anyway the result was that the capital sunk in the making of a big film would not begin to come back to the maker until about two years afterwards. It can hardly be wondered at that so many makers preferred to keep to their old policy of small pictures and quick returns and so helped to build up and succour the very evil which was bringing about their own downfall.

Nevertheless it was reported at the end of 1915 'the picture theatre in England, after seventeen months of war, is more firmly established than ever.' But the war years brought a large share of those troubles—other than the war itself—which war always

brings to any community. A large number of picture theatre companies failed, though often for other reasons than those directly connected with the war, and tax was imposed upon imported films as well as upon prints and raw film-stock, and entertainment tax was imposed upon the theatres. This was the most unkindest cut of all.

Although I have admitted by innuendo that my company was slow to take up the challenge of the specially expensive feature film made from copyright books and plays, it must not be assumed that we were still playing about with unimportant open market subjects mainly. On the contrary we had for some time been making lengthy and important pictures and had won great success with most of them. But I had always had the feeling that picture making was an art in itself and should depend upon its own original writers for its material. It was while I was waiting for those original writers to show up that I agreed to the making of such films from books as those quite successful Dickens films and the plays I have mentioned.

But it was gradually brought home to me—notably by my friend Baynes, the man with the mackintosh and the big dog—that I *must* break away from this inexpensive material and pay good money for books or plays that were already successfully in the eye of the public. In other words, cash in on the popularity already secured.

It was somewhere about the middle of the first World War—say 1916—that I had occasion to produce a film in which a portable typewriter would be conspicuous. I suggested to the Remington people that in view of the publicity value, they might care to make me a present of one of their portable machines to be used in the picture. They liked the idea, agreed to the suggestion and sent me the typewriter.

I used it, though not to any great extent, and then found to my dismay that for some reason—now entirely forgotten—I could not put the picture into production. So there was nothing for it but to take the typewriter back to Remington's. Of course I explained the situation and apologised and they were exceedingly nice about it. But they said they had no existing facilities for selling used machines, even so little used as this was, and in the end they said they quite understood the position and in the circumstances they would like me to keep the machine.

I have had it ever since, and if I say that its behaviour has always been worthy of the gracious manner of its coming to me, I shall not be guilty of exaggeration.

It has only one fault; it is a shocking bad speller.

A typical example of a good war-play was *The Man Who Stayed At Home* which ran for a long time at the old Royalty Theatre in Dean Street, Soho. The name part, played by Dennis Eadie, told of a man who was always being gibed at for not enlisting and going out to serve his country as every fit man should. He bore all this with exemplary patience which was mistaken for cowardice, but it turned out in the end that he had a wireless-set concealed in his fireplace and was doing noble and valuable secret service work with it. We bought the rights in this play and made a good film of it, and I have always been very grateful to it for it was the means of introducing my greatest colleague, Henry Edwards, to the Walton Studios, where he worked finely and very successfully until the end. He was carrying a not very important part in this play but he did it so supremely well that I was very glad to be able to persuade him to join us. All his acting work was excellent and he very soon took on production as well, and afterwards started a series of productions of his own side by side with me. Chrissie White became the leading lady in many of his pictures in the same way as Alma Taylor was usually mine, but we changed about occasionally when the films we were making seemed better suited that way.

In our screen version of *The Man Who Stayed At Home* which was produced by me, Dennis Eadie played his own part but most of the other parts were taken by the members of our stock-company. I don't think Eadie was very happy with us, which is worth remarking for that did not often happen. But the film was successful and helped to confirm the theory that stage plays were good material for us to work upon.

Nevertheless I still clung to the belief that they were not the only or even necessarily the best foundation for picture-plays. It is an argument which has never yet been settled, for there are always examples bobbing up to prove or disprove it either way.

The Pipes of Pan was founded upon a pretty fanciful little picture or picture postcard which was popular in the shops at the time. I produced the film, which was of no great importance but it comes to my memory now because of an ingenious trick which

I used to obtain a particular effect. The story was of the fanciful thought-pictures of a small boy which came to him when he played the pipes. One of his visions which I wanted to show, was of a number of fairy children playing round his heroine, the girl who was so kind to him and seemed to understand him so well. Alma Taylor was that girl, and the fairy children were supplied, I think, by Italia Conti. Among them was one whom I picked out at once as being a specially clever little dancer. She was about nine or ten years old and her name was Angela Baddeley! I wanted them to appear to be dancing on the surface of a lake. I fastened a little piece of very thin, optically worked and surface-silvered glass horizontally in front of the lens, just touching it and just below its optical axis. The dancing children were shown clearly but the grass they were really dancing on had disappeared and their inverted images were reflected as if in water. I hope this little trick will be useful to someone else some day—it was certainly very effective. It was very much cheaper than laying down a whole mirror large enough to cover the lawn and the reflections were softer and more pleasing.

Helen of Four Gates, from the novel by Ethel Holdsworth, was another of my productions with Alma Taylor but in an entirely different style, for what I really wanted in this case was to capture the wonderful atmosphere of the story. So we all went to Haworth —where Emily Brontë and her sisters had lived and where she wrote *Wuthering Heights*—for it was a somewhat similar atmosphere that I was anxious to obtain. As soon as we left Hebden Bridge and began to climb the hill to Haworth we seemed to feel the dour, cruel environment which I wanted. Up on the moor at the top it was far more intense and somehow it managed to get into the picture as I wanted it. It was one of Alma's best bits of work and I was pleased with the whole job. But it was not a popular film.

A better picture which gave her more scope was *Tansy*, a sheep-farming story on the Sussex Downs, written by Tickner Edwardes. Alma played the part of a shepherd girl and to get under the skin of it, she lived with a shepherd's family for some weeks and studied the work thoroughly. And she borrowed a sheep dog and brought it home with her so that he got to know her and obey her every word. There was much delightful pictorial photography in this film and here again the very atmosphere of the story really crept into it.

There was a curious technical incident in connection with *Tansy* which is perhaps worth recording. It was necessary for the purposes of the story to show the sheep-herding skill of the heroine and of her dog. This called, I felt, for one long scene rather than a number of short ones, for that would not be so convincing since the effect could be so easily faked. So what might have been a long sequence was taken in one scene of 398 feet, the equivalent in modern practice of 600 feet; just on seven minutes.

It was on the Sussex Downs and a place was chosen on the top of one hill overlooking a broad valley and another hill opposite. The scene began with Tansy standing at the entrance to a pen and the sheep were dotted like mushrooms all over the valley and on the far hill side. The dog was told to collect them and off he went at full speed. The camera was, of course, on a stationary tripod stand—tracking cameras had not been invented then—but it could be swung around on its revolving head in any direction. It kept the dog in focus right away into the far distance, until the sheep were all rounded up and collected and driven into the pen.

At this point at the trade show where, of course, there was no music or sound of any sort from the film, there was a round of applause from the audience, hard-boiled as most of them were. Geoff. Faithfull was the camera-man and for that long scene he did a real job of work, for to turn the camera steadily by hand for seven minutes and follow all the movements of dog and sheep at the same time was no mean effort of muscle and will.

There is no doubt whatever that that long scene absolutely held the interest throughout and it is interesting to see that the same technique has recently been re-discovered and hailed as a complete novelty.

I begin to be appalled at the number of these films: for though to recall them is interesting to me because I worked hard in them, I must call a halt; for they cannot be of more than slight interest to other people.

CHAPTER 15

By the time we were well into the third year of the war, 1916; in spite of the ever increasing difficulties which the war inevitably laid upon us, we did manage to produce bigger and better films than ever before. *The Cobweb* is a good example, a fine, strong and most interesting story from a play by Leon M. Lion and Naunton Davies. I had, too, as fine a cast as any producer could ask for: Henry Edwards, Alma Taylor, Stewart Rome, Violet Hopson and John MacAndrews with several others. The theme of the play is well suggested in something Edwards has to say:—'Better chaos than submersion. There's life, there's growth, comes out of chaos. But in this decaying world of yours, you are being strangled. You're all enmeshed like a swarm of flies in a monstrous cobweb —Civilisation.'

For the title of the film, *The Cobweb*, Geoff. Faithfull wanted to make an ornamental background, like those which came into fashion much later on. He put a number of twigs in a sort of frame, collected several big spiders from a garden opposite and left them all night. The next morning there were some lovely cobwebs, only needing tiny glistening dew-drops, which were easily provided by the fine spray from a borrowed inhaler, to make a perfect and most attractive title-page for the film. It would be the only title then, of course, for the long sheets of exasperating 'credits' were, happily, not invented until very much later.

The time was drawing very near when I should have to lose Geoffrey Faithfull who worked the camera for me. Stanley left a month or two earlier. I do not remember how I managed, but I should have had no difficulty in tackling the camera myself and that is probably what I did.

One of the very best of Pinero's plays, *Trelawney of the Wells*, gave me a great deal of trouble and a great deal of pleasure. The trouble was mostly in the getting together of the dresses and

scenery and furniture so as to be true to the period of the play, 1836, or thereabout. It was a delightful play and I think we made a good film of it. Alma gave a wonderful impersonation of the humble actress-girl and her strange entry into a pre-Victorian household, with all its prejudices and inhibitions, and she made the most of the dramatic situations which it involved.

The strangeness of her entry into that household was much accentuated, made more dramatic perhaps but certainly even less auspicious by the fact that she and her escort were caught in a tremendous downpour of rain just as they were arriving. The 'rain,' of course, was produced artificially as it is in modern studios but, needless to say, we did not originate the mistake which nearly all modern studios perpetuate by setting the rain shower in brilliant sunshine. Perhaps I should not write 'needless to say' for that sounds rather rude, but it is a fact that with all our crudities we did not make obvious mistakes of that sort. Rain does sometimes come in sunshine but only very rarely. Thunder does sometimes sound at the same time as its flash, but only when the flash is within a few yards of you. Perhaps these are details which do not matter, but to fastidious people they are annoying and it is much better to be correct when you are attempting to create an illusion of reality. (That's why I don't like a full band accompanying a heroine when she wanders out alone into the Siberian Steppes or the wastes of Sahara.)

The people who insist upon brilliant sunshine in spite of pouring rain have this much excuse for their defiance of the verities, that it is exceedingly difficult to make the artificial rain get itself photographed unless there is specular light to show it up. We had the same difficulty in *Trelawney*. The rain soaked the hero and heroine quite thoroughly and their consequent discomfort was sufficiently obvious, but the rain itself was invisible on the screen. So we resorted to a very drastic remedy. We laid the negative out upon a long bench, gelatine uppermost, and stroked it slantwise with two grades of sandpaper, fine and coarse. It was a truly horrible thing to have to do but it was extraordinarily successful. We had tried simpler things first, though even when milk was added to the water it wouldn't photograph like rain. But we had been in the film business from the beginning and we remembered that the very early films always showed 'rain' after a little while of use and we knew that that was due to surface scratches. There was the clue we had been looking for.

It was in 1916 too, that Blanche MacIntosh wrote *Sowing the Wind* from a play and this was produced by me during the year and met with considerable but not very conspicuous success. I am not very clear about it however and my memory keeps crouching back behind a defensive fence composed of the various and many troubles of the time, the difficulties of 'keeping on, keeping on' in the face of the ever-diminishing staff and the continuingly increasing demands of the war-racked country. Food was difficult to come by and many things were unobtainable. As far as I can remember this film, with the somehow faintly appropriate title, was the last one of all for which I had the help of my camera-man, Geoff. Faithfull. Anyhow, both he and his brother Stanley were called up in the early autumn of this year and from that there was no further reprieve.

This was a double loss to me, of course, and when in the following month Tom White was also irrevocably called in the same great cause, poor Henry Edwards was left as high and even drier than I. How we managed is nobody's business, as the saying is, and I doubt whether anybody can recall it now. But it is certain that we did manage, and we kept on turning out films which, by the grace of God, the people liked.

In October my indefatigable script-writer gave me another scenario to be getting on with, this time called *The Touch of a Child*, which sounds rather sloppy but, as neither she nor I are much given to that sort of thing, it probably 'turned out,' like a good pudding, sufficiently solid to stand up by itself.

It was in early October, 1917, that my wife died—the best and truest wife that any man could ever have had. Three months of very serious illness, from which at one time there seemed to be some hope that she might be recovering, proved to be too much for her remaining strength. I was left with three small children—the eldest not yet thirteen. After the funeral I could think of nothing better to do with them than to take them down to Lulworth Cove where we had often had such happy times. We got into a little cottage and did what we could to comfort one another. The eldest one, Barbara—she of *Rescued by Rover*—became at once a good companion and she and her sister have been that to me ever since. The sister, Margaret, aged eleven, had terribly fine golden hair, almost as fine as spider-web it seemed. I remember—I shall never forget—trying to comb it out each evening. It was

always hopelessly entangled. The boy was too small to know much about anything.

One day when we four were mooching along a country lane we were overtaken by a big car which, with shrieking brakes, pulled up just in front of us and four excited people streamed out and ran to us. I was not at all pleased to see them. They were Alma and Chrissie and Kimberley and my old friend, Bill Barker, who had had that bright idea to 'Cheer old Hep up.' In the face of that great kindness I had to give way and be glad. The two girls took the children in hand and the men took charge of me and they all did everything they could to make us forget. At the least they dulled the first sharp edge of grief, and in the end they took us home.

A personality that impinged upon me with considerable force during the first World War was that of Temple Thurston. The Government appeared to have got it into their heads that the end of the war might be brought nearer if a man like Thurston were to write a number of short films with a propaganda flavour. They introduced me to him and we settled down to a close collaboration. He was tremendously keen to find out all that he possibly could of the possibilities and practices of film production and particularly the relationship of author to producer and where the influence of the one ended and the other began. Seeing that he was a very nice fellow and that we got on very well together, I was just as keen to impart my views upon the subject to him and to discuss with him what I thought the function of the producer should be.

He practically lived in my studio nearly all day when I was at work and came home with me in the evening to continue our long talks upon every subject under the sun, but particularly films. He came to live at Walton so as to be on the spot but he had previously had rooms in London in Adelphi Terrace on the Thames Embankment. One evening when I went to see him there I told him how I had admired a view of the Lot's Road power station in the gloaming, its four tall chimneys dark against the setting sunlight, the brilliant effect of the water and the one dark tug-boat with its black smoke and its bright red port light, its hull churning up the smooth water as it came down the stream towards me.

When I went to see him again he showed me with pride how he had painted this scene in oils from my description. I was horrified to find that he had painted the tug-boat's port light

green instead of red! He said, 'What does it matter? I think green looks better.'

It somehow came about that I had occasion, at his request, I imagine, to put on paper my ideas about the Author vis-à-vis the Producer, and as those ideas do not seem to have altered since then, and may perhaps be interesting to others, I will quote my letter. This is what I wrote:—

'It seems to me that there is no real line of demarcation or place where it can be said: here the author's work ends and here the producer's begins . . . . I do very deeply sympathise with you in your very keen desire to keep the development of the story in your hands throughout. I think I can quite understand how painful it must be, after having brought a child into the world, to hand it over to a foster parent to be brought up and reared, and however great one's faith might be in that foster parent, the wrench would be painful and the bringing up could never be perfectly satisfactory to the real creator. But what are you to do if you are not prepared to do the wet-nursing? You must let somebody else do it or let the baby starve.

'It seems to me that the author has an absolute and undeniable right to put as many stage directions in the scenario as he thinks fit—he may, if he likes, give complete drawings and sketches of the materials to be used for every dress which is worn; in the same way there may be working plans for every scene, and I have heard of authors in America who have selected the exact pitch of every exterior view and written the particulars in the scenario.

'I hold that everything which is in the scenario must be adhered to by the producer and that he accepts the scenario on these terms. Of course, he can refuse it if he likes, but if he accepts it, he must either produce it as it is given to him or obtain the author's permission to make alterations. But if the author does not put these particulars in he has not the right, it seems to me, to come along afterwards and demand to see the dresses which have been selected or the people which have been chosen for the parts, or the scenery which has been prepared. It seems to me that he must either do these things himself or leave the other fellow to do them. The author has a perfect right to insist upon certain people playing the various parts; if he does so, the script comes to the producer with that much load upon it, and it is then up to the producer either to accept it or refuse it as it stands. The same with the dresses, the scenery and everything else. Take for instance

your script upon which I am working now; the stage directions for the first scene read as follows: "A scene in the street of a Belgian town. It is fruit and flower-market day; the stalls are overflowing; people are lounging about and drinking outside a café." You know what I am doing for that, for you were there when the scene was taken.

'If you had been willing to do all that I did, so much the better for me, but as you did not, I should not have felt, and I do not think you would either, that you would have had the right to come along and make alterations afterwards.

'To try and put it more briefly—it seems to me that the author may go just as far as he likes, but where he stops he must let the other fellow carry on without claiming the right to vary. When the author has finished the producer begins. He takes what the author has written, and by the act of accepting it binds himself to adhere faithfully to it except that he may make such minor alterations as do not affect the sequence of the story, the characterisation or the atmosphere.'

I am greatly indebted to Temple Thurston for a considerable broadening of my own ideas and for long, profitable and pleasant conversations. We worked together happily and smoothly for a long time. Possibly we worked a little too closely and too continuously. We may have exhausted our mutual resources: got a little tired of each other. I had not been used to having anyone beside me in the studio when I was working—had always turned out anyone not actually engaged in the scene. Any whispered commentary behind me, any suspicion of what might be a criticism, was enough to put me off my stroke, and although there was no suggestion of anything of that sort from Thurston, his mere presence may have unconsciously irked me a little in the end.

But before we drifted apart we had had the advantage—or perhaps I should say *I* had had the advantage, for it is unlikely that he gained as much benefit from it as I did—of a great deal of happy and fruitful collaboration. The stories he wrote for the Government war-films were full of inspiration for me as well as being, I suppose, valuable propaganda. His ideas did not always work out as we both hoped they would, but that is perhaps only natural for we were working in an atmosphere which was new to us. At one time he enunciated the interesting theory that tragedy, for instance, might be equally tragic at all sorts of different levels.

A child's desperate anguish over a broken doll is just as poignant while it lasts as a mother's grief for a dying child.

So he visualised an incident in overrun Belgium when the Germans strode across it smashing and killing everything in their path. A poor old woman, serene and happy, though there was nothing in her life to live for but her plot of flower garden, radiant just then with a glorious show of hyacinths and spring flowers of all descriptions. This garden by a corner cottage was in the path of a company of soldiers who could just as easily have passed round it. We showed only their heavy feet trampling all those lovely flowers into the dust. It tore at the heart-strings of all the people in the studio who had gardens and allotments of their own, but no one thought it really tragic on the screen.

We had better success however in a much more ambitious subject which required the building up of a corner of a Belgian town in a meadow which we had recently rented for another purpose. This was a very effective set comprising some cottages, two or three small shops and the west-end of one of those large churches which in Belgium seem so completely out of proportion to the little towns or villages which they dominate. It took the best endeavours of our designers and all our carpenters and stage-hands to erect and paint it and it must, one way and another, have occupied much of my own time. Yet the story which it enshrined has utterly faded from my mind, while I remember the old lady's flower garden distinctly. Perhaps there was something in Thurston's idea of deep suffering in low-level tragedy.

He was a strangely lovable unlovely character: very kind, very clever, very selfish. He had a marvellously good and patient wife —patience in any woman in her position would have been a marvel, for he must have been dreadfully difficult to live with, though he had great charm. He would write all day—when he wasn't discussing films with me—and then in the evening he liked to collect his family and friends around him and read his morning's work over to them. This was by no means an ordeal for those who listened, for he read delightfully and well. He had a soft and pleasant voice and as we sat in silence round the fireside, the phrases he had nurtured and loved all day came easily and attractively over to us. I suppose his books are out of fashion now, for that is the fate of modern writers in an age when far too many books are written and the consequently small editions soon are out of print and crowded off the shelves and out of libraries. His

one-time film-colleague shares similar oblivion but we both had a good time while it lasted.

I mentioned just now a meadow which we had recently rented. This was in Halliford on the other side of the river from Walton and was for the purpose of building a large portion of old London for the staging of *Barnaby Rudge*. This, the latest of Thomas Bentley's efforts in Dickens-land on our account, was his largest and best, for the story, as everyone knows, was in the time of the Gordon riots and involved nor merely a great number of different views of the London of the period, but these must be substantial enough to be both convincing in their reality, and strong enough to withstand the rough treatment which must hang upon scenes of disorder and struggle. Part of the ambitious set-up was a replica of old Newgate prison which in the story is destroyed by fire, that the prisoners may be rescued.

The poor, half-witted boy, Barnaby, around whose adventures the story ranges, was beautifully played by Tom Powers who both looked and acted the part to perfection. He was well supported by the rest of the company which absorbed, for the time being, nearly all our stock of actors including Chrissie White, Violet Hopson, Henry Vibart, L. Howard, MacAndrews, Buss, Royston, Felton and Stewart Rome. Like all the stories of Charles Dickens this is far too complicated to tell clearly in any reasonable length, and it is all to the credit of the producer that he managed to make it understandable within the limits of a film of not undue extent.

Barnaby Rudge has, I am sorry to say, like several other films in the course of this book, got itself somewhat misplaced in chronological order. It should have come before mention of Temple Thurston who only came to Walton towards the end of the war, while 'Barnaby' was filmed near its beginning. It does not matter very much, except that I like to be fairly accurate if I can.

I have quoted a considerable number of films made in that war-time, but for the most part only those which were of my own individual production, because, as I have mentioned before, this is a book about me, not about the film industry, which does not come into it except in so far as I have had to do with it. For instance, I have scarcely mentioned Henry Edwards' work. But he was producing side by side with me all through the war years and for some time afterwards and it would be stupid to suggest that his work was not at least as good as mine both in quantity as well as quality. Other of our producers were working hard and

successfully too, although we certainly did for a time lose some of our most important men. The times were undoubtedly difficult and the war's need of men could not and should not be disputed. But those of us who for age or other infirmity 'stayed at home' were glad to feel that what we were doing here was contributing its tiny bit to the spirit and well-being of hard-worked Britain.

But in spite of what I have just said about Henry Edwards—Tedwards, he was always called for short and for affection—I must mention one of his films which was a most valiant effort to do something which, in the doing, proved itself to be almost, but not quite an impossibility. He set out to make a full-length silent film without any titles, either of description or of conversation. One only it had, and that was its name at the beginning: *Lily in the Alley*. It was very nearly as successful as it deserved to be, and it would have succeeded altogether, I think, if he and we and all other producers had not for many years been telling people, in titles and other devices, exactly what they were to think and understand and believe. This continual doping had so dulled the intellects of the audiences that they never sit up and try to understand. Nothing is left to the imagination; everything is handed to them on a plate, ready cooked and digested so that there is nothing whatever to do but just swallow it whole. It is much the same now, for though sound does sometimes complicate the plot a little, it is more often used to clarify it.

It is a little difficult to say what effect the first World War had upon the British film industry. It certainly brought us many difficulties at the time but I doubt whether it had any real or lasting effect. I have already told of the difficulties caused by the calling up of the youngsters and of the way we met that trouble, but it was not very long before the more experienced people were also required for more serious work than ours. Our clever French technician, Gaston Quiribet, left two days before the war started. Others were called up from time to time and then released again to go on helping us a little longer, though the tribunals were naturally unsympathetic to our appeals for exemption. One irascible colonel said, 'Picture theatres are an unnecessary luxury and the public will benefit by their closing.' Both Kimberley and I, ineligible for active service, were in the Volunteers which took up a lot of our time, and practically all our workers drained away in the end. But we managed.

The industry as a whole kept its flag flying. The Hepworth

Chrissie White and Tom Powers in 'Barnaby Rudge'

Stewart Rome, Warwick Buckland and Violet Hopson in 'The Chimes'

Stewart Rome in 'Barnaby Rudge'

players frequently appeared in *Film Tags*, snappy little propaganda films which I made for the Government, rather on the lines of the somewhat ineffective *Food Flashes* which I made for the later war (it doesn't seem quite safe to say the last war). The long litigation by the Federal Government of America against the Motion Picture Patents Company, the General Film Company and other defendants (Anti-Trust Law) whose beginning in 1909 caused so much trouble at the time, ended in favour of the Government on October 16th, 1915.

In the same year our manager, C. Parfrey, left us and later joined the Kinematograph Trading Company, and Lewin Fitzhamon also drifted away. Yet 1915 was described as the beginning of the Hepworth-Pinero boom. Our *Barnaby Rudge* was trade shown at the Alhambra by the purchasers, the Kine Trading Company, and 'three thousand footers' were described as the rage of England, America and Italy.

One of the first practical suggestions for a trade benevolent fund was mooted but did not bear fruit until later. This is a most important institution because, from its very nature, the film trade is certain to have a large number of 'left-overs' who early become too old to earn their living in the manner to which they were accustomed.

Griffith's very fine *Birth of a Nation*, which had been so successful at the Scala Theatre, was transferred to the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, but it failed to attract large audiences in its new abode. I paid a courtesy visit to Mr. Griffith at his office there, but although there were chairs about he kept me standing all the time I was there with him. But that wasn't very long. His *Macbeth*, put on at His Majesty's Theatre in June, only remained there a week.

The year 1917 appears to have been a momentous one for the film industry, for almost immediately we come upon the remark that 'our producers now compare favourably with the Americans,' which I am afraid is one of those thoughts which are fathered so prolifically by wishes. But the Government of the day began to realise the value of the screen and its popular influence, and Colonel Buchan, of the Department of Information, invited the Trade Council to assist in Government propaganda.

This was turning over a new leaf, for the industry had been very much vilified one way and another. Then the National Council of Public Morals held a commission to take evidence for and against the kinema. After a long period it produced a refutation

of the reckless charges that had been hurled against the industry—its complete vindication in fact.

The previous year's entertainment tax had hit the trade hard indeed but it was now proposed to increase it. That horrid idea was postponed till the autumn but that was the best that could be done with it. The effect of the tax was in many cases to shift the patrons into cheaper seats, so the exhibitor was hit, without benefit to the treasury.

The inception of a trade employment bureau to provide employment for disabled soldiers, who were now beginning to come back in increasing numbers, was due to the initiative of Paul Kimberley. It was a fine idea and a considerable number of officers and men were successfully trained in various branches of the trade and found employment suited to the needs, but the lay press was still ignoring the industry, as though they feared to look at it lest it should turn out to be a rival. W. G. Faulkner's notes in the *Evening News* were practically the only exception. He noted, among many other things, that Alma Taylor had won through from tiny parts, boys, tomboy girls, and all sorts of things, to leading player in such important films as Pinero's *Iris* for instance, and now had widespread popularity.

Henry Edwards' first big part was Gabriel Oak in Thomas Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Larry Trimble had seen him first as the waiter in *The Man Who Stayed at Home* and secured him. He rejoined the Hepworth Company when Trimble and the Turner Films returned to America. Chrissie White, a contemporary of Alma Taylor and fellow conspirator in the *Tilly the Tomboy* series of most popular films, was also growing up to big and important things. Victor Montefiore, a resident scenario writer for Hepworth films, a fine musician and a delightful personality, a gentle almost ethereal being, most obviously and utterly unsuitable for a soldier in any possible capacity, was ruthlessly called up, nevertheless, and he was dead within a week of going into camp.

I wonder whether I am managing to get over any sense of my great feeling of gratitude to all the fine people who worked with me so loyally and for so long. I do not know how to put it into words for something of the same sort is so often said without any real meaning behind it. I can only hope that some sense of my real indebtedness may seep through my words although they are applied to other things.

W. D. Griffith's *Intolerance*, with its extraordinarily advanced technique, was enthusiastically received at Drury Lane Theatre in April, and in March, Hamilton Fyfe, in an article in the *Daily Mail*, claimed Charlie Chaplin as a national asset. He was in danger of being claimed by America. Mary Pickford, the 'World's Sweetheart,' announced the formation of her own company for the production of films.

The second half of 1917 saw the launching of several fairly important films, both of mine and Edwards', but I am not going to risk the boredom of giving their names. It was also notable for the rapid growth of the trade unions in the industry. Does that sound like a knell? It had no effect whatever upon me or mine, for our sands were running out already, and so I could write about it without rancour if I wished to do so. But it is no part of the job I have set myself, to pass judgment upon the greed and avarice of people, the reckless extravagance, the utter waste of time and money and the senseless disregard of the difference between essentials and mere ostentation, which have brought a great industry to the very verge of ruin.

In June, 1918, there was the first definite suggestion of the Trade Benevolent Fund, national and covering all sections of the industry and further developed at a Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association conference in July, when a substantial sum was subscribed for a nucleus. Paul Kimberley joined the Hepworth Company as general manager in August, and *Tares* and *The Refugee*, two of our propaganda films written by Temple Thurston, were trade shown by us in September when we entertained the trade press and some friends at luncheon, and, by October, the Trade Benevolent Fund was definitely in existence.

In that month I directed *Broken in the Wars* and the right Honourable John Hodge, the Minister of Pensions, appeared in it. In November Gerald Ames joined the company. But in the films of 1918 there were very few of English make and only about half a dozen of them were from the Hepworth studios. Perhaps that is understandable, for this was the last year of the Great War.

CHAPTER 16

SUDDENLY, after hope so often postponed that it seemed nearly dead, there was a strange uncanny sound in the air—at first a distant wailing as though a million people drew a half-sobbing breath—a sound growing momentarily louder, spreading on every side, becoming a cry, a song, a shout! Then there was no mistaking the throbbing joy as it burst upon us everywhere. It was the end of the War! Release! The end of the pent-up fear and misery of war. Peace. We were *Free! I* was free to go my ways—no longer trammelled at every turn; free to photograph what and where I liked! Free at last to realise my life's ambition—free to buy a boat and go sailing!

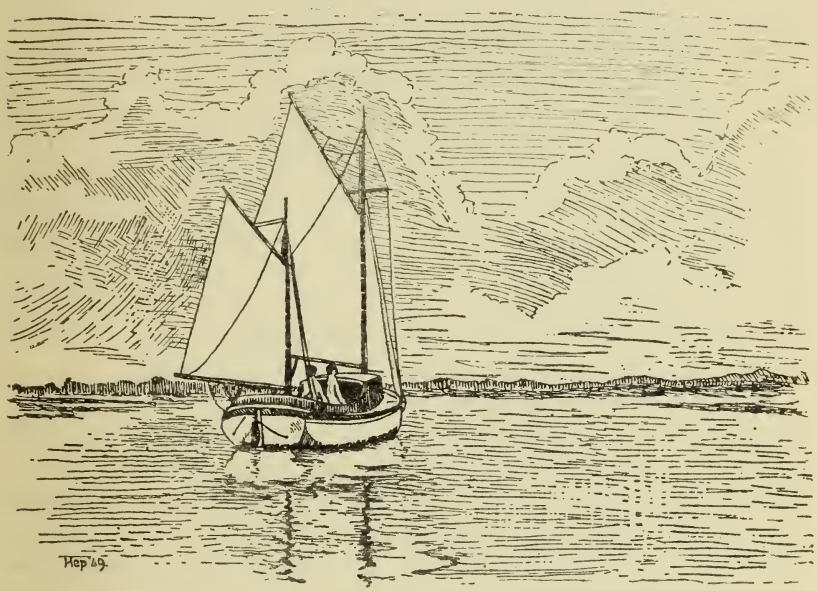
For I had suddenly realised that if I did not do that at once, it would be too late—sailing is not a job for an old man. And how I did want to get on the water and have room to move! There has been no room on the land for many years—never will be any room on the roads again. I wanted to sail right away from everything and everybody; out of sight of everything except sea and sky. That is what it *means* to be free.

So every week-end I diligently searched all the ship-yards within reasonable reach and at last I found what I wanted at Cowes, Isle of Wight. She had been laid up for four years, of course, but I couldn't wait for an expert examination. She had a two-cylinder, two-stroke engine which, as soon as I saw it, I decided to replace. She was a ketch of eleven tons and her name was *Bluebird*. She seemed sound and fairly complete and my heart went out to her. I bought her right away for £500.

The snug little village of Hamble on the river of that name, leading into Southampton Water, offered a convenient mooring, and then there arose the question of bringing *Bluebird* across the Solent to what was to be her home town. Kimberley said he would like to come and help (knowing even less about sailing than I did), and then his wife said she would like to come too. She was

a kind and happy woman so there was no objection to that, and when she wanted to bring Alma to balance up the party there was, for a similar reason, still no objection.

It was the early afternoon of Boxing Day of 1918 when we went aboard, wonderfully warm, slightly misty and practically no wind. We pushed the boat out of her shed and a man in a dinghy took us in tow to get clear of the very crowded anchorage. We started up the engine, gear out of course, but he was in a blue funk lest we should run him down; then we sailed under our own steam to



the mouth of the river where I decided to up-sail and save petrol. Alma was steering when, with the main-sail up, I let go the topping-lift and dropped the heavy boom on her head. The main-sail was taking practically all the weight but she got a nasty knock. Lucky that it was no worse.

The slight mist hid the opposite shore so I set a course by compass to stand clear to the westward of the Brambles—I still had the famous chart-book. After a while the breeze fell lighter and we started up the engine again, but after a couple of miles it burst its rusty exhaust-box and smothered us with evil-smelling smoke. The ladies began to murmur a little at that but there was no help for it that we could see. Then the little engine, with

unexpected tact, came to a sudden stop and settled the matter and a quick glance revealed the secret. The poor little thing, ashamed of the horrid behaviour of her silencer, had snapped her half-time shaft in two and brought her own career to an end.

Luckily the last of the flood-tide was setting us in the right direction and should draw us into Southampton Water and even perhaps into Hamble river, if only there were air enough to give us steerage way. We rounded Calshot, drew slowly into the Water, and spotted the light of the Hamble buoy in the gathering gloom. I knew we had to leave the buoy to port and we still had air enough to steer. But like all these rivers the entrance is marked by booms, poles stuck up in the mud on either side of the fairway. At low tide you can see exactly what they mean and how the river winds, but when the mud is covered I'll be hanged if you can be so sure. The first boom was a toss-up—and I lost the toss. I took the wrong side of the boom and we ran right up on the still invisible mud. There was no engine to ease us off. We were there for the night! The women refused to believe it, said it was all nonsense and we must do something about it at once. But they had to take it, for it was dark and we were miles from anywhere, with deep mud all round us. Also there was nothing to eat or drink. We all settled down in the cabin and lighted the lamp.

Then Kim and I took a good look at the engine. The half-time shaft, true to its name, had snapped itself neatly in half. It normally controls the timing of the ignition so its failure put a stop to everything. We took it out and saw that if we could file a deep flat on each half we could splice it together. By extraordinary luck (no one would ever believe such a thing in a film) there happened to be a file on board. Never did prisoners work harder at their bars than we did on that shaft. Between two and three in the morning we finished the job and then we could run the engine, but we were high out of the water and it would be four hours or more before it would be light, or we afloat.

'——Came the Dawn.' Also the water. We steamed slowly and with much smoke and smell up to our mooring and went ashore. And while we looked for what we hoped would prove a 'breakfast' shop of which I knew, we joyfully sang our theme song:—

'We're four jolly sailormen, just up from the sea——
There's Alma, Paul Kimberley, his missus, and me.'

We found the shop: it *did* serve breakfasts, but if black looks

could kill, we four would have dropped stone dead on the oil-cloth. Brokenly we explained that we had been marooned all night on an engine-broken yacht. Heads were tossed so high at that that it was a wonder they didn't come off altogether. Never had vile suspicion so clearly been expressed in silence. Nothing but our ravenous hunger could have kept us suppliant there. At last these virtuous gorgons yielded enough to perceive that, deep in sin as we might be, they need not demand our death by starvation at *their* door, and reluctantly they served breakfast. The joyful avidity with which we consumed it must have been a shock to these sinless sisters who were waiting to see us choke.

But even sailing must not be allowed to interfere with films. The Christmas holidays were practically over and we all arrived at our homes before lunch time that day. And with the dawning of 1919, with the lifting of the dreadful load of war from our minds and bodies, a load which seemed even heavier in retrospect than it did in reality, we could, breathing freely once more, settle down to full production again. We were still a little crippled by the absence of those men who had been left to us, it is true, longer than we had dared to hope because we were deemed to be doing work of some slight national importance, but we did not know when we could expect them back at work.

However, they began to return fairly early. Tom White was the first—of course, he would be—and he was a very valuable re-recruit. He says it was an accident but I have my own opinion about that. It was in January and he found himself unloaded in the snow with a lot of other fellows, going to some place for further duties. He went up to a sergeant who asked him where he belonged. He gave the sergeant ten shillings and told him. 'No you don't,' the sergeant said, 'you belong over there.' So he went over there, and joined a little group, who were almost immediately demobbed! That's the sort of chap he was. He is general manager of Pinewood Studios now.

The Hepworth Manufacturing Company Ltd. were to be found at 2, Denman Street, Piccadilly, with myself as managing director and Paul Kimberley as general manager, and its greatest artistic strength lay in Chrissie White, Alma Taylor and Henry Edwards.

In a review of the year 1919 my good friend G. A. Atkinson speaks of a general feeling at the beginning of the year that 'England would never be the same again' which, of course, turned out to be very much truer than he thought: wars do have

that effect upon us. But there was a gradual recovery and a sense of profound thankfulness that the war was 'really over.' The industry had enormously increased its prestige with the public, parliament and the press. It had played no small part in tranquillising things at home and inspiring national 'will to victory,' and that was earnestly acknowledged by the Prime Minister.

In the railway strike of that year all sides discovered the possibilities of mutual aid and it was generally felt that railways were undesirable as a means of film transport from the makers to the theatres, although the total let-downs during the strike were probably under five per cent. In December, 1919, Will Barker announced his retirement from the industry after twenty-two years' work, and Jack Smith became managing director of Barker Motion Photography.

In February Stewart Rome—who had left us to join the forces—gave out the announcement that he would join the Broadwest stock-company on his demobilisation, and the London Film Company, who had suspended operations because nearly all their staff had been called up, recommenced producing on an elaborate scale. In March Violet Hopson—another of our early players—proposed to head a company of her own for film production. In April, 1919, Hepworth Picture Plays Ltd. was formed, with a capital of £100,000.

Eileen Dennes joined the Hepworth stock-company in April and a very staunch and useful little lady she was from then to the end, and Leslie Henson 'succumbed to the lure of the screen.' Block booking was becoming more and more difficult in its effects but serious attempts to solve the problem were beginning to show signs of hopefulness. The agitation for state censorship of films raised its silly head over and over again, but under the skilled generalship of J. Brooke-Wilkinson the clearly efficient censorship imposed by the trade itself was demonstrated to be quite satisfactory and it persisted as it deserved to do, and it still persists.

Hepworth Picture Plays Ltd. made an issue on November 1st of £2,500 debentures, part of a series already registered, and again in December, 1920, of £10,000 similar debentures. It will I think be obvious that underneath the record of these things there must have been the heave and throb of big difficulties; a feeling of premonition of heavy trouble in store for us. There was a pressure in the air which we did not understand and we worked on as best we could in spite of it.

The City of Beautiful Nonsense was by a long way the most popular book of all that Temple Thurston wrote. I had read a great many of his books but this was the first one that I came upon that I did not really like. That is not a condemnation of the work however. It probably was of the reader. But among its very numerous admirers was Henry Edwards who now made an excellent film of it and evidently secured a faithful rendering of its essential quality, for it was rapturously received by the great host of the admirers of the book.

In August, 1919, Stanley Faithfull, just back from the war, was going for a short holiday in Devonshire before coming back to me to take up his work again where he had left it two years before. On the platform of Templecombe Station where he had to change he, by most remarkable chance, met his brother Geoffrey, also back from the war but on his way to camp to await demobilisation. When Stanley had finished his holiday and returned to Walton he organised the growing importance of the 'still' picture department, which included enlargements and all sorts of direct photographic work, and made a very good job indeed of this valuable side-line.

It was in that same month that Blanche MacIntosh wrote the script for Phillips Oppenheim's *The Amazing Quest of Mr. Ernest Bliss* from which Henry Edwards made a very successful series of short films, afterwards combined into one of 'feature length.' This was the story which, a little later on, got us into the law court with that peculiar action I dealt with earlier in this book.

The Forest on the Hill was the first post-war film to have the benefit of the full staff again with all its war-worn veterans back in their old places. It was great to have them back and to know that the war had ended all wars and never again would the glorious company of film-makers be interrupted in their important work by the strife of nations: that was what we thought at the time. It was partly that feeling then, I expect, but chiefly the sheer beauty of the story and the lovely country in which it was laid, that made *The Forest* such a very enjoyable thing to do.

The story was by Eden Phillpotts who invited me to stay at his house at Babbacombe near Torquay, so that he could tell me all about the places in which he had laid his story. For Phillpotts, in this case at all events, had adopted Dickens' habit of using actual and existing sites among which to weave his story. He showed me the Hanging-Wood which was his Forest-on-the-Hill; the most

delightful village of Ilsington, on the border of Dartmoor, the deserted copper-mine which had such dramatic influence in the tale, and the different aspects of the wonderful moor which has so often figured in his yarns. No wonder the making of the picture in such surroundings and with such an introduction was a delight to me, and I think all my crew were equally happy. And what a crew it was! That good scout, Jimmy Carew, with Alma Taylor, Gerald Ames, Gwynne Herbert, Eileen Dennes (new to us then but a great find), MacAndrews and Lionelle Howard. And glorious weather and the whole of Dartmoor to play about on!

Sheba, the script for which was prepared for me by Blanche MacIntosh, was principally noticeable for the fact that it was the first film I produced with Ronald Colman acting in it. His was an unknown name in those days and I, knowing nothing of his ability, cast him for a part of no great importance. There was, consequently, nothing very distinguished in his acting, for the part did not give him much opportunity and I don't think he had ever been in a film before. All the same I did take sufficient note of him to keep him in mind for another and better part as soon as there was an opportunity. I also noted that he appeared to have some slight awkwardness which prevented him from walking really naturally in the film. It may have been merely temporary or he must have overcome it, for I have not noticed it in any of his films which I have seen since. I must have thought well of him for I remember inviting him to join our company, but he said that he was determined to go to America. I do not suppose he has ever regretted that determination, but I have—often.

Another script from the same writer and at about the same date was *Once Aboard the Lugger* which was produced by Gerald Ames in collaboration with our clever French colleague, Gaston Quiribet, happily released from the war and back in our company after more than four years. He was in some kind of reserve in the French army and rushed over to France the moment the war was imminent. I had feared, of course, that we might never see him again, and I was mighty glad to welcome him back, as was everyone else in the studio and laboratories. He is now in the Kodak Company in Paris and when I saw him the other day he looked well and very happy.

The last important film of this year, so far as I personally was concerned, was Phillips Oppenheim's *Anna the Adventuress*, which was trade shown in the beginning of the following February, that

is, 1920. This was a very interesting and attractive story of two girls, identical twins I suppose they were, who were so exactly alike that they could only be told apart by their clothing and their entirely different methods of doing their hair and so on. It happened that in the beginning one of them became rich and opulent while the other remained in the same social scale or even became poorer. The difference in their opportunities which is the natural result of these conditions is the main theme of the film. The difficulty from the producer's point of view is to show that difference while at the same time preserving the essential identity of their innate appearance.

When that impudent and unmoral minx, that 'handmaid of the Art' of cinematography, called 'the Vivaphone' for the sake of euphony, came to its inglorious end at the murdering hands of the ice-cream girls who would *not* put the needle on properly, it had a more worthy re-birth in a sphere of actual utility. For it was, in another shape, used to make sure of the synchronism between the two halves in various forms of the trick of double-photography.

There is one form of double-photography which is so called, although it does not really come within the meaning of the term. In *The Pipes of Pan*, I told of it as a reflection of figures who appeared to be dancing on the surface of a lake. In another instance, a semi-transparent mirror reflects the image of a 'ghost' off-stage, apparently into the midst of the 'live' actors in the main scene; but in both these cases the photography is simultaneous and no difficulty of synchronism arises. But real double-photography is that device by which one actor plays two parts in one scene. A shutter is fixed in front of the camera so as to hide one half of the scene while the other half is taken. Then the shutter is changed over to the other half and the actor, probably disguised as a different person altogether, crosses to the other side of the scene and plays the appropriate action to the now non-existent person he has previously portrayed. It is very difficult to time it exactly enough to be at all convincing.

To overcome this difficulty, and to enable an actor in one half of a scene to remember at any given moment exactly what he was doing in the other half at that moment, I hit upon an ingenious idea which worked perfectly. I got hold of an old-fashioned phonograph, not a gramophone, which had a wax cylinder instead of a disc. By speaking into the funnel of the instrument you could make a record which could be 'played back' as often

as you wished. This phonograph was geared to the camera so that the film was kept in exact correspondence with the wax cylinder. I used this arrangement first in my picture of *Anna the Adventuress*, which as I said was a story of twin sisters, one very rich and not very good and the other very good and not rich at all. Alma Taylor played both the parts and, as she had to change her appearance entirely when she changed from one to the other, she had plenty of time to forget the details of the work she had already done.

There were several of these double-photography scenes in the film but I need only describe one of them as the procedure was much the same in all. In the one I have in mind the line dividing the two halves was not vertical but ran diagonally from the top left-hand corner to the bottom right. It was, of course, completely invisible in the finished picture. It was a bedroom scene and the rich girl was perched up on the bed, dealing out some of her discarded clothing to her poorer sister seated on the floor beside her. I wanted her to toss these clothes to her sister who would catch them and lay them in a little heap at her feet. Obviously, very accurate timing was essential.

When all that the two girls had to do was understood by one, we started to take the scene. While the camera was running, all my directions shouted to the girl on the bed were recorded by the phonograph, and as soon as the scene was finished she ran away to change. While she was away the camera was carefully turned backwards until the counter registered 'nought' and the actual first inch of the film was in position behind the lens—which, of course, had been covered meanwhile.

The wax record, being close-geared to the camera, was automatically reversed also, and carefully checked to see that the needle was now in the same exact position as at the start; and the dividing shutter in front of the lens was thrown over to the second position. Then Alma came back and took up her place at the foot of the bed. The camera was started up and she heard the phonograph shout back at her the exact instructions I had given her before, something like this :—'There are a lot of things here I don't want —I shall never wear them again. Look at this dress; it is quite out of date now. It's the very thing for you. Here take it and put it with the others. Catch.' She had in the previous take thrown the dress on the word 'Catch.' Now a 'stand-in' girl, sitting on the bed and of course invisible, threw the same dress to her exactly

on the word, and she caught it at the right moment. The result was a very clean job of work and the deception was uncannily convincing.

All the other double scenes in the film were done in the same way. Even when it was only a case of the two girls standing up and arguing with each other it was far easier to play the parts when every word was audible; and the finished picture was so much like actual reality that it was difficult to believe that the parts were both played by the same actress. I hope I have managed to make this clear. It is not easy to explain though it was quite easy to do.

This method of double exposure with divided frame is used by many other people, though I haven't heard of a phonograph being employed with it, but I thought I had 'invented' it when I was twelve years old and photographed a school-friend playing cards with himself in a garden. It showed no trace of a line between the two halves. Up till then the same thing had been done without a sliding shutter but with a black background instead, and that, of course, could not show any line for there was none to show. Whether I 'invented' it or not, it was a tremendous improvement on the black background method and is always used now when the effect is required. And of course, the already existing 'sound-track' is used to maintain synchronism instead of the more clumsy phonograph.

This trick must not be confused with the one used in photographing 'ghosts' like that of Hamlet's father. In that case there was no shutter before the lens: the whole scene was taken twice on the same film, with half the proper exposure each time. That is to say, suppose the estimated correct exposure was F/5.6, the scene would be taken at F/8, wound backwards and then taken again at F/8. The figure walked through one 'take,' but the other was of the background and rocks only. So these showed vaguely through the figure and made it appear partially transparent.

Anna the Adventuress was the second film of mine in which Ronald Colman had a part—a bigger one this time, and he made me still more sorry that he was so set upon going to America. In fact the whole cast was a very strong one and included, besides Colman, Alma Taylor, as both Anna and Annabel, James Carew, Gwynne Herbert, Jean Cadell, Christine Rayner and Gerald Ames.

CHAPTER 17

PERHAPS the most completely successful picture I ever made was *Alf's Button* in 1921, from a very delightfully fantastic story by W. A. Darlington, of the *Daily Telegraph.* I cannot resist quoting the foreword which he wrote and signed for us to put at the beginning of our trade show 'synopsis':

'During the making of this film-version of *Alf's Button* it has been brought home to me most forcibly how much an author can owe to his producer. To write "slaves in marvellous oriental draperies" cost me little effort, no special knowledge, and a minute quantity of ink. For Mr. Hepworth to attain the same effect in his own medium of expression cost him endless trouble and careful research—to say nothing of a sordid detail such as expense. Many times while the work was in progress did Mr. Hepworth refer in tones half-humorous, half-tragic, to my over exuberant imagination; but I can only say that my warmest thanks are due to him for the result of his labours. He has accomplished the almost impossible feat of making a humorist laugh at his own characters. If any of my readers enjoyed my book as I enjoyed my first sight of Mr. Hepworth's film, I am more than satisfied.'

Blanche MacIntosh as scenario writer was perfectly true to the story and I, as producer, was perfectly true to both. 'True' may seem a curious word to use about a not merely improbable but completely impossible story, but it is the word I want to use, for I am sure that the only way to deal successfully with an impossible conception in story, play or film is to be absolutely true and loyal to it from beginning to end.

You may invent the maddest idea of which your brain is capable but if you state it clearly at the beginning and go on to develop it on sane and logical lines, keeping true to the one impossibility and letting every situation grow naturally out of it, just as if it were a sane and sound premise, you will find that it

will be accepted and enjoyed without question in spite of its primary absurdity. But if you introduce an alien fantasy which is not consistent with the original theme, you are lost.

Alf's Button starts with the statement that Aladdin's Lamp had not been lost or destroyed but been forgotten in rubbish heaps since the days of the Arabian Nights, until the British Government bought up a quantity of waste brass and copper to make up into buttons for soldiers' tunics. Alf's button was one of these and the bit of metal of which it was made still had the power of summoning the attendant genie when it was rubbed. Grant that one absurdity and anything that happens *in consequence* cannot be disputed.

Give the name part to Leslie Henson and make John MacAndrews play the part of his foil, Bill, and the story comes to life at once as an intensely comic picture. For when once Alf has got over his terror of the genie, who appears for orders whenever the button is rubbed, the instructions he gives, translated in the literal but oriental mind of the Slave of the Lamp, produce extraordinarily funny situations. The titles of this silent film are a large part of the fun, for the soldier's language has to be represented for the most part in lines and dashes which the audience translate into words according to their several tastes and fancies.

When it occurs to these two lonely souls that 'Eustace,' as they have christened the genie, might be persuaded to produce a much-needed bath for them, that simple request turns a tumble-down barn interior into an Arabian palace, complete with gorgeous maidens and half a dozen black slaves, who bring in a wonderful glass-sided bath-tub with masses of mirrors and taps and set it down in the middle of the splendid hall. Alf says: 'That's the worst of Eustace, he's so ——— extravagant.'

The two Tommies, in their modesty, drive out all the humans and arrange that Bill shall bathe first while Alf stays outside to keep guard. But there, after a minute or two, he sees an officer approaching and hurriedly summons the genie to clear everything away, *pronto*. So inside we see Bill luxuriating in a bath, with all the oriental splendour which dissolves around him and leaves him sitting naked on the floor of the tumble-down barn.

After the war, when Alma Taylor, as Alf's wife, blushingly admits that the one thing she really wants is a baby, the genie hears and vanishes. In the sequel, with which the picture ends, Alf is awaiting the happy event and the nurse brings in one, two,

three babies to place in his arms. He says: 'That's just like Eustace: he always is so ——— 'olesale.'

This indication of the soldiers' language by one or two dashes was the way the swear-words were suggested in Darlington's book, and I believe it was a truly artistic device and far more effective than the words themselves would have been, while offending nobody. Each reader filled in every hiatus according to his own imagination and attained to the full the satisfaction which grows from the use of really strong swear-words.

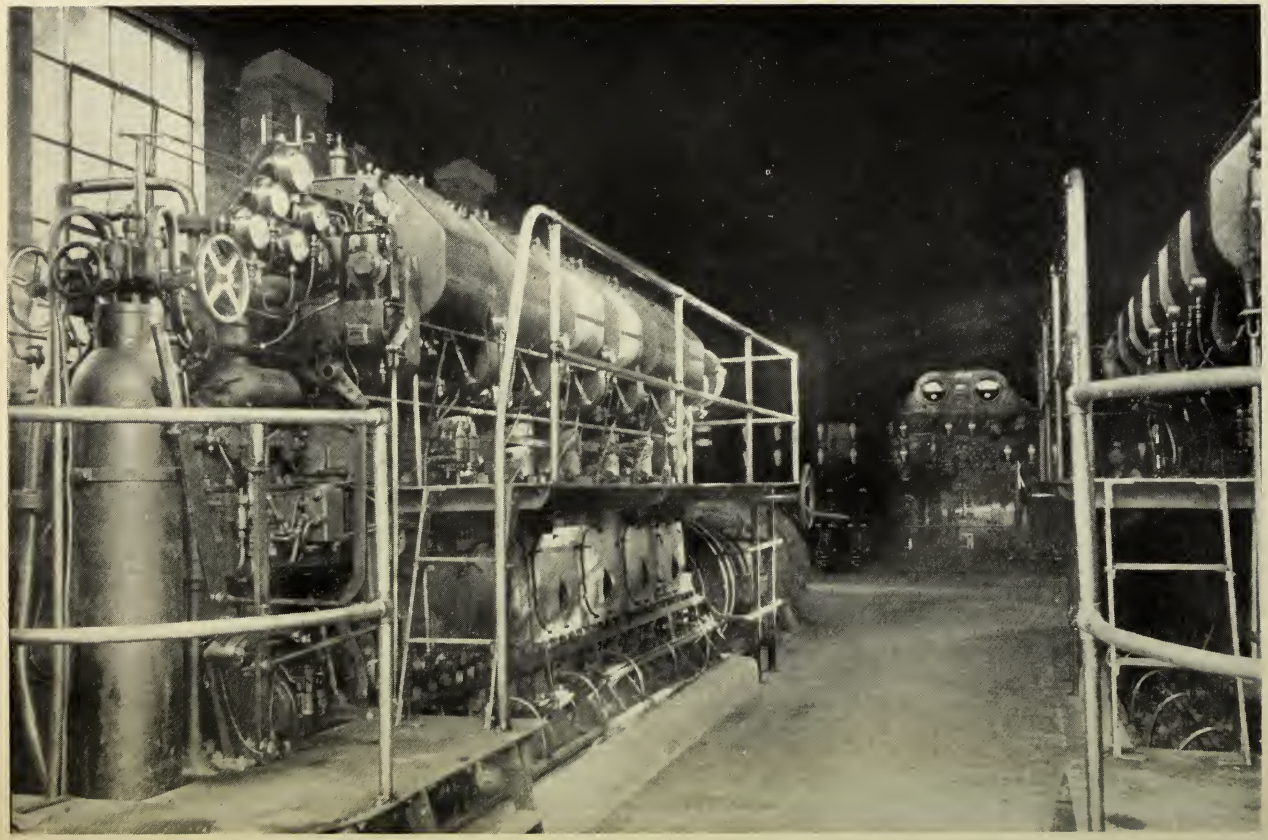
I once knew a little boy who, after he had been thwarted in some childish desire, strode in high dudgeon to the end of the garden where there was a small shrubbery in which he could hide. His parents followed him stealthily and heard him spitting out all the 'swear-words' he knew—'Bother, beastly, cat, blow, brutal, *bottom*,' after which he felt better.

The same little chap for his next birthday wanted a bicycle, with that terrible longing which perhaps only children know. Someone advised him to pray for it and then it might come. He did. They determined his prayers should be answered, but with a precaution dictated by their fear of danger. On the great day he crept eagerly down the garden path and suddenly stopped dead. Then he fell upon his knees and with clasped hands cried out from the bottom of his poor little heart: 'Oh. God. *Don't* you know the difference between a bicycle and a tricycle?'

The 'trade show' of *Alf's Button* was a very great success. Perhaps I had better explain a little what is meant by a trade show, although its meaning is fairly well expressed in its name; for it is a private showing of a new film, given exclusively to the trade, to provide a foreknowledge of it and to promote its sale. A big and important theatre was usually hired for the purpose and the picture presented with full orchestra and any other artful aid which might be considered appropriate, such as a highly finished and illustrated synopsis eulogising the film, or perhaps merely describing it without exaggeration. Personally, I was rather pernickerty about the music and generally managed to secure Louis Levy to arrange it for me and to select and conduct the orchestra. He was very skilful. His music was apt, pleasant, never obtrusive—a great contrast to much of that which so often spoils modern pictures.

The marked success in this case led up to an important change in my business arrangements. I had seen a great deal of Paul

Harry Royston in 'Oliver Twist'



Diesel engines and generators from German submarine U20 in engine-house at Walton, 1923

Kimberley during our mutual service in the National Motor Volunteers—afterwards R.A.S.C., M.T. (V)—both as fellow privates and later when we received our commissions together, and we had sailed together many times. I had met him first when he was in the service of my old friend, Frank Brockliss. Now he was an important film renter in Wardour Street, and, under the title of the Imperial Film Co. Ltd., had the best organised renting concern in the country. He had been suggesting for some time that we should join business forces. This would enable me to rent out my films direct through his connection instead of selling outright as was my previous practice. The advantage of having a subject like *Alf's Button* to give the scheme a flying start was too good to be missed. So we 'bought it in' ourselves, so to speak, and gravely disappointed some hopeful would-be purchasers. So then in 1921 the whole building at No. 2, Denman Street, Piccadilly, was taken over and the new joint scheme inaugurated with Paul Kimberley as director-manager.

In December, 1920, we held a very successful trade show of *Mrs. Erricker's Reputation*, a six-reel film which I produced in the summer from the novel by Thomas Cobb. I had a very excellent script for this novel which had already been made into a play under the title of *Mrs. Pomeroy's Reputation.* The story was a very charming one of exactly the type which appealed to me most—the type for which we had earned a considerable repute, and it was beautifully played by Alma with excellent support from Jimmy Carew, Gwynne Herbert, Eileen Dennes and Gerald Ames. As our studios were only about a hundred yards from the Thames it seems a little surprising that this was, I believe, the only picture we made with the upper Thames as its principal background. It afforded us quite a lot of delightful scenery and a considerable part of the film was set in a beautiful house-boat in which we were made very welcome and allowed to do whatever we liked. Alma Taylor was very happily suited in the part of Mrs. Erricker, the very difficult role of a sincere and genuine young widow assuming the character of a flighty and careless society woman, saving a silly married friend from disgrace by taking upon herself the other's misdeeds. This is the part which was taken by Violet Vanbrugh in the stage version written by H. A. Vachell in collaboration with the author of the novel.

Quite early in the following year we come to a story of an entirely different character, but it had a little flavour of *Alf's Button*

about it in its use of a slightly similar magic device. *The Tinted Venus* was a novel by F. Anstey, whose production as a film was in my hands, but I have forgotten all the details of the story although it presented at least one very interesting problem. However, I have the stills before me as I write and I think I can gather enough of the argument for my purpose. Imagine a rather common young man engaged to a girl whom he takes for an afternoon to some pleasure gardens—the original could have been Rosherville or Vauxhall. He sees a life-size statue of Venus in classical Grecian drapery and pays more attention to it than his fiancée approves. A silly tiff develops into a real quarrel and the girl tears off her token ring and returns it to her swain. That young man, in a spirit of bravado and to show how little he cares, slips the ring on to the finger of the statue which thereupon miraculously begins to come to life and assume the ordinary hues of flesh and blood. The numerous embarrassments and adventures which naturally ensue when 'she' follows the hero of her release back to his home can be imagined and need not be described.

In order to portray the story properly the first thing to do was to find a lady of statuesque appearance to play the name part. This done, I had to procure a statue so exactly like her that the change from marble to reality would look sufficiently convincing. I took the lady to a sculptor who said he could and would make me a statue in the exact likeness of the original. He did. And the result was thoroughly disappointing. When the lady was whitened to look like marble she and the statue were the spitten image of each other, but when she stood aside the other didn't even *look* like a statue—it looked all wrong. This was very puzzling.

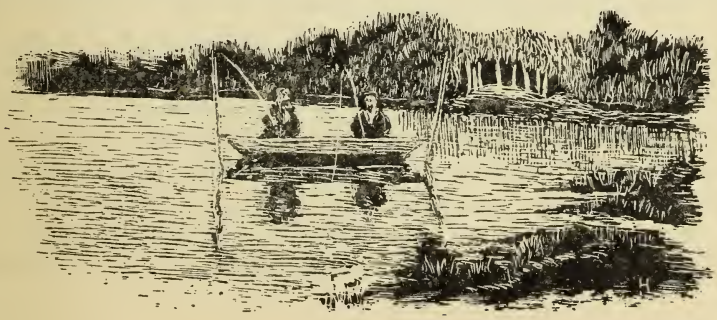
Then I remembered from my early art training that, while the human head has a length of about one seventh of the total length of the whole figure from top to toe, there is a tradition in art that the head should always be drawn only one eighth of the total height, and in statuary it is often even reduced to one ninth. Consequently we are so used to seeing in pictures, and particularly in sculpture, people with small heads that when we are confronted with figures in natural proportions they look wrong. That is why full-length photographic portraits often look stocky and out of shape. Evidently that is what had happened here. So I was faced with the choice between an unnatural-looking statue coming to life, or alternatively a natural-looking one whose head swells visibly to greater size under the influence of the spell. I chose the

former on the double ground that I could not help myself and that people easily swallow anomalies in films, especially when there's magic about.

The part of the young man whose foolishness with the ring had led to all the trouble was played by George Dewhurst who had joined the company some considerable time earlier. His girl friend, who certainly had a very great deal to put up with, did it very gracefully and well in the person of Eileen Dennes, and Alma Taylor and Gwynne Herbert and others of the company gave loyal support.

And now a word or two of advice from an Old Man to a very Young One: pearls of great price for practically nothing. First, remember always that if you do a thing, anything, and put your whole brain and mind and soul into doing it, then, when it is accomplished, it will be something worthy, something of which you may be, and should be, proud. Whether it is a film you are making or a kitchen table or only a packing-case, if you make it with all the best that is in you, it will be in its way a work of art. I don't say it will be good art—it may be thoroughly bad, but it will be a separate and different thing, different in some tiny detail from anything anyone else has done. It will in some sort be expressive of yourself—and self-expression is the beginning of all art.

Let us suppose it is a film you propose to make. First of all make up your mind and swear black and blue that you will not at any stage of the proceedings be content with anything but the very best that is within your power or reach—and that does *not* mean the most expensive. You start with an idea, naturally. Make quite certain that it is a *good* idea and until you are certain about that don't go any further in the matter. Then put it down on paper. See it in your mind's eye as so many separate scenes and write each one out as you see it. This is the most important part of the whole thing. In any case it is an exceedingly valuable exercise.



CHAPTER 18

Long, long ago, I was moved to study the work of Freud—I didn't get very far with it—but I learned that one's memory was largely conditioned by one's will. That if I forgot to post a letter it was because it was one that I disliked writing. Now, that seemed to me to be mere poppycock, for I always forgot to post all my letters whether I had liked writing them or not. Even my early love-letters were found in my overcoat pocket days afterwards.

But while it is evident that I have remembered quite a lot of things about my past film-life, I am hanged if I can remember anything at all about the end of it—the part which I certainly disliked intensely. It is a sad story of seemingly unreasonable failure bearing down with cruel insistence upon the very peak of my greatest success. It must have had its beginnings during that time of apparent triumph—somewhere there must have been a wrong turning taken blithely in the happy sunshine, and I have been searching through the published records of the times to see if I can trace it. The pages of the trade papers, notably the *Kinematograph Weekly* and its *Year Book* have been laid open for me and I have been raking among the ashes of past times to see whether I can find an occasional piece of bone to give me a clue to the mystery.

The first thing I found which seemed to have any bearing upon the matter was the record of the purchase in or about July, 1919, of the Oatlands Park Estate at Weybridge which was near enough to our place at Walton to be very convenient for all sorts of exterior work. This was at the time when James Carew joined our stock-company and Anson Dyer—'Dicky' Dyer, another good friend—signed a contract with us as Cartoonist. It was the time when two leading Swedish picture-producing companies amalgamated to enter the foreign market. In short it was the time of considerable European prosperity, the boom after the Great War.

The estate had recently come into the market. It had fine gardens, access to a lake, plenty of trees and a large house, and though it was fairly expensive I had no qualms about it then for it seemed exactly what we wanted. It proved so indeed when it furnished so many of the luxury scenes for my *Alf's Button*—the most successful film I ever made. It seemed wise to buy it while we had the chance, and, anyway, it was real estate and should fetch its price at any time if we wanted to dispose of it.

But circumstances alter cases. To show how the atmosphere of the 'boom' impressed itself unconsciously upon people in the trade at that time, here is a little story which I believe to be perfectly true though I must not mention names. A young man of limited experience applied for a job with a big concern which had just entered the film production business. His application appeared to be going successfully and when he was asked how much salary he wanted he drew a bow at a venture and said, 'three hundred pounds.' He meant per annum. But they thought he meant monthly, and they gave him a contract for £3,690 a year, indefinitely!

In the following year, 1920, the number of British films issued appears to have been decreasing, ours as well as others. But in our case, and probably in other cases as well, it was the number of titles, not the total length of films or their quality which was going down: the long films were getting longer and the 'shorts' were tending to disappear. Among the films of the year which may perhaps be remembered still there were Welsh-Pierson's very fine production (English) *Nothing Else Matters*, Griffith's *Broken Blossoms* (American), *the* film of the year, and *Miracle Man*, perhaps the best all-round picture. Our *Alf's Button* and *The Amazing Quest of Mr. Ernest Bliss* come into the following year.

We were producing regularly and continuously and with quite fair success, though to give a list of the names now that the pictures are all forgotten would be meaningless and merely boring. The whole trade was flourishing and we had our share in that.

We formed our own distributing organisation in America and secured office accommodation in Glasgow. Then comes a sinister note though it did not appear so at the time: a mortgage on land and properties at Weybridge to secure all moneys due or to become due to Barclays Bank Ltd. That was on January 7th, 1920.

Nevertheless it seems to me now to be portentous enough but that may be because I know what it all led to; I do not remember

that it struck any terror to our hearts at the time. It was, I supposed, all in the course of ordinary business. For very big ideas were taking shape in our affairs. Our films were growing ever bigger and more ambitious. Our two studios were neither enough in number nor size to cater for the quantity of our contemplated output, or for its size and importance. My ideas were taking form and growing. I wanted six bigger studios—two of them much bigger—all in a row so as to share as conveniently as possible the economy and accommodation of dressing rooms, carpenters' shops, scene docks, canteens, engineers' premises, crowd rooms and all the dozens of rooms which usually grow up afterwards around the studios. These were all to be on the ground floor with the studios above, served by a roadway running around the lot. All of this was carefully thought out and duly arranged and all the architect's drawings were made. Then we acquired the land and actually got as far as pegging out the positions of all the outer walls.

Then there was the question of the electricity supply, for, although I still clung to my archaic idea of using daylight as far as ever possible, the auxiliary arc-lighting would call for a very large amount of power. I approached the electricity suppliers and they quoted £20,000 for the necessary cable. (They afterwards said that that was only a preliminary suggestion, when they found that I was putting in diesels and generators for the needed supply.)

Diesels were frightfully expensive and not easy to obtain then, for all engineering was only beginning to recover after the wastages of war, but I heard of a couple of big engines with their attached generators out of a captured German submarine. I went and inspected them and I bought them. That, I see now, was almost certainly a false step. I realised that it would take a very long time to take them to pieces, transport them and get them re-erected on the site. So that involved me in the immediate building of a suitable engine-house.

It was built close to the projected studio building. Afterwards, when everything was cleared away, that engine-house became the auditorium of a theatre and had a stage built on at its rear. It is now known as The Playhouse, Walton-on-Thames, and it has been, and still is, the scene of many an amateur opera and play. It was taken over for this purpose by my very old friend, George Carvill, and opened by Ellen Terry, then a very old lady.

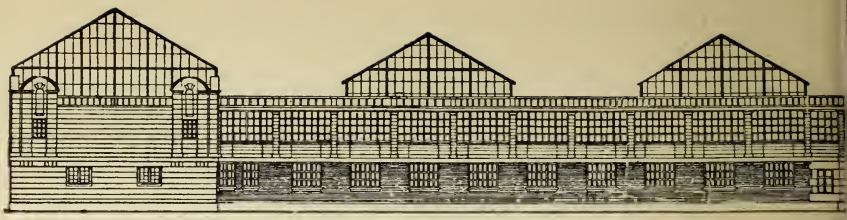
Underneath its floor are still the huge compressed-air cylinders for starting the diesel engines and the fuel-oil tanks for feeding them.

Close at hand is another building, now an important garage, which was put up at the same time as a scene-painting dock and construction shop. It is in two stories and had at the time it was first finished a six-inch slot running through the first floor for the whole width of the building so that backcloths, pinned on to the huge slung-frame, could be raised or lowered in the slot to suit the comfort and convenience of the painter who stood on the floor in front of it. This was also built in advance so as to serve the pressing needs of the existing studios. In the meantime the diesel engines and the generators were brought down from Liverpool and the engineers started erecting them with the aid of a travelling gantry under the roof of the new engine-house, and while they were at it—it took over a year—I ordered the switchboard for the distribution of power to the studios, and in due course that was also erected. This switchboard alone cost £3,250. That will give some idea of the size of the installation.

Now comes another step. And another and another. There are particulars of an issue of £40,000 debentures, authorised August 7th, 1920—present issue £5,000—charged on the company's undertaking and property present and future, including uncalled capital: the issue on September 30th, 1920, of £5,000 debentures, part of a series already registered. Another £3,000 on October 14th. Another, same date, £2,500, and another twelve days later of a further £2,500. If I wasn't getting cold feet by that time I must have had a remarkably fine circulation.

Yet what could I do? I feel sure now that the whole electrical undertaking was a mistake. There must surely have been some way of buying the juice instead of spending all that upon making it. But that is easy wisdom after it is too late. Besides, we were making good money with good films all this time: *Anna the Adventuress*, publishing date, February 3rd, *Alf's Button*, May 4th, *Amazing Quest*, July 31st, and half a dozen other big films, as well as the usual number of smaller ones. There must have been several compensating things to disguise the dread of trouble to come, and even now I think, with full consciousness of the niggers in the woodpile which I have already mentioned, we might have won through if the national post-war boom had continued.

The boom was followed by a slump and a serious one. The trade had a sharp lesson and pulled itself together. We didn't. I



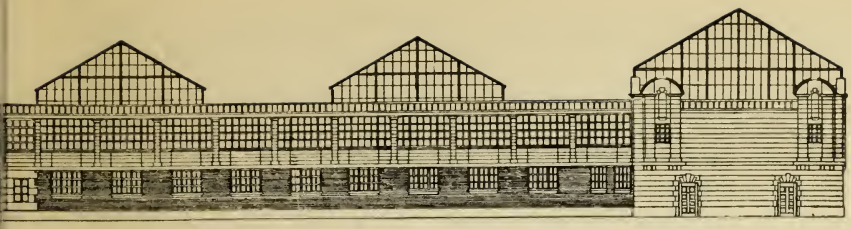
Proposed new additions to

suppose we couldn't with all those liabilities hanging round our necks. We carried on as long as carrying on was possible.

Now I must go back a bit for in unconscious hurry to get through with things which taste but sadly in my mouth I have passed over several matters of contemporary interest. While my troubles were gathering momentum, serious efforts were made by important interests to abolish the evils of block-booking and advance releases. At a special meeting of all three associations a joint committee was formed and a better plan was drawn up but does not appear to have had very much effect upon the trade which gradually righted itself. It was at this meeting that poor Friese-Greene died so tragically in the middle of making a passionate appeal for unity in the trade.

Friese-Greene is sometimes described as the inventor of cinematography. I never met him but evidently he was a man of great personal charm and of vivid ideas which were not always practicable. He was a most successful portrait photographer but abandoned that for other things. He took out seventy-six patents on a most extraordinary variety of subjects. If enthusiasm could of itself provide a fortune he would surely have died a rich man.

The greatest film of this year (1920) was Charlie Chaplin's *The Kid* which richly deserved even the great popularity it received. The Swedish Biograph films were making a continuous appeal; subjects with high ideals and no truckling to the lower tastes or mere silliness of the audiences. And Victor Seastrom of Sweden was a fine director. It was a great pity that he was lured away to America. That also happened to a great German director. In both cases their genius languished in a foreign atmosphere or perhaps undue and unsympathetic handling, and their work soon began to wane and never regained its early beauty and vitality. Transplanting was not a success and Europe lost what America failed to gain.



the Hepworth Studios, 1922

Taste was on the whole improving though, I think. Though old-fashioned showmen continued to pander to the worst public, better ideas won through in the end, and British films were said to be 'infinitely higher than those of last year.' Sunday opening for the theatres was mooted and partly gained. The British Board of Film Censors was severely attacked by the lay press but survived, helped a good deal by the L.C.C. licence being made conditional upon films having the Board's certificate. Some British films found a hearty welcome on the American continent, among them *The Amazing Quest of Mr. Ernest Bliss* and *Alf's Button.* The last had two or three repeat runs in several large Canadian cities.

It was in May of the following year (1921) that the Hepworth Company won the action for libel which was brought against it by the agent whose name was the same as that of an unpleasant character in a Phillips Oppenheim story which was filmed by us. I spoke of this much earlier in the book when I was dealing with a couple of other lawsuits, but without giving many details. The action was heard in King's Bench Division on May 10th before the Lord Chief Justice and a mixed special jury. Counsel for the plaintiff was Sir Edward Marshall Hall and for the defence, Mr. Douglas Hogg. It was brought by Bernard Montague (Mr. Marks in private life). The evidence of the producer, Henry Edwards, who was out of England at the time, had been taken on oath and was read. The great weakness of the case appeared to be that no one was brought forward who could testify that the villain in the picture was believed to represent the plaintiff. The jury, without leaving the box, returned a verdict for the defendants, and judgment with costs was given accordingly.

In the autumn of the same year, Charlie Chaplin visited this country and had, of course, a tremendous reception. He travelled back to New York on the Berengaria, and Alma Taylor and I

with a director of the company, Mr. W. A. Reid, and his secretary were travellers in that same ship. We saw a great deal of Chaplin on that voyage and he proved a most delightful fellow-traveller. He was, and still is, a great artist, certainly one of the greatest the film industry has discovered. We met him again by invitation at his house at Beverley Hills, Los Angeles, and visited his studios and had many most interesting talks with him on production and allied subjects.

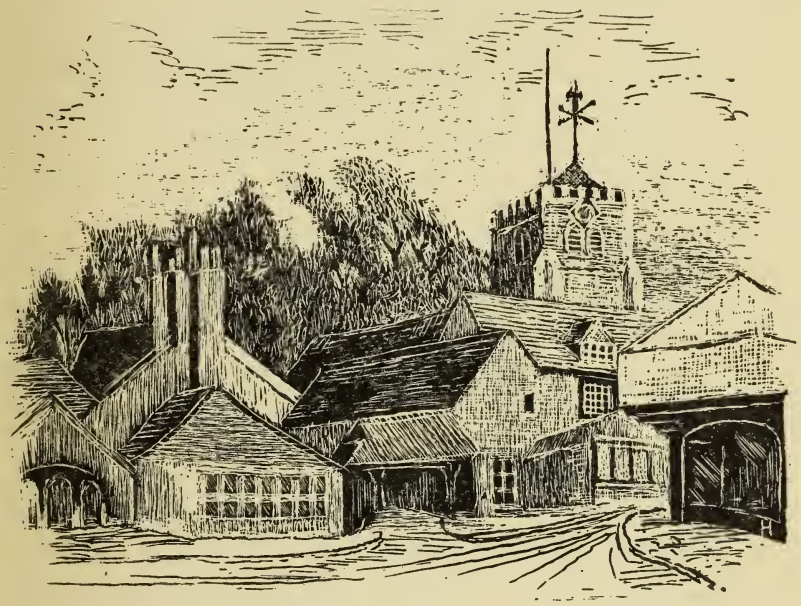
Now I come to a part of the story which is bristling with difficulties, for although we had many good films in the making or made, we had very expensive schemes in hand and it began to be evident that it would be more than we could do to finance them. It had always been the intention to float a public company to provide the capital for our ventures but the after-war boom had collapsed, and all the financial people who understand these things said we should have to wait until the money market was favourable.

We waited, but the various things we had started upon would not wait. They could not be held up and all the time they were using up money. It became apparent that either we must abandon all the enterprises we had set in motion—and that meant almost certain bankruptcy—or we must chance our arm and go to the public as originally intended. The scene-painting house was ready for use, the engine-house had all its machinery installed and nearly ready to run. All the drawings and designs for the new studios were prepared and the land secured and marked out, but we could not place the contract. Still we were advised to wait. The money market was not favourable. The times were not propitious. Yet, almost perforce, we launched a public company with a capital of a quarter of a million in £1 shares (150,000 preference and 100,000 ordinary). This was Hepworth Picture Plays (1922) Ltd. It was almost still-born for it was very badly under-subscribed. I had been warned that this might be so and that the high reputation of the firm might not be proof against the unlucky choice of a date when the money market was depressed. But I felt that it must be risked, and I alone am to blame for the unhappy result.

Almost at once we were in difficulties. The studio scheme had to be abandoned and the land released for the construction of a bypass road. (I had previously secured a promise that this would be diverted enough to pass round the studios if built.) There were

several more debenture issues—they seem to be piling upon one another most alarmingly. I suppose I really understood the matter and all its implications at the time, but looking back now over what records I can find I confess I am horribly muddled. The final blow seems to be implicit in an issue of £35,500 debentures charged on the company's undertaking and property including uncalled capital. What does not appear is the rate of interest, which I remember all too well was *ten per cent.*!

As may be imagined the time soon came when we were unable to meet the monthly drain of that punishing percentage. Directly I announced that fact a receiver was put in charge of the business and I was no longer of any account in it.



CHAPTER 19

WHAT I cannot understand now is that while all these dire happenings were proceeding, on the one hand, on the other I was cheerfully getting on with the production of my best and most important film, the second *Comin' Thro' the Rye*. I think I must have had something of a split mind: my memory refuses to be conscious of these completely opposite phases occurring even within years of each other. But it does sometimes happen, indeed, perhaps rather frequently I think, that the onset of disaster is preluded and concealed by a spurt of better times than usual. I will go over some of the events of 1923 and see whether they will account for the confusion.

'Rye' was described as one of the outstanding films among several fine English pictures released—in order of date it was the sixth, and last, of the Hepworth Company films put out that year. Of the others a very remarkable one was Henry Edwards' *Lily in the Alley*—remarkable because it was a long feature film without any titles except that opening one. All the story was explained by the action.

The British National Film League was started two years before this to raise the standard, improve the quality and promote the general interests of British films. By the beginning of this year it included every British producing company of consequence, and now it decided to run a British Film Week in London, to be followed by similar shows in various areas all over the country. Under the presidency of Col. A. C. Bromhead, a luncheon was held early in November with the Prince of Wales as the chief guest. There were many great films this year, mostly foreign of course, and they necessarily were not eligible. Unfortunately the number of good English films was not sufficient to fill the bill and there were adverse comments and many complaints that the pictures submitted for exhibition were of too varied a quality for

so great an occasion. All the same, the effect on the whole was that of an acknowledged and successful move.

Of the foreign films it was noticeable that Harold Lloyd produced great comedies which were tremendously popular, and the coming of cartoons with *Felix the Cat* started the most popular series in the country. Louis Lumière, who had first shown films to the public at Lyons on March 22, 1895, was hailed as the inventor of cinematography. I do not know that he ever himself laid claim to that title but it is evident that it should be a very distributed one, for numbers of people have had a hand in the birth of that invention. There was no progress in the fight against the entertainment tax, but several British films found sales in America, including most of the Hepworth pictures. In August, 1923, the Hepworth Company announced an agreement whereby its pictures would be handled by Ideal Films Ltd.

At the inaugural luncheon of the B.N.F.L. at the Hotel Victoria with Col. A. C. Bromhead, C.B.E., in the chair, I was very thrilled to meet the Prince of Wales. He evidently was, or appeared to be, very interested in British films. He was a most natural and genuinely kindly gentleman, courteous and friendly, with unaffected dignity. I formed that impression then, greatly intensified later on when circumstances put him at the dictation of hostile interests and he was compelled to lay down his crown. It seemed to me, and it seems to me still, that we lost then the best King we had ever had since Alfred.

Among others present at the luncheon were several very important people, including the Earl of Abercrombie who had often expressed great interest in Hepworth films. The meeting was a great success and it led to the taking of the Scala Theatre for the first London British Film Week.

As may be imagined I was most anxious to put up a good showing and as we had had long notice that this film week would in the end be forthcoming, I had, in my intention, set aside the still scarcely begun *Comin' Thro' the Rye*. I felt in my bones that it was going to be a good picture and indeed I believed it would turn out to be the best I had ever made. And then, I suppose, largely because of the very many other difficult and disturbing things which were going on around me, I had at that time no other picture of my own make which had not already been shown or was in any way competent to take its place on such an important occasion.

The first version of *Comin' Thro' the Rye*, made in 1916, had been a great favourite with the public, but I had long felt that such a popular story was worthy of more generous treatment than it received in those comparatively primitive days. The rights then had been acquired for a limited period only, but now we bought them for all time, that is, of course, till the copyright runs out fifty years after the author's death. I set about to make the film as worthily as I possibly could.

The first thing was to find a rye-field—that is to say, a field which was intended to be sown with rye. I couldn't find one within many miles and as I wanted it close at hand I rented a field just opposite the studios and had it sown. It had a beautiful old oak tree just in the right place to make a conspicuous feature in my picture. Before it was sown it had to be ploughed and that ploughing made a good opening shot for the film. Then there was the sowing which was also photographed, and the real story begins when the young crop is half a dozen inches high. It ends when it is harvested by an old man who looks something like Father Time.

Most of the exteriors were taken at Moreton Old Hall in Cheshire, a magnificent timbered building which made lovely backgrounds from a dozen different angles. We had a great stroke of luck here when we discovered a real rye-field right up against the rear of the old house. This keyed in excellently with our own rye-field back at Walton. Our interior scenes were built up exactly to match the real rooms in the old house and everything was perfectly in keeping.

But luck didn't hold throughout. We were about three quarters of the way through the film, that is to say well on in the summer, for the picture took most of the year to complete, when the leading man, Shayle Gardner, playing the principal part of Paul Vasher, contracted typhoid fever and was out of the cast for months. I did all I could with the remaining scenes in which Vasher does not appear, but there is no need to point out how very awkward it was.

When it came to providing a worthy film for the British Film Week at the Scala Theatre I had nothing to offer.

But it happened, rather curiously, for things rarely turned out that way, that the 'Rye' film was complete up to a certain point, because the order of its taking had been to a great extent conditioned by the growing up of the rye. So with much misgiving I

decided to let it appear as a sort of 'unfinished symphony.' It was in fact a great success even in that truncated form, and with its 'stage presentation,' its specially selected music, and an orchestra of twenty-eight musicians, it attracted enthusiastic attention.

Shayle Gardner recovered in due course, to the very great and thankful relief of everybody, and came back to the studio to complete the picture, though not until December. It all fitted well at last and showed no untidy joins.

It is strange to recall that, apart from this, one of our greatest difficulties was to make a footpath through our rye-field which would not look at all artificial. People walking along the selected route seemed to make no difference at all. What was trampled down one day grew up again in the night. So we filled a wooden box with heavy stones and towed that behind the procession of walkers and after a while that produced the effect in the end. The rye scenes were, of course, taken at various times during the summer so that the age of the crop should correspond with the time-development of the story.

Everybody worked to the very best of his or her ability in this picture and I put all that I have in me into it. I did not know at the time that it was going to be my 'swan song,' but so it proved, for it was the last of the Hepworth Picture Plays.

Now I must pick up the main story again at the point where the receiver was appointed to sell or realise the assets of the company and repay to the debenture holders the amount of their holdings, £35,500 in all. It appeared that this should not be at all difficult for the assets of the company were then conservatively valued at between three and four times that amount. He was a kindly man, friendly disposed and probably very skilful in his own particular line but without special knowledge of the film business, not that that was necessarily needful. He told me that in his last receivership he had not only repaid the debentures in full but had realised a considerable sum in addition that he had been able to hand back to the company, and with which they were able to restart their undertaking. Receivers don't *have* to do that. Their only concern is to realise enough to pay off the debentures in full. After that they have no further duties or interest in the matter. They have no concern with shareholders or creditors.

In our case, however, he was not so successful. The contents of the engine-house, diesels and generators, the compressing plant, the travelling gantry and the switchboard, which last alone had cost £3,250, were all sold together for £950. The two studios, with the freehold land on which they were built, together with all accessories, the four printing and developing machines, the drying machines, the electric-lighting apparatus, cameras, and in fact everything there went for £4,000 as a going concern. The same sad story went right through the whole deal and in the end the debenture holders got only seven shillings in the pound!

It may perhaps be of interest to see how the rest of the trade in England was faring during the decline and fall of my company. It is no consolation—but it may be some little explanation—that other producers in the country were in similar straits, though their efforts to struggle through were more successful. It is an indication of the depth of worry in which I was submerged that I was quite unaware until years afterwards that others were at that time nearly as deeply under.

In spite of the fact that the Snowden budget, Labour being in power, remitted the strangling entertainment tax on all seats priced at sixpence and under, and that in many other respects the year opened well for the industry; in spite of the fact that the Prince of Wales' blessing upon British pictures, given in the previous November, supported by the Premier and many important leaders, was still having its beneficial effect upon all thoughtful people, the production of British films gradually declined during the year. Until at the end of it there came a time when not a single foot of film was being exposed in any British studio.

Nevertheless, there were at least two interesting events this year. One was the Kinematograph Garden Party at the Royal Botanical Gardens which not only was a great social success but resulted in a nice little sum of £2,500 for the Trade Benevolent Fund, by then truly and thoroughly on its feet. The other was the gathering together, at the instance of W. N. Blake, of all the old-timers in the industry since 1903 at the Holborn Restaurant on December 9th. This was so successful that there was a clamant demand for its repetition every succeeding year until the last of the veterans departed. That has not happened yet and the veterans are still meeting annually, under the skilful auspices of Tommy France, though some of us are beginning to get a little old. At the original

meeting dear old Will Day brought a selection from his wonderful exhibit at the South Kensington Museum of ancient apparatus of Kinematography, so that there were veterans then both inanimate and human, united once more.

During this year colour-films and stereo-films were both continually cropping up, with little success for the one and none for the other. Sound films on the other hand were beginning to show signs of being a practical proposition, and the de Forrest 'Phono-film' embodies the embryo of all that the present sound films have now successfully accomplished.

Meanwhile I, and half a dozen of the players who had taken the principal parts in 'Rye,' were doing a little entertainment turn on our own. It should be mentioned that the stage 'presentation' which I had produced for this film at its first showing at the Scala had been very successful and attracted a great deal of attention. When the film was afterwards completed I thought it would be good fun to take a London theatre and give it a run. This idea was financed by Jimmy White. The theatre I wanted—one of the largest—had another film running at the time, but I was told that I could have the first refusal after the run came to an end if I paid two hundred pounds as a deposit to secure it. I did that and the run came to an end after several weeks, and then another show was put on with no word said to me about it!

My natural protests were met with a bland smile at my credulity and ignorance of theatrical usage and I realised that I was beaten, for a remedy would be too costly for me. So I fell back upon the Scala, which is a beautiful theatre but too much off the beaten track.

I cannot describe this special 'presentation' without a lot of drawings and diagrams which would be uninteresting. But it gave the effect of a huge picture in a gilt frame which at first showed nothing but the ordinary title familiar on every silent film. This gradually dissolved into a stage scene with the *living* actors going silently through their parts. That dissolved into another title filling the frame, to be replaced again by the appropriate scene and so on. That sounds very bald but the effect was quite magical and as the actors were 'personal appearances,' the whole thing went with a swing and pleased everybody. So much so that I persuaded Sir Oswald Stoll to come and see it with a view to putting the 'act'—without the film, of course—on at the Coliseum.

The complete show ran at the Scala for thirteen weeks, but it did not actually make money though it covered expenses. As it happens I can give an actual date in this instance, for we reached the hundredth performance on my fiftieth birthday, March 19th, 1924. Then Stoll gave me a three weeks' contract to run the show without the film at the Coliseum for two hundred pounds a week. We all enjoyed that immensely. Then we travelled with it *with* the film to numbers of picture theatres throughout the country wherever there was a stage big enough to carry it, but that number was naturally limited.

At the Coliseum there was a rather particular stage-manager, unusual because he did not like bad language used in the theatre behind the scenes, whatever happened in front. Our set, of course, was permanently on a section of the revolving stage so we had nothing to do but to wait while it pulled round into position and then lit up. On one occasion the light fused and the electrician said 'Damn' under his breath. The manager said, 'Mr. Smith, *Mr. Smith, MISTER SMITH!*' in accents of growing horror.

I remember the stage and all the dressing-rooms and everything about the place behind the curtain was immaculately clean, and that is *not* usual in a theatre. I liked that stage-manager, indeed all the personnel there were exceedingly nice, and we had a very good time. Once I was called round to the front of the house to try and pacify an old lady who 'was creating somefink awful.' When I got there I found her in indignant tears and she told me she had come up all the way from the country to see Alma Taylor in the flesh and had been put off with a coloured film. I tried hard to reassure her that she really had seen Alma, but she would not be convinced, so I took her round to the back and introduced her to the lady, and it was rather a compliment to the effectiveness of the illusion.

CHAPTER 20

I AM not prepared to deny that the gradual and final collapse of the business which had been the major part of my life was not a very real grief to me. It certainly was. But I was not broken by it, except, of course, financially, and even that was not complete. In fact from the time when failure began to loom as a probability, if not a certainty, I always had at the back of my mind that I still had personal assets in the form of experience and reputation which should be fairly readily saleable. It was only a thin consolation for the loss of so very much I held dear, but I felt that it would be there when I needed it.

It was a poor conceit but I did feel that if the worst should happen and it became known in the trade that I was free to consider engagement as a film director there would not be much lack of opportunities for me to choose from. But no such opportunity offered. I dare say my many friends among my former competitors were sorry to see me go under but they did not throw me a line. Maybe it was a sense of delicacy that restrained them. Maybe if *I* had gone to *them* it would have been different, but I did not think of that until it was too late to try it. Perhaps that was my last false step.

I had long ago taken into my own keeping the negatives which I had made personally of certain historical subjects, like the visit of Queen Victoria to Dublin, the Queen's funeral and so on, and when all the trouble was over, and I had plenty of time on my hands, I cut up and re-arranged all these, with suitable titling, into an historical film which I called *Through Three Reigns*. I trade-showed it on my own in a London theatre and it was very well received. If it had not been for the still-remaining evil of 'advance booking' I should probably have made a nice little bit of money with it. But in the meantime, 'Sound Pictures' burst like a bomb upon the silent film industry. All the theatres were feverishly 'wired for sound' and silent films which had not already got their

dates booked were relegated to the third-rate limbo—if they could get any bookings at all. *Through Three Reigns* was still-born.

So I rearranged my material with a number of early Hepworth films which I managed to pick up here and there—comics mostly —into a lecture called *The Story of the Films* with which, years afterwards, I had a moderate success in all sorts of big towns in England, Ireland and Scotland.

There is very little left to tell, for, though this is the story of my life, my *film* life is the only part of it that is likely to be of interest to anyone but myself. But it is not to be assumed that there was any moaning. I had had a very full and happy life. I have had a very happy one since; not so full but certainly not empty, and I haven't finished it yet.

The grievous thing about that studio debacle was that I had foreseen *and foretold* the coming of a great shortage of studio floor space in England *before* our studios were given away for little more than the value of the land they were built on, and I pleaded for delay and waiting for a better price. It was only a year or two afterwards that producers were screaming for floor space and prices were soaring.

I was in America at the time of the actual sale, trying to dispose of 'Rye' in the interests of the liquidation. I rented a theatre in New York for a private showing and engaged a 'sure-fire' organist to accompany the film with the special music which had all been so carefully prepared beforehand for the London showing and the British Film Week. He refused the suggestion of a rehearsal; he said he could read music and had played for hundreds of films. He made an awful mess of it; got the most cheerful tunes in the tragic scenes and vice versa, and mucked up the whole thing. But in any case the film was quite unsuited to the then American ideas. I was told that it might not be so bad if it was jazzed up a bit and I came home.

The sale of the negatives—*all* of the negatives we had issued in twenty-four years—was another blow. They were sold to a man who did not know how to use them and eventually resold them to be melted down for 'dope' for aeroplane wings. And with them he was given, thrown in, the *rights* of such copyright subjects as *Alf's Button*. I bought-in 'Rye' myself and saved it from that fate—I suppose it would have gone with the others if I had not had it in America.

Now it would be utterly false and unworthy if I pretended I

did not mind all these happenings. I did mind very much indeed. But I could not quite believe they were final. Perhaps, Micawber-like, I kept on hoping that something would turn up. But it never did, and the last of the old assets were disposed of; and the unfortunate debenture-holders—mostly my children and myself —still clinging to the belief that the deeds were worth much more than their face value, received a beggarly seven shillings in the pound. It was clear that the end had really come.

Nevertheless, I clung to what I thought was my good repute and felt sure that as soon as I was known to be free, some other producing company—perhaps several of them—would bid for my services and I should be able to start again without any of the drag of business worries on my shoulders. But that didn't happen.

Nevertheless, I was not down and out or even near it! I felt the fierce bludgeonings but though I was not the master of my fate my head was in a mess but unbowed.

I sold my ship—nasty jar, that—and my car, and drew in horns wherever I could. The Faithfull boys, men rather, true to type as ever, hung around. Stanley's 'still' and enlargement business continued in being, for I had arranged with the receiver to let him carry on till the building was sold, and I went into it with him. When we were cleared out, we three set up in a D. and P. business—developing and printing amateur roll-films—first at Hampton Hill and then at Staines, Middlesex. There I built and patented another developing machine, quite different this time, for roll-films of all sizes. I sold several of the machines for between three and four hundred pounds each, which helped, and later we took in enlarging of stills for the film trade and installed machinery for that. But nothing really paid. I struggled and squirmed and tried many things, but the small capital dwindled and got smaller still.

I was still living at Walton-on-Thames—my daughter, Barbara, was old enough to be mother to the two other children and me, and we moved into a bungalow which was easier to manage than the house. My architect friend, Carvill, had purchased the power-house cleared of all its machinery, and turned it into a very jolly little theatre for amateur theatricals and the like. He conceived the idea of starting an amateur operatic society and got hold of a chap who, rather reluctantly, agreed to run it as musical director. He had approached me, for he had been in my little choir, but I told him it was far beyond my capacity. But the other chap

seemed dreadfully doubtful and Carvill asked me again. At last I agreed to stand by and try to take a rehearsal if ever there was a let-down.

The first rehearsal was called and there was no conductor! Greatly dismayed, I took it on, and I held it for four years. We did *Mikado* first, then *Patience*, *Ruddigore* and *Gondoliers*. The joy of those adventures with that very clever producer, Miss Clara Dow, to take care of the acting, healed all my little wounds and cheered me up again.

But I must not allow myself to be tempted into reminiscences which cannot be of much interest now that they are divorced from films. So I am going to cut out several years which were unprofitable though not unhappy and jump to the time when, by chance, I slid back into the film-industry again.

First, however, I must tell of a curious incident, because recounting it is the only way in which I can discharge a debt of gratitude. I have said I was not unhappy and that was still true but I was in low water and slowly getting deeper and deeper and beginning to wonder a little where it was going to end. And then one morning at breakfast time I opened a registered envelope addressed to me:—nothing in it but a bank note for £100! There was no clue of any sort as to where it had come from—even the post-mark told me nothing. By no earthly means can I say thank-you except by this public acknowledgment. If the generous and understanding donor should chance to see this I hope it will be taken as a token of sincere gratitude for an act which did even more good than was perhaps expected of it.

For it was at this point that things did begin to look up again for me. Paul Kimberley had, of course, been stranded on the same shore by the same wave which took me there. We walked up the steep beach in different directions and I saw very little of him afterwards for a long time. He did in the end, however, get into a very good job as managing director of the English branch of an American film company, the National Screen Service Ltd. This international firm was formed with the object of making and supplying 'trailers' to advertise each week the film which was to be shown the following week in the picture theatres.

It will perhaps be remembered that the British Board of Film Censors, which I had a small share in forming in 1912, was charged with the duty of deciding whether or not each film, produced here or imported, was fit to show in English picture

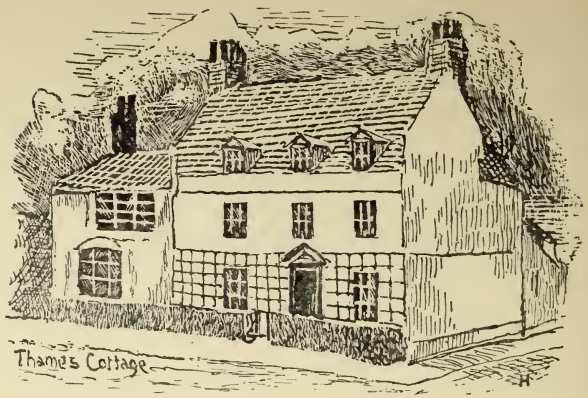
houses. But they soon found that they could not do this fairly unless they had two classes of certificates, one called 'A' for films which were not recommended for children, and another called 'U' for universal exhibition. This scheme worked well for a long time, but the coming of 'trailers' put a different complexion upon it. For the trailer for an 'A' film quite naturally often got shown during a week in which the rest of the programme was 'U,' and the theatre was consequently full of children!

Even the trailer was not good for kids, but they got their appetites whetted and wanted to see the film as well. The licensing authorities were up in arms and said these things must not be, and the censorship board was in a quandary. Brooke-Wilkinson, wise man, hit upon the remedy. He said we will have 'U' trailers on 'A' films as well as on the others, and the censor shall see them all and guarantee their innocence. And the people who make trailers must take care that they do not contain anything which would prevent them being passed as 'U,' whatever the 'feature' might be like. The licensing people agreed and Kimberley agreed, but they all said that there must be a liaison officer to see that the conditions were duly carried out. But who?

Brooke-Wilkinson said, 'What about Hepworth?' and Paul Kimberley said, 'Why not Hepworth?'—both at the same time. So it came to pass that I joined the staff of National Screen Service, and of two other major companies who were making their own trailers, and I have been there ever since.

The scheme functioned so well that my work gradually became little more than a sinecure. I filled in my time in many ways in the interest of National Screen Service and gradually settled down to my present job: the production of 16 mm. stereoscenic sound films in colour with a view to subsequent enlargement to 35 mm. for the more important picture theatres.

I am happy in this job which takes me out into beautiful scenery and the making of the sort of films I enjoy. I have numbers of friends, dear friends, in this company and in the film trade generally. Fate has been good to me after all. I am content.



EPILOGUE

Now that it is all over, I am sometimes assailed by little whispering doubts—a very slight murmuring, as of a conscience awakening too late and faintly suggesting that this and that might have been done to turn aside the hand of fate. It is then that I wonder whether I ought to have foreseen the catastrophe and taken steps to avert it; whether I ought to have realised that we were in for a slump which would probably be only temporary and might have been better met by heaving-to and trying to ride out the storm in inactivity, or even running before the wind under bare poles.

In other words, ought I, much earlier, to have disbanded the stock-company I was so proud of, and laid off the staff who had always been so loyal to me, and just sat down and waited for better times? I don't know. I don't know. The onset of the trouble was so desperately gradual and we were so involved in new ventures, which would have been very difficult to abandon before the necessity for doing so became clear and indisputable, that I cannot tell whether to blame myself or not. Even after the event, when it is proverbially so much easier to be wise, I still cannot see where there was a false step which should have been avoided.

Did I devote too much thought to my yachting and allow my eyes to stray from the danger threatening on land? Ought I now to be adapting the old lament: 'Had I but served my job as I have served my ship, it would not have brought my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave.'

But, hang it all! Who can tell? And anyway, I wasn't in the grave then and I am not now. My hair wasn't grey—it's only partly grey now, and I am not 'in sorrow' either. There are many things I am sorry about; many things I ought to have done and didn't, and many others I might have done better. But I am not worrying over spilt milk: I am *not* 'in sorrow.'

I have a dear, good wife; happy, loving children, and a fairly important job of work in which I am very interested and do thoroughly enjoy. Could any man say more in the evening of his life?

And I remember always one beautiful incident, which I promised to tell about when I came to the end of my story.

It was when matters were looking very black indeed that I called my staff around me and told them I had no choice but to sack half of them and try to carry on with the other half till things looked up again. They didn't say anything; just quietly slipped away. Next day they came back at me with a 'round robin' signed by all of them. It asked me to give up the idea of keeping half the staff at full wages and instead keep them *all* on at half-pay. I was glad to agree to this, for it seemed to me to be a very fine and generous gesture.

But the day came, and not so very long after, when I had to tell them that there was no money left and with bitter regret I must part with all of them, in spite of the fine thing they had done to help me try to save the sinking ship. It is difficult to believe how they met that final blow.

They sent a small deputation to me to ask whether I could find money to buy enough paint to paint the factory. I said it was not impossible, but *why*?

They bought the paint, plenty of it, and without a penny of pay they set to and painted the whole factory, inside and out: the women and girls painted the inside and the men the exteriors. It took a long time but they kept on until it was well and truly finished. That was their tribute. Even after all these years my eyes are smarting as I write of it.

APOCALYPSE

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And hang a calf's skin on those recreant limbs.'

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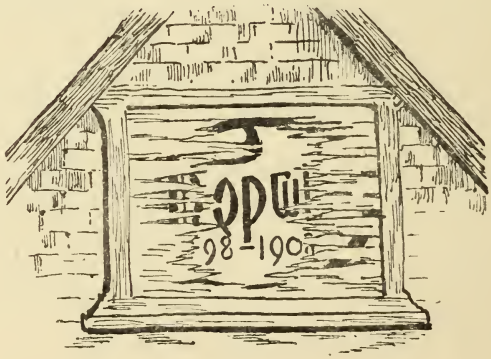

But when Time laid a cruel hand upon Great Extravagances and closed up most of the studios, wind and weather were allowed to work their will; the boarding wore away and the Emblem stood revealed again.

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