If You Can Write Funny Movies—

The film producing companies say they will let you write your own figures on the pay check. One famous laugh-maker tells how he composes his screen comedies. It's hard work

HUNDREDS of thousands of people all over the world daily laugh at moving picture comedies," said Mack Sennett, king of the film farceurs, "but how many ever pause to think of the brains and work that go into the making of one laugh?

It would be a revelation to those who never have considered the source of their fun to watch the maker of a certain brand of well-known comedies in action. But down almost to his eyes, shirtsleeves rolled above his elbows, and perspiration pouring from his face, he rushes about the studio, the personification of dynamic, untiring energy. At his side there is always a stenographer, to whom he is saying repeatedly, "Make a note of this, make a note of that; I want to change it." His brow is gnarled in concentration as he shoots orders.

"Don't make that expression of dismay quite so pronounced, Miss Normand," or "Exaggerate that gesture of quick deference a little more, Mr. Arbuckle." In short, he handles the company as a musician does his notes, blending their actions into what in the end will be a symphony of laughter.

"Comedy," the miracle man of merriment told a writer for the New York Sun between the rehearsal of two scenes, "is the hardest thing in the world to 'get over' successfully, and film laugh plays are hardest of all to make as those of the stage. In the first place, the movie director is handicapped because it is impossible for him to use two of the great elements of comedy upon which the stage director largely depends—the voice of the players and the funny lines. What was would Harry Lauder's inimitable laugh or Oscar Wilde's brilliant epigrams be to me? I have to juggle with action where the playwright juggles with words. Then to make a comedy successful, you must have a climax every minute. I always must be building up, making each climax funnier than the last, and the last funniest of all. If a film play is too funny at the beginning, it kills the latter part.

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"There are three things that make a picture comedy successful—first, one-half depends upon the scenario. I write all my own scenarios, because I find it almost impossible to buy good ones. The man who can write successful scenario a week for me that is up to our standard can make out his own checks. The rest depends upon the actors and the director. The director's part is the selection of the proper cast—and that is very important—the working out with infinite care of the proper details regarding scenery, costumes and action and the arrangement of the scenes in the order in which they will appear that every farce of the screen must follow. Every leg or movement of the eye, every breath he draws, is absolutely essential.

"I am the point of view of the actor, too," continued the creator of comedy smith as he warmed to the subject that fills his every thought, "comedy is the hardest kind of acting to do well. To begin with, the comedian has to clog the boll every time. Either he makes his audience laugh or he fails flat. A serious picture play done only indifferently well may get by, but there is no such thing as half-way success for the movie comedian.

"And let me take this opportunity to say right here to those people who are forever referring contemptuously to 'slapstick' comedy, that to do successful, 'low comedy' successfully is, in my opinion, the highest accomplishment possible to the histrionic artist.

"Burlesque is taking a serious character and ripping the scales of his actions just enough to make him appear laughable, dropping him by an exaggerated gesture or a facial expression from the sublime to the ridiculous. To burlesque a character the actor must first be able to play that part 'straight' before he can attempt a travesty on it. Before a man can 'kid' with nonsense and chortle he must be a good musician. To turn out good satire a writer first must be able to write serious stuff. That's just the way it is with the actor who tries burlesque.

"One of the attributes that a film comedian needs particularly is a serious face. He must be an acrobat or at least an athlete; a man who can be a successful comedian on the screen would be a success on the stage, too, but the rule does not necessarily work the other way. The film comedian does not depend too much on a humorous makeup or queer clothes. It is the action and the facial expression that gives costumes it is just as if he wore his street from a picture-play point of view. Watch me.' If he fails to live up to the actions he will be a failure with him. He must get a laugh with every gesture, must have his clothes act or he goes flat and the audience begins to ask, 'Who is this guy trying to act funny, anyway? He's painful.' And that's what I don't like to rely on funny make-ups. I'd rather have an actor who can be funny in a dress suit.

"Several actors have made great reputations as comedians simply because they were unusual specimens of humanity, because they were remarkably fat or remarkably tall, because they had some very pronounced peculiarity of features or because of great ability as facial contortionists. These men are born and cannot be made.

"Many of our farces on the comedies of the silent drama will be recruited from the European. I believe. Continentals are by nature very expressive. They talk with their arms, eyes and whole faces. This is true especially of the members of the vitaliic Latin races, who cannot imagine a speech without making a gesture as if they were about to dig a hole, cannot keep the eyebrow out of their eyes when they tell a joke.

"The screen has many advantages over the stage," said Mr. Sennett, his eyes roving about the studio to see that all of the many-sided subject he loves to talk about was in order for the next scene, as a ten by fifteen set for moving picture scenes is termed, "and one of the greatest is that the director is not the supervision of an actor's face more closely than it can be done by one sitting in the back of a regular playhouse.

"In a close-up picture you can show all the minutest details, the quiver of an actor's eyelash or the faintest curl of his lip. Look at this picture of Mabel Normand Hitchcock and the dancer Pavlowa. In the film a close-up picture of Mr. Hitchcock's face is shown, and he registers surprise, delight, chagrin and winks! It brought a roar of laughter everywhere the film was shown. Just a wink! But every movie fan in the house could see his eyelash move and catch the expression in his eye as clearly as if Mr. Hitchcock were sitting in a chair beside him. You could not get that effect in the gallery gods, or even to the people in the back orchestra chairs, if Hitchcock himself was on the stage of a regular playhouse.

"A little while ago I saw a novel experiment in the way of moving pictures. Just at one of the funniest climaxes in the action of a comedy picture the operator stop his machine, the lights were flashed up, and

Both Hungry.
Weary Willie—No bloomin' good! I ain't bar the tale, sir, said. "I'm 'ungry, wum, I'm weery 'ungry!"
Tired Tim—And what cause to it?
Weary Willie—She says, "An m's

Question.
Some of the coal exports people want to buy ought to be at a time."
Answer—Not a penny or ser

Sphinxes.
"Do you believe a woman can keep a secret?"
"Well," replied Senator Sorghum, "a woman can keep a secret as well as she can keep a promise."

Clear Over.
Barton—I see a preacher out West declared a sermon from an airship. What do you think of that?
Egbert—Why, I think the sermon was over the people's heads.

Look for the Silver Lining.
When a young man gets into a new place he meets the best of everything first. They feast around on top, as the cream always does. It's discouraging to see so easy to get into. It has to be scraped. The young man who comes after the chummies through which he can come in contact with respectable people.

Meteorological Motto.
The Lord sends the sunshine and the rain, but the farmer must do his own irrigating.—Christian Herald.

Sympathetic.
"Miss Bluggins a sympathetic nature."
"In a way. He is honestly sorry for the boys he knows so few of them know as much as he does."

Study Humanity.
One of the most delightful and simplest factors in the perception of others' points of view, of sympathy, is to study humanity and that synopsis is one only gain through looking at human nature in its wholesome.—A. C. Benson.

Mudders.
The supreme mudders of living are often people of quite remarkable intellectual faculty, with a quite remarkable gift of being wise for others.—Arnold Bennett.

Jeanne Henry Was Conjured.
"Mars John," excitedly exclaimed Aunt Tilly, as she pantingly rushed into a five-engine house, "please, sith, come quick to de ole cissors' session and notify Dan't to exorgorate home frequently. Jeanne Henry Jones' done bin conjured! Doctor Ostrom and Miss Lucy Hamilton and two blood relatives from Kentucky and two blood relatives from Kentucky and two blood relatives from Kentucky