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The Guide-Advocate

### Anna's Merciless Critic

By CORONE REMINGTON

(© by McClure Newspaper Syndicate.) It was not surprising that Anna Terhune should try writing for the movies. Everybody but the entirely illiterate and the abjectly lazy has tried it, is trying it or is going to try it tomorrow. Most folks experiment in film fiction because they fancy them-

selves a bit clever. Anna, however, was prompted to that endeavor only because she was sure she was a little less stupid and a good deal less badly educated than Hazel Hazelhurst; and Hazel, so all Hillsburg was one morning informed by the Herald, had written and sold to the Imperial Films company a scenario called "Flaming Swords and Bleeding Hearts." Afterward Anna had seen the film herself, with the subtitle, "Story by Hazel Hazelhurst," as

big as life. It was an amazing thing to Anna, because Hazel, a spinner girl in the silk mill where Anna was a stenographer, had left school of her own vo lition at thirteen and was the kind of girl who talks slang exclusively, chews gum on the streets and goes to 10-cent dances.

If it were really true that inarticulate people like that could get hundreds and hundreds of dollars for just tacking together a few ideas and sending them to a film company, then Anna felt she was doing herself an absolute injustice by not trying her hand at this fairy game of chance. She would do it.

Wherefore, within the next six weeks, Anna by dint of much mental toil evolved three stories. Each was neatly typed and dispatched to the Colossal Photoplays company, at New York. And each, about a week after its departure, came back as unerringly as a homing pigeon. With each was enclosed the same printed form, stat-ing that the Colossal company "regrets that the material submitted is not exactly suited to its present needs.

It was just at this time that the National Fabrics company decided to close down its Hillsburg plant for two weeks for "readjustment purposes." Anna, receiving assurance from manager that she would not be affected by the readjustment proceedings, found nerself with a fortnight's vacation on her hands.

She determined that the way to discover something about this scenario game, meantime, was to go to the place where it is played. So she made the first trip of her life to the metropolis, procured as comfortable a furnished room as New York's fantastic prices made possible to her limited purse, and set out next day to "learn the game."

Anna expected to get speech with a couple of scenario editors, at least, and to obtain from them some words of advice and suggestion; also, probably, to secure permission to visit a studio or two and witness screen drama in the making. She went to the Colossal's establishment first.

From a red-headed typist at the portal of the scenario department Anna received disillusionment. The scenario editor wasn't to be seen. Nobody was to be seen, except by appointment. A million people a day wanted to see somebody about scenarios. Anyhow, Mr. Highland was out. The associate editor was out, too.

Anna was on the point of beating a discomfited retreat when Ted Maltby, under inspiration to have an early lunch, emerged from an inner room Ted, one of the Colossal's keenest scenario readers, nevertheless was a departmental joke for his softness of heart toward the genus "writing nut." He stopped, looking inquiringly at the red-headed girl and toward Anna.

"'S lady wantsta see somebody 'bout script writin'," volunteered Red Head, vastly bored.

"Perhaps I can be of service," offered Tom. The proffer was made in sacrificial kindness, but as Anna Terhune's face lighted in acknowledgment Ted whistled, mentally, in delighted surprise. "A regular girl!" he inwardly congratulated himself—"after, oh, Lord, these many hundreds!" Then, to Anna, "I am one of the readers-Malt-

Anna told him her name. "Of Hillsburg?" Ted asked. "I have read several of your scripts lately."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" exclaimed the girl. "Then you will be the very person to advise me. That's what I have come for, you know."

Maltby experienced the sudden sense

of depression that comes to him who is unexpectedly called on to break the news to the family of the victim. "I news to the family of the victim. "I shall be deflighted," he managed to say, however. "I was just going over to Forty-fourth street for much coffee and little food. Would you care to come? It's a wonderful place to talk."

New York is not mhispurg, ever one's first day. Anna, quite to her own astonishment, accepted the invitation with no more ceremony than had accompanied its extension. minutes later they were sitting. in the camaraderie of old acquaintanceship, at a little undraped table in the presence of a negligible luncheon and

miraculous Brazilian brew.
"Now," said Ted, "I'm going to play the heavy-just mere plain brute. You've come to New York to get set right in this stunt of screen writing. You've had your scripts sent back and con've made up your mind to find the veson why and how to correct your anlis. That's it, isn't it?"

"Why, yes. And I'm glad you-"Wait," interrupted Ted. "You're not going to thank me; in a minute you're going to throw that coffee cup at my head, Miss Terhune"-Maltby's expression showed that he hated the task ahead of him—"I ask you to believe that I am animated by the sincerest, if quite sudden, friendship. There is only one thing for you to do about this work."

"I think I know what you are going to say," Anna interjected. "You're going to tell me I must start all overbegin at a beginning, somewhere—and learn the craft, just as any other must be learned."

"Wrong. Quite wrong. The only thing for you to do is to drop it. Quit it. Forget it, You'd never make a screen writer in a thousand years. There! I've said it—and mighty hard it was to say. I've read all the stories you've sent in. There's nothing the matter with them-except that they are hopeless. You're not a writer-I think you're a doer. You're not an imaginer of make-believe romances. If you'll pardon me, I think you're a million times more surely intended to live a real one. I don't believe you ever had any actual conviction that you could write—I can tell that from your stuff. I wish you would tell me just how you came to undertake it."

So kindly, so admiring, so ardently friendly and concerned were the big brown eyes of her merciless critic that Anna could feel no resentment. The only surprise she experienced was in not being surprised at all. And she told him, plump, about the Hazel Hazelhurst episode.

"My better judgment tells me you are wholly right, Mr. Maltby," she went on. "And yet how do you explain the success of that illiterate girl? If it were not for that one thing I could laugh at the whole idea -and devote the rest of my vacation to 'seeing New York' and having a good, wholesome time.'

At the mention of the name Hazelhurst, Maltby had started impercepti-bly. Now he looked at his companion for half a dozen long seconds before he answered. "I hate to spoil your Hillsburg celebrity's small glory," he said at length, "but in the person before ou see the original and only Hazelhurst, author of 'Flaming Swords.' I sione am guilty of that atrocity-and my only excuse is that I needed the money. And you, Miss Terhune, aside from the lunatic who bought and produced it, alone know the shameful truth."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Anna "do you mean that that girl at home merely lied-claimed the picture when she saw the name in a movie magazine or somewhere?"

"Your imagination improves, Miss Terhune," grinned Ted.

"Do you know how I feel?" demanded Anna suddenly. "Well, I feel as though some one had lifted a ton weight off my shoulders. I'm going straight home and fear up those foolish manuscripts and give three cheers and go to a perfectly good show!"

"Why not make it the shops this af-ternoon and the show tonight?" sup-plemented Ted eagerly. "I—I'd mighty well like to take you."

As they parted at the Broadway corner it wasn't disappointment that went along with Anna — disappointment doesn't sing in your heart. And Ted Maltby, looking after her, said to him-self: "Two weeks. Well, many a pip-pin of a story has been built in less than that."

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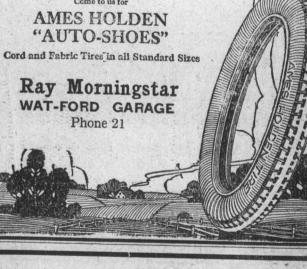
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