

# My Movie Confessions-

By Harold MacGrath

## Best Seller Novelist Tells His Experiences in the Motion Picture Game—Re-creating Himself in Fiction—The



An Interview by Harold MacGrath

The movies are rapidly finding themselves. A trend of picture making has begun which from all I can gather, will lift photoplays to a high level of art. It seems only yesterday that a surfeit of "Mysteries of the Box Car" and other atrocious things reeled off in the studios made us despair of the movies ever doing anything worth while. Today one can see pictures that give keen enjoyment. I have seen many pictures that made me wish for nothing in their portrayal—surprising, I suppose this will seem to you, for I understand it is quite fashionable in literary circles to scoff at the movies.

Not that I think the movies perfect—oh, a long, long way from it. For one thing, too many of them underestimate the intelligence of their audience; too many deal in the obvious; too many atrocities are still being committed on the screen. And then I recall with feeling having gone to see a production of one of my books, the picture rights to which I had sold to one of the big companies. The story was "The Puppet Crown," a story I was particularly fond of, for I liked the heroine of it about as well as any character I ever drew. She was a strong character. Imagine my feelings then, when I sat in the theatre and watched my story on the screen. I could not recognize it. Back in the studio they had put it into a chopper and ground out hash. That is one thing I have against the movies—mayhem of my favorite heroine.

Yes, and "The Voice in the Fog." That was another big crime. Donald Brian played the picture version of that one of my novels. It was his first and his last picture. Later I saw him and he said: "I'm through. Never again! They made me look foolish."



Luck of the Irish and the Luck of Some Others

By Harold MacGrath

Allan Dwan who forsook stars to direct authors.

"Shake," I agreed. "They made me look foolish, too. Nobody who ever read 'The Voice in the Fog' would have recognized it on the screen."

The too frequent thing had happened. The director had not begun to realize the possibilities of the tale. Did you ever notice how often, when the movies present the drawing-room of a wealthy man, they have it filled with teakwood furniture? As soon as a man becomes rich, does he buy teakwood?

We hear much about the educational value of the movies. That is true, very true. The scenery, customs and all of foreign countries have been brought right into our theatres. Were college to use motion pictures, it could educate in the modes and forms of life quicker than by any other way. But as I watched one play after another, it emphasized that such good productions were all too infrequent.

The thing obsessed me; it was like unraveling a crime. The evidence piled up to show that the guilt was double. That fearful thing which is called the "requirements of our star" was distorting good stories; and the Movie Magnate, one of those persons who used to press pants and who now tucks England to ask Charles Dickens or Shakespeare to write scenarios for him exclusively, that person was to blame, too. He craved to buy more limousines and country places with Japanese gardens filled with Ohio statuary, was making his studios turn out pictures too quickly. I wondered when they would ever get on the right track.

They tell me they have scenario writers in California who can swipe any plot, and tinker with it so an author will not recognize it. Unfortunately for my piece of mind, I seem to have a nose for plagiarism of my work.

When I went to see a production of my "The Goose Girl," I got a shock. It was wonderful. The photoplay had realized everything I had ever dreamed of in the story. That quickened my interest in movies. One thought: "If they can do a thing so beautifully once, why can't they do it every time?" It showed me that the movies are capable of conveying to an audience all the romantic charm that comes to the reader of a romantic novel. But as I watched one play after another, it emphasized that such good productions were all too infrequent.

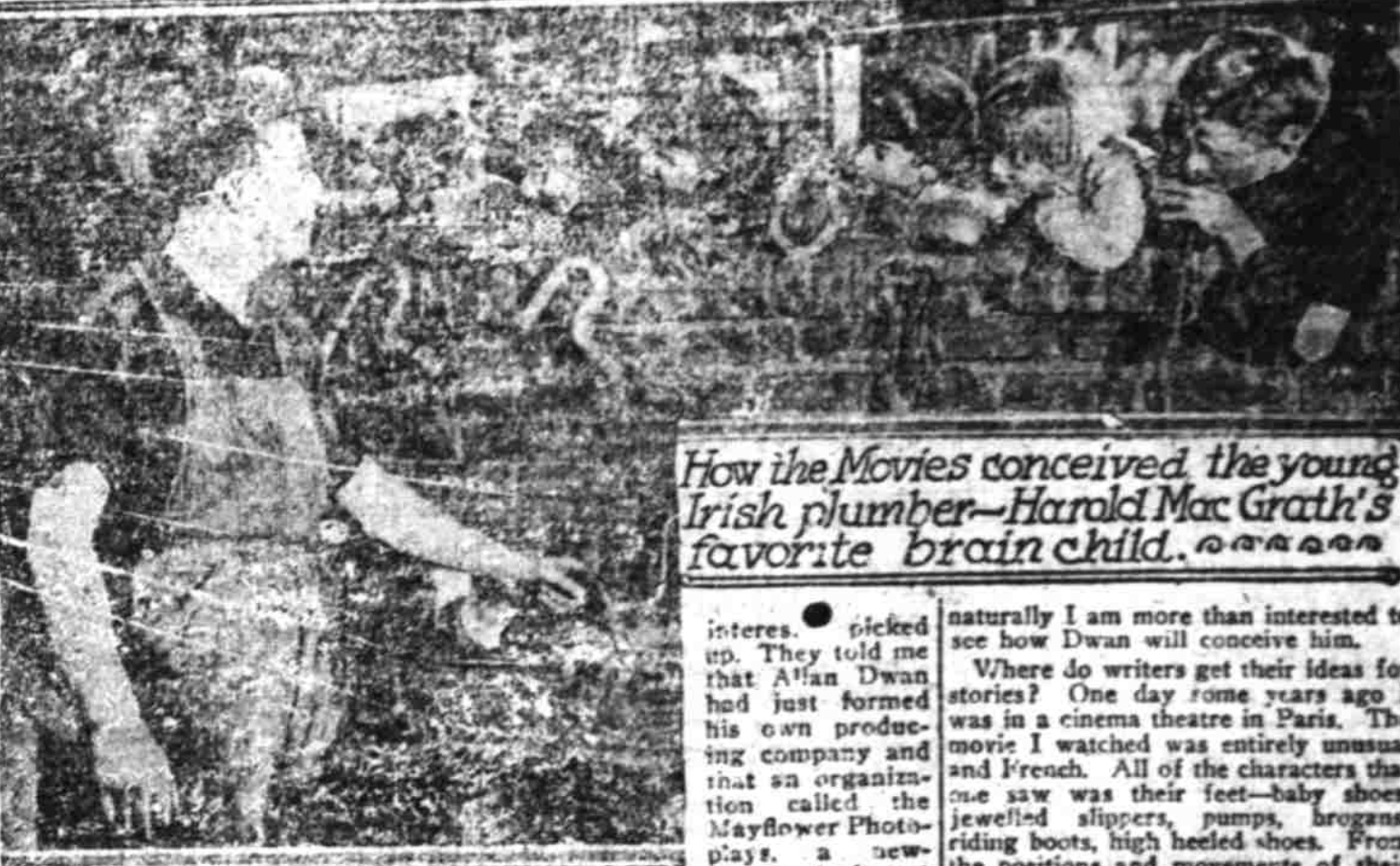
The thing obsessed me; it was like unraveling a crime. The evidence piled up to show that the guilt was double. That fearful thing which is called the "requirements of our star" was distorting good stories; and the Movie Magnate, one of those persons who used to press pants and who now tucks England to ask Charles Dickens or Shakespeare to write scenarios for him exclusively, that person was to blame, too. He craved to buy more limousines and country places with Japanese gardens filled with Ohio statuary, was making his studios turn out pictures too quickly. I wondered when they would ever get on the right track.

The motion picture rights to most of my books had been sold by last winter, but there were a few left. And when I think what some of those books went for, a cold chill creeps over me. You remember "The Carpet From Ezzard"? Seven years ago a movie company bought the rights to it for—what? Five, ten thou-

sand dollars? Oh, no, for one hundred dollars! When the publishers told me they had sold the rights for that price, I had a stroke. When I heard that over my head they had not confined themselves to this one act of charity, but sold four more for the same price, I almost became a paralytic. Twenty-five thousand dollars is the price today for the movie rights to all my future work.

So many of my books have been done in pictures that I have been asked if I wrote them with one eye to selling the picture rights. Emphatically, no. I never wrote a story for the movies in my life. I think it is because I like clean romance and action that my stories have found the way to the screen. For after all the movies are far more democratic than are books. And in my writing I always seek to entertain the great ninety per cent, holding that high privilege. Let writers who can do it better than I care for the needs of our highbrows.

Nine out of every ten writers would like to have their books done in pictures—no matter what they tell you. Of course, the war did away with much of the froth and frivol in American writing and undoubtedly forced many authors to put red blood and punch in their stories. That will help the movies, and something to the story supply which seems to show signs of being quickly bought up. There are many good books that would make good pictures that the movie people have passed by. It is easy to understand. They cry for good stories and most of them would not know a good story if it bit them. Do you know that one of the essential qualifications of the average scenario editor is that if a he—she shall know nothing about



How the Movies conceived the young Irish plumber—Harold MacGrath's favorite brain child.

story construction and that—is a she—she shall be able to say: "Oh, how utterly lovely."

"WHY THE GOY'S A PLUMBER?" I have in mind two books of my own—A Splendid Hazard and The Luck Of The Irish. One company said that A Splendid Hazard had no motive. The motive that urged on the man in the story was only to try and restore the monarchy in France and place himself upon the throne; but, of course, to the average movie maker's eye—zero. And about my The Luck Of The Irish, another company said: "The hero isn't a swell. Our star likes to wear evening gowns. Why the guy in this story's a plumber?" I thought it better to wait a few years before trying to dispose of the picture rights to these books. An undying faith in the movie told me that intelligence was bound to come.

Then to my astonishment from California last spring came word that the picture was to be The Luck Of The Irish. Incredible—with the hero a plumber! Who was the director? They told me his name was Allan Dwan, and I remembered a recent picture I had seen of his. At the time it had impressed me that here was a man who had been given a poor story and asked to make a picture of it; and in some miraculous way, he had done it, creating a thing of beauty, the scene in the African desert and its north coast—and doing it all in California! I

picked up. They told me that Allan Dwan had just formed his own producing company and that an organization called the Mayflower Photoplays, a newcomer, had put funds behind him with the understanding that he make pictures for them alone, first a few each year, spending as much time as he liked, engaging whom ever he liked and choosing himself whatever stories he liked. That sounded like common sense. When next they told me Dwan was a University graduate, that in his college days he had specialized in literature, that he had been graduated as a civil engineer and had worked at his profession in remote places before taking up pictures, it seemed to me that here was a man of faith and ready action and of culture, who had somehow acquired a surprising mastery of motion picture writing. I had seen his African picture. And when they told me that Allan Dwan had made some of the best known stars but that he felt the star system was wrong and that the story the author should be the star, plus the director's conception of his story, I said: "Here is one man who is on the right track."

He is busy now out in California making my The Luck Of The Irish and I am eager to see it. Here is where I "fess up something. Some authors write introspectively. I did it but once. That was The Luck Of The Irish. The young plumber in that story is a drawing of myself, of course, but I should like to be. Of course, he is my favorite character and

naturally I am more than interested to see how Dwan will conceive him. Where do writers get their ideas for stories? One day some years ago I was in a cinema theatre in Paris. The movie I watched was entirely unusual and French. All of the characters that one saw was their feet—baby shoes, jeweled slippers, pumps, brogans, riding boots, high heeled shoes. From the positions and movements of their feet it was conveyed what their owners were doing. The audience played the picture with its imagination. From that I got the idea of a young Irish-American, a plumber, working in a shop below the level of the sidewalk. Every day above his workbench he saw hundreds of passing feet and one day he fell in love with a very neat and very sensible looking pair of feet. Then, inheriting a fortune from an outrageously wealthy relative, he bought himself an around-the-world ticket, and met those feet he loved, on the steamer, and—now know. You see, a few years before I had made a trip around the world; hence that idea.

Every foot to get a "best seller" plot? It is—romance, lovable characters, color, action. Sometimes they ask me: "Why don't you write realistic novels?" What for? The ninety per cent go to the movie theatres and would rather see stirring, clean romance than "problems" and smut. Another point where Dwan and I agree on is that and on the "happy ending." There is no particular art in having a man blow out his brains at the close of a story or in having a deserted wife reading a love letter from her husband written during their betrothal. Americans are happy and healthy minded. And by the way, the new romance character today is not the Irish-American. He is the Scotch-American. The possibilities for a terrific western are enormous. It is the quintessence of romance.

### DORMITORY FOR INDIAN SCHOOL IS RECOMMENDED

Commercial Club Committee Investigates Needs of Institution

\$70,000 HALL NEEDED

Oregon Delegation in Congress Sent Wire Telling Request

TODAY "ONE WEEK OF LIFE" WITH PAULINE FREDERICK

And CORINNE BARKER Former Salem Girl

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gram sent to the Oregon delegation in congress yesterday by a committee of the Commercial club. The committee composed of T. E. McCroskey, E. S. Tillinghast and R. O. Snelling, was named at the open forum meeting of the Commercial club Wednesday night to investigate the needs of the school.

School Visited. The committee visited the institution yesterday and investigated its needs and held conference with Harold Hall, superintendent at the school. The recommendation to Washington followed.

The recommendation affirms the needs of the institution as set forth in a report of Mr. Hall to Washington.

### BILLS IN LEGISLATURE

- Fourteen bills were introduced in the house yesterday. They are as follows:
- H. B. 61—Jackson county delegation; fixing salaries of county officers of Jackson county.
- H. B. 62—Roads and Highways: Authorizing state highway commissioner to repair damaged highways by force account or otherwise and declaring an emergency.
- H. B. 63—Joint Ways and Means: Appropriating \$600 for portrait of late Governor Withycombe.
- H. B. 64—Joint Ways and Means: Granting additional appropriation of \$8500 to public service commission.
- H. B. 65—Gallagher: Increasing salary of state engineer from \$3000 to \$4500 and declaring an emergency.
- H. B. 66—Roads and highways: Increasing state highway revolving fund from \$30,000 to \$75,000.
- H. B. 67—Graham and Bean: Appropriating \$50,000 for completing and furnishing women's building at University of Oregon.
- H. B. 68—Corporation committee: Extending corporate existence of private corporations.
- H. B. 69—Kubli: Providing annual tax of 1.05 mills for support and maintenance of University of Oregon, Oregon Agricultural college and Oregon state normal school.
- H. B. 70—Wright: Designating certain roads in Sherman county as state highways.
- H. B. 71—Weeks: Relating to load and weight capacity of motor trucks.

- H. B. 72—McFarland: Substitute for H. B. 35; relating to angling in Willamette river.
- H. B. 73—Dennis: Relating to capacity and load of motor trucks.
- H. B. 74—Roads and highways: Relating to matching of federal funds for road purposes.
- Bills withdrawn in the house yesterday were:
- H. B. 35—Brunaugh; relating to payment and rate of interest.
- H. B. 58—Brunaugh; relative to granting of pardons.

Senate. S. B. 42, by Thomas—Increasing salaries of Jackson county officials. S. B. 43, by Pierce, Orton and Eberhard—Increasing salary of state superintendent of schools from \$3000 to \$4500 annually. S. B. 44, by Patterson—Fixing levy of six-tenths of one mill for Oregon Agricultural college. S. B. 45, by Rimer and Shanks—Providing that discharged service men may record discharge paper with county clerk without charge. S. B. 46, by Porter—Increasing the indemnity to \$250 for some classes of slaughtered cattle.

### PAVING PLANT MEASURE FAILS

Bill Would Authorize Highway Commission to Make Cement

The paving plant bill introduced by Scheubel and ardently defended by him on the floor of the house was killed yesterday when it failed to receive a majority of the representatives. The affirmative votes numbered 26.

The bill provided that the highway commission be authorized to purchase paving plants and manufacture cement for highway purposes.

Mr. Scheubel contended that the system has worked successfully in California and that a financial saving has been effected by its use there. Smith of Baker declared that state operation has usually proved costly. Dennis took issue with him on the point but he was not in favor of the bill.

Whitman team was probably the deciding feature in winning the game, as the Bearcats had the push and the punch, but there was a slight indication of individual playing on their part. There was a good turnout of sympathizers for each team. The seating capacity of the lower floor was all used and the balcony was filled.

The Whitman quintet was composed of efficient and experienced men who worked in unison and successful aggressiveness and had it a little over the Willamette five for teamwork, but for spirit the Willamette team was remarkable. Every man on the team stuck to his position and battled until the very last second, when they knew they were defeated. Gillette played a good game, at all points of the floor and still covered his position as guard well.

Jackson was another one of the Willamette aces. He played a clean and forceful game and a few examples of his very own. Stars for Whitman were the same as on the previous night. Dement with eight baskets and Rich with his speed was what kept up the good morale of the Whitman team.

### WHITMAN AGAIN BEATS BEARCATS

Basketball Team From Walla Walla Shows Superiority in Team Work

The Whitman college basketball team of Walla Walla won the second game from the Willamette "Bearcats" with a score of 29 to 23 on the Salem armory floor last night. Despite the wide difference in the score the game was fast and interesting. The efficient teamwork of the

### HOUSE PASSES NUMEROUS BILLS

Hughes Measure Provides for Administering Oaths by Assessors

- House bill No. 15, introduced by Hughes of Marion, passed the house yesterday. It provides for the administering of oaths by county assessors and deputy assessors.
- Other house bills passing were:
- No. 19—Fixing the salaries of deputy labor commissioners at \$1500 annually instead of \$5 a day.
- No. 42—Giving fish and game commission authority to purchase land for game farms.
- No. 25—Requiring individuals and firms to secure license for practicing dentistry.
- No. 28—Creating office of county meat and herd inspector in Coos county.
- No. 30—Providing increases in salaries for Malheur county officials.
- No. 32—Fixing salary of district attorney of Deschutes county.
- No. 39—Establishing county fair in Deschutes county.
- No. 12—Providing for acquisition, ownership and control of property within or without their corporate limits.
- No. 5—Providing for payment of interest by state on irrigation and drainage district bonds.
- No. 41—Providing imprisonment as punishment for killing mountain sheep, goats, elk, moose and caribou.
- Senate bills passed in the house yesterday were:
- No. 4—Amending act creating court of domestic relations to validate law.
- No. 6—Permitting organization of drainage districts.
- No. 7—Permitting establishment of kindergartens in several Umatilla county schools.
- No. 10—Granting powers to municipal corporations known as "ports."

### WHO SHOULD WEAR GLASSES

This Is a Problem That Confronts Us All

Whether you are young or old, rich or poor, the question of "who should wear glasses" is one that touches you very closely.

They who "refuse to be bored" by learning anything about their eyes, simply because their vision seems to be good, are taking the most serious risk with their most precious faculty. No one can afford to lose good vision—but it often is lost solely by reason of that neglect which arises from lack of appreciation of the importance of care of the eyes.

Those who cannot see clearly need no warning to take care of their eyes. But the human eye is a long suffering servant, which never tries to avoid work which it can accomplish, even by extreme difficulty, and hence it is very apt to create a false impression of greater power than it really possesses.

These people have bad vision without realizing it, they can see clearly, but do not understand what a terrible strain the eyes are having to achieve this desirable result. This condition is called Eye-strain, and it results in severe headaches and nerve troubles.

You may get your sight in a similar fashion! You cannot prove whether you do or not unless you have your eyes scientifically tested. The only evidence you have of eye defects may be in the form of headache.

We can tell you scientifically whether your eyes need help or not. We can ascertain whether your vision is good or bad in the sense of how it is obtained, whether at cost of undue effort or not.

The method of Sight-Testing employed by us is a thoroughly scientific process by which the exact condition of the eyes can be established, and corrective glasses, if necessary, can be furnished. Your optical defects of vision can, in this way, be perfectly corrected.

If your eyes need attention see Dr. L. Hall Wilson, Eyesight Specialist, 210-211 U. S. National Bank building.

### Four Stores Entered by Thieves at Mount Angel

Four stores at Mt. Angel were entered Wednesday night by thieves and numerous articles of value were taken, according to Deputy Sheriff Oscar Bower who returned from Mt. Angel yesterday afternoon, where he was investigating the robberies. He says no arrests were made.

The Goodrich drug store experienced the heaviest loss. According to the proprietor, inventory of the missing articles was not completed when Deputy Bower was there, but the loss was in the neighborhood of \$200 or \$300, including 13 kodaks and a valuable toilet set. The store was entered through an open skylight.

Barr's jewelry store was entered through a rear window and all papers were gone through and about \$5 in change was missing.

The candy shop belonging to Thomas Lals was entered through the back window and some small change taken.

Evidence showed that someone had tried to enter the Schmalz warehouse but did not succeed.

The office of the Mt. Angel creamery was ransacked. The company

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safe which was left open was gone through but nothing of value was in it.

### CITY PREPARES FOR THRIFT WEEK

Schools, Churches, Business Men and Others Join Movement

The public schools, the Salem Ministerial association, Salem Women's club, bankers, insurance men, real estate men, manufacturers and the general business interest of the city

### IN DISGUISE

At the zoo an Irishman and Scotchman were studying a zebra. They were arguing about what kind of an animal it was. The Scotchman said it was a zebra, while the Irishman persisted that it was not. "Well, what is it?" said the Scotchman. "It's tall you," said Pat; "it's a donkey with his football jersey on." —Unidentified.