



Barbara Stanwyck suffered a bruised hip and Katherine DeMille a badly scratched arm when they put on this fight for the cameras.



## Just TRY to BALANCE that MOVIE BUDGET!



Here's a studio-staged flood filmed at a cost of \$3000. Does that sound expensive? Well, look at the upper left, where the "Captains Courageous" company went out and got a real storm at sea. It was ever so much more costly, what with insurance premiums and all.

During production of "The Last of Mrs. Cheyney," a butterfly wandered into the set, and husky property men went mincing about the stage with nets trying to catch it.

By Jeannette Meehan

HOLLYWOOD

IT'S a fact that every Hollywood movie is budgeted within an inch of its life.

Every penny is accounted for long before the camera records a single image. So much for advertising and exploitation. So much for story and writers. So much for cast, artists, labor, crew and technicians. So much for wardrobe, props, sets and rentals. So much for retakes, transportation, insurance and "special effects"—and so on far into a thick sheaf of papers laboriously cataloged, item by item.

Then the picture begins, and so, inevitably, does the grief. So many things can happen—and do.

No matter how thorough or ingenious the measures for guarding against excessive expense, somewhere in the course of production an emergency is bound to arise that will mess up the shooting schedule and set the members of the production office back in their crying-chairs for some little spell.

A movie company has headaches enough, heaven knows, but the main dilemma is delay. Among other things, it's those hours marked off to "lost time" that skyrocket production costs and reduce the efficiency experts to the lowest common denominator of nervous collapse.

A waste of five minutes is bad enough. A forced inactivity of two hours is serious. If production is halted for a day it's a catastrophe—especially on ambitious pictures like "Romeo and Juliet," "Good Earth," and "Mutiny on the Bounty" where the overhead ran in to \$50,000 a day.

Delays can't be disciplined and it's all very maddening. They can be caused by almost anything. They're caused by the birds and the bees. They're caused by temperament, miscalculations and unforeseen emergencies—all resultant of situations over which no one has any control.

And of course there are those two old stand-bys, the Weatherman and Ole'

Meany Microbe—the bitterest of the Budget's bitter enemies.

INDEED, the Weatherman seems to be devilishly out of sympathy with the troubles of movie companies on location. If it's sun they want, there's apt to be a most unseasonal cloudburst. Or, what is even more disconcerting, one of those awful days when the sun shines through the clouds just frequently enough to tease the company outdoors, and then keep them there in a frightful state of indecision—whether to stick it out and play tag with Old Sol, or go back inside.

But suppose the producer is a stern realist and WANTS a storm. Haw. Just as sure as you live, there will follow a long period of simply heavenly weather. Then, as happened on Gary Cooper's new picture, "Souls at Sea," just as the studio gives up and spends \$2000 to stage a storm in a specially built tank on the back lot—it will hail.

It's no secret that when the late Irving Thalberg sent the cast and crew of "Mutiny on the Bounty" out on the Pacific to find nature at her stormiest, they sailed away exactly \$80,000 worth of time before they found one.

People always talk such big money in Hollywood that one sometimes forgets that they are budget-conscious. If you don't think the studio is concerned about every dollar they spend you should see the activity around the production office when an emergency arises.

Not long ago M-G-M had 1000 people on location at Catalina Island for sea shots on Wallace Beery's new picture "Captains Courageous." One bright sunny morning the weather bureau reported a heavy storm approaching the island from the north. The production office got busy.

Within two hours there were six long distance telephone calls; two specially chartered boats were dispatched to the location unit where an army of laborers were already breaking up the loca-

tion city; a night fleet of limousines and buses were waiting at the harbor to transport the company back to the studio, where preparations were being made for 1000 hot dinners.

IN the meantime a new set of orders had been given to the wardrobe department; an entirely different set of calls had gone out from the casting office, and the construction of a new set was under way on one of the studio sound stages.

Boy, they work fast. In this case the "break up" call came at 8 a. m. and at 6 p. m. the entire cast and crew were intact on the studio set, working as calmly as if nothing had happened. The "move" cost the studio \$5000—but that was better than several days' loss of shooting time.

Sickness is a beastly threat to the budget. The recent "flu" epidemic cost Hollywood literally thousands of dollars in production delay. Paramount alone had seven companies held up at one time or another because of influenza cases among the cast and crew.

And believe me, the actor who has to work with a cold is nothing but a pest. All he does is give it to somebody else.

As a matter of fact, there are so many things that can delay a picture, one marvels that a movie ever gets finished at all. The studios are situated directly on the route of the various transcontinental airways, and every single time a plane flies overhead production has to stop.

Take the company that goes on location. If they're lucky enough to find good weather, that's just ONE problem out of their way. The microphone is responsible for most of the others. "Mike" is a sensitive body.

Suppose the farmer just over the hill is running his tractor? Nothing can be done until someone runs over and persuades him to stop. That takes more talking than you'd think. If he's a nice farmer, he'll be reasonable. If he's one of the Smart Boys, he'll drive a pretty hard bargain. So it's a motion picture company that wants him to stop, eh? Well, they've got lots of money in Hollywood, haven't they? He'll take \$500.

Freak accidents contribute no little to the elasticity of the movie budget. It's

a rare case indeed when some slight casualty doesn't cause delay until medical attention has been received and damages repaired.

You've heard so many stories about doubles who forget to "pull their punches" in fight scenes that you're inclined not to take them seriously—until you've seen it happen. It was during the filming of Irene Dunne's current picture at Paramount, "High, Wide and Handsome," that I saw my first one.

TWO husky stunt men, all be-wigged and be-masked to look like Randolph Scott and Charles Bickford, were staging a battle that looked like anything but a tea party. Chico, who was doubling for Mr. Bickford, took a nifty on the chin, was flung over his opponent's shoulder against a wagon and landed, kerplunk, on the barn floor—just as he had done in rehearsal. The director called "cut" and the scene was over, but Chico lay quite still, and when he did get up there was a trickle of something dark and red on his forehead that wasn't make-up.

A bee in the microphone sounds like the 26th Pursuit Squadron and is most difficult to dislodge. A fellow can't be too careless as he never knows whether he's going to come in contact with the feeding end or the business end of the insect.

During production on "The Last of Mrs. Cheyney" a butterfly found its way into the set, and the cast is still in hysterics over the sight of husky grips and property men mincing about the stage with butterfly nets trying to catch the darn thing.

Precautions against these annoying delays often result in some rather odd jobs around the studio. Every spring, Twentieth Century-Fox employs 15 men to oust a flock of woodpeckers who think that the storage barns on the studio's back lot are a swell place for an honest bird to make a living. Their "pecking" makes sound production on outdoor sets impossible.

Every time they use animals in a motion picture, Fox employs a man who remains on the set all day. His function is most important.

His name is Paul Gerrets and he does nothing but swat flies.