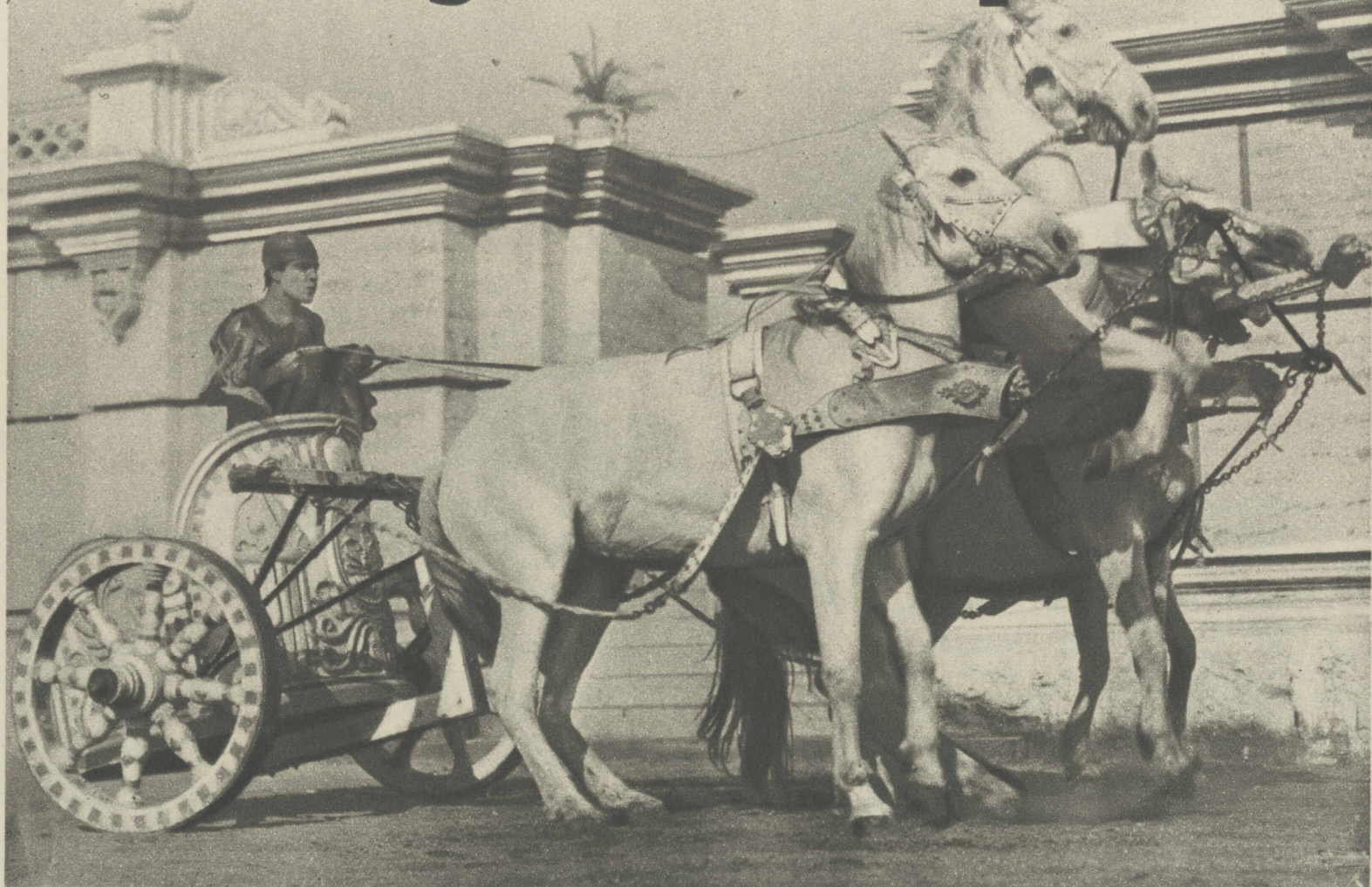


# Looking at Hollywood with Ed Sullivan



Ramon Novarro reins in his chargers in the race scene from the silent film version of "Ben Hur." Gen. Lew Wallace's book holds the record for movie earnings.



Gen. Lew Wallace. He earned close to \$2,000,000 on "Ben Hur."



(Acme photo.) George S. Kaufman . . . \$200,000 for "You Can't Take It With You."



Edna Ferber . . . with Kaufman, the best paid writing team of today.



Ben Hecht "can earn \$1,000 a day any time he wants to work."



(Acme photo.) Charles MacArthur gets \$40,000 to \$60,000 for a movie script.

## "Starving-in-the-Attic" Days Are Gone for Authors Who Crash Films

By ED SULLIVAN

Hollywood, Cal.  
**R**EMEMBER when you were kids, and you shuddered at the stories of gaunt geniuses who wrote in cold attics with only a crust of bread and a cup of water for sustenance? That was the old-time conception of an author. But Hollywood has changed all of that. Your modern writer lives out here in a mansion, with two or three private swimming pools dotting the estate, a massive yacht docked sou' by southwest of the tennis court, and bank deposits aggregating at least \$1,000,000. He has butlers and second men and polo ponies and foreign limousines. That picture of a 1938 model writer is not so cock-eyed as it may seem. Youthful Sidney Kingsley received a certified check for \$165,000 from Sam Goldwyn for "Dead End." Sinclair Lewis got \$165,000 for "Dodsworth." RKO paid George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber \$130,000 for "Stage Door," although they used only one line of dialog from the play, hiring screen writers to build a completely new script around the title and locale of the stage play.

RKO paid more than \$225,000 for "Room Service" as a movie vehicle for the Marx brothers. Maxwell Anderson just received \$66,000 from David O. Selznick for "Star Wagon," which will star Janet Gaynor. Against these staggering sums of money I'm afraid that the old-time conception of a hollow-cheeked individual penning his attic masterpieces in a wavering hand won't hold water. The modern author is sitting on top of the world, sated with luxuries, the most important figure in the Hollywood picture. Not only is the pen more powerful than the sword; it is the pass key to the government mint.

Selznick, who bought the rights to the widely read book, has been offered \$350,000 by other major companies out here, but refused to sell. Books and magazine stories never, of course, command the prices that successful or even fairly successful stage plays get. One reason for this is that novels often are bought from the gally proofs. The picture company therefore is gambling that the book will be a best seller, and so the author, who also is doubtful, is willing to accept a smaller sum. Dashiell Hammett got \$50,000 for "Thin Man," which was an unproduced story. But when RKO paid John Murray and Allen Boretz and George Abbott \$225,000 for "Room Service" the play was a smash hit on Broadway. The same reasoning explains the high sales tags on "Dodsworth," "Dead End," and "Stage Door." The sum of \$200,000 was paid for "You Can't Take It With You." The movies, however, have not always guessed right on these Broadway smash hits. Paramount paid \$100,000 for "Sailor Beware," a hit on Broadway, and then learned too late that there

was no way of cleaning up the dialog to present it as a film. M-G-M had the same trouble with "The Postman Always Rings Twice," a successful book that could not be translated into celluloid terms because of censor restrictions. Sometimes, however, the movies get a break. After a lapse of years a copyright expires and novels are thrown into the realm of public domain. "David Copperfield" and "Little Women" were in public domain. Then, too, companies which owned valuable story properties in the days of silent pictures only need to acquire the sound rights. Paramount's "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch" is an illustration of this.

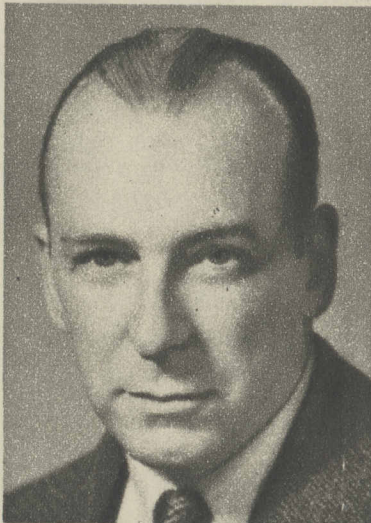
Rice, who is fond of berating commercialism in the theater, was crass enough to take \$165,000 for "Street Scene." Eugene O'Neill ranked high with \$85,000 for "Strange Interlude." Somerset Maugham settled for \$27,500 when he peddled "Of Human Bondage." However, it is not only the novelists and the authors of plays who dip their fingers into the golden pot of Hollywood. Ben Hecht, Gene Fowler, Grover Jones, Charlie MacArthur, Morrie Ryskind, and Bob Riskin demand and get from \$40,000 to \$60,000 to prepare a single movie script. Hecht can get \$1,000 a day any time he wants to work, and his sardonic slant in "Nothing Sacred" proves that he's still in rare fettle. Damon Runyon for a spell was getting from \$15,000 to \$25,000 a story. Howard Estabrook, Towne and Baker, Eddie Moran, Jack Jevne, Jean Negulesco, Casey Robinson, Frances Marion, Vicki Baum, Bess Meredith, Wallace Smith, George Marion, Eric Hatch, John Mahin, Donald Ogden Stewart, Edgar Allen Woolf, and Jerry Wald are contract writers paid from \$1,000 to \$3,500 a week. Against this array of experienced craftsmen John Doe—and he represents all of the hopeful amateur and semi-professional writers of the country—stands no chance. Legal departments of the major film studios refuse to permit the studios even to open an envelope containing a manuscript. This is to avoid the plagiarism suits which are a nuisance to the industry and which at one time developed into a prosperous racket. Produced plays, magazine stories, and novels supply the bulk of the stories used on the screen. Original screen stories by established authors, presented by an agent, complete the shooting schedule. So while the sums of money I have set down here may make your mouth water in anticipation, don't mail your manuscripts to the studios. It will save you stamps and heartaches. The idea is to get your story published, either in book form or in a standard magazine. Then the movies may be interested in it and you can qualify for the gold at the end of the rainbow.



David O. Selznick bought "Gone with the Wind" for \$50,000.



Margaret Mitchell, author of "Gone with the Wind," profited despite bargain she gave Selznick.



George Abbott was able to sell "Room Service" for \$225,000 because it was a Broadway hit.

## Voice of the Movie Fan

Letters published in this department should be written on one side of the paper. If you wish a personal reply please inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Dear Miss Tinée: I am going to ask you to settle an argument between my girl friend and me. It is about the age of George Murphy, who took the part of Sonny in "Broadway Melody of 1938." Could you please print a picture and also something about him in your Sunday column?  
Thanking you, I am yours sincerely,  
PERRY HELEN QUIN.



GEORGE MURPHY

Editor's note: I hope the attached information doesn't lead to any coolness between you and the girl friend. Mr. Murphy was born in A. D. 1904 on the Fourth of July. Perhaps that's why he's such a wise-cracker. (Ouch!) He was born in New Haven, Conn. He's 5 feet 11 inches tall, weighs 175 pounds, and has brown hair and blue eyes. Before going into pictures he worked as a toolmaker, a miner, real estate agent, and then a night club dancer. He's married to Juliette Johnson.

Dear Miss Tinée: I've enjoyed your column a lot and would like to add my two cents' worth. May I try?  
Here are just a few comments jotted down over a period of time.  
Let's see more of Tyrone Power. He definitely has something—looks, good acting, grand smile—and how about co-starring him with Frances Farmer?  
May I put in a plea for Clark Gable as the one and only Rhett Butler?

It would be nice to see the much talked-about Temple curls and complexion in color.  
How about Nelson Eddy and Deanna Durbin in a movie? Their voices should be grand together, and a clever plot could be found, I'm sure.  
Then the two Bennett sisters—both interesting personalities. They could be just darling in a clever comedy. How about a few facts about them?  
I'd certainly like to see this in print, but then I'll be reading your column anyway. Thanks.  
Editor's note: Thank you—and here's hoping you like the looks of your contribution in print. I imagine you'd like to see Nelson and Deanna in a "Daddy Long Legs" sort of film?  
Constance Bennett was born in New York, Oct. 22, 1905. She's 5 feet 4 inches tall, weighs 110 pounds, and has blonde hair and blue eyes. Educated at Miss Shandor's school, Mrs. Merrill's school, and Mme. Balsan's finishing school in Paris. Hobbies are bridge, living in France, and good books. She's divorced from Philip Plant and the Marquis de la Falaise de la Courdraye.  
Joan Bennett was born in Palisades, N. J., Feb. 27, 1910. She's 5 feet 3 inches tall, weighs 110 pounds, and has golden blonde hair and blue eyes. Educated private tutors, St. Margaret's Boarding school in Waterbury, Conn., and at a finishing school, L'Ermitage, Versailles, France. Divorced from Gene Markey and has two daughters. Appeared on the stage in the production "Jarnegan" before she entered motion pictures.

her name. She played in Sonja Henie's picture "Thin Ice" and sang "I'm Olga from the Volga." To describe her further, she does a lot of crazy dances—also stutters a lot.  
Lots of luck to your column in the new year. Thank you.  
DOLORES BROWN  
Editor's note: Joan Davis is the name.  
Dear Mae Tinée: I have just seen that marvelous production, "The Life of Emile Zola," and, like most others, remain deeply impressed with its near perfection. However, I have several questions to which I would appreciate answers.  
First of all, how could carbon monoxide gas, which was the cause of Zola's death, be seen emanating from the stove when carbon monoxide is invisible?  
Secondly, did Ralph Morgan take the part of one of the army officers in the trial of Zola?  
Thirdly, who took the part of Anatole France, the part of Mme. Dreyfus, and the part of Colonel Piquard?  
I hope my questions are not too many. Thank you.  
Yours sincerely,  
DAVID E. ALLEN JR.  
Editor's note: You saw the stove smoking, not the carbon monoxide escaping. It was, of course—but the smoke was what



GALE SONDERGAARD Played the part of Mme. Dreyfus.

you saw. Yes, Ralph Morgan was commander of Paris. Morris Carnovsky played the rôle of Anatole France, Gale Sondergaard the part of Mme. Dreyfus, and Henry O'Neill played Colonel Piquard in the film.  
Ask me all the questions you want to. I'll answer them if I can.  
Dear Miss Tinée: Being an ardent movie fan, I was inspired to write the following poem. I've written many poems but this is the first one based on the movies.  
It is my belated Christmas contribution to your column. You are a splendid critic, but please do not be too severe with my effort.  
"THE STARS UPON THE CHRISTMAS TREE"  
I have a Holly[wood] Christmas tree Bedecked with artists, noteworthy; The lower boughs in bright array Are trimmed with stars of yesterday. Von Stroheim, Compton, Chaplin, Lloyd, Farrell, Mulhall, White, and Boyd. And in the center, dancing there Are Jessie Matthews, Fred Astaire; George Murphy and Miss Powell tap. But Stepin Fetchit takes a nap; Myrna Loy, in young wife part, Puts love and joy in every heart; MacDonald sings a "Maytime" song. And Eddy follows right along; Bruce and Rainer with a charm, Rare and sweet, reserved and calm; Spencer Tracy, real, sincere, Makes one laugh or shed a tear; Gable, Colman, he-men meet To give the public eye a treat; Fredric March and Franchot Tone— Personalities all their own. Atop my lofty Christmas tree, Loretta Young and Paul Muni. The brightest stars, are shining high; The rôles they've played will never die; But none my wondrous tree can find Because it lives within my mind.  
LILLIAN OSWALD.  
Editor's note: "Severe!" I think it's lovely!



William Powell and Myrna Loy in a scene from "The Thin Man." Dashiell Hammett, its author, netted only \$50,000 for what proved to be a smash hit because it was unpublished at the time of sale.