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THE SHADOW WORLD OF ALFRED HITCHCOCK

by LAWRENCE KANE

ALFRED HITCHCOCK, the English motion picture director whose melodramas have been as widely admired as anything on celluloid, lives in Bel-Air, California. Today—rich, famous and fifty—he might take time out occasionally from that sybaritic environment to look back on the shadow world in which he won his eminence. Perhaps it would not occur to him that some future movie historian, looking for a career to typify those of the distinguished directors of the early Twentieth Century, could do a great deal worse than select his own. For in it reside all the elements: the severe apprenticeship, the flare of creative originality, the smile of fame and fortune, the progressive compromises which the latter forced . . . and, twenty six years after Hitchcock's first screen credit, the atrophy of his art in the Hollywood web, where the spider's mesh is spun from gold.

Alfred Hitchcock's most recent film is "Rope," which has had some nice reviews and will certainly return the Warner Brothers a substantial profit. It is also an outstanding example of what Hollywood has done to him. The most conspicuous thing about the film is the unique way it was shot: instead of the customary hundreds of short takes, "Rope" was filmed a ten-minute reel at a time. "As I see it," Hitchcock said recently, "there's nothing like continuous action to sustain the mood of actors, particularly in a suspense story." To accomplish this continuity the studio was turned inside out. Walls were hung on greased rollers from the ceiling beams, swinging back and forth to admit the camera; furniture was moved on and off at specially designated points as the camera passed; a brand new Technicolor camera, mounted on a boom, followed the actors relentlessly from point to predesignated point, always coming to rest on somebody's back to permit the reel changeover. The result of these mountainous labors is a mouse of a picture in which action has somewhere been lost; and in which the people (excellently drawn in the Patrick Hamilton play on which "Rope" was based) are, for all the salmon hues of Technicolor, nothing but pale effigies.

It might be difficult to find fault with Hitchcock's notion about the virtue of continuous action— had he not, twelve years ago, prophetically confounded himself. Then, in talking of "Sabotage," a picture in every way superior to "Rope," he said: "If I have to shoot a long scene continuously I always feel I am losing grip on it, from a cinematic point of view. The camera, I feel, is simply standing there, *hoping* to catch something with a visual point to it. What I like to do always is to photograph just the little bits of a scene that I really need for building up a visual sequence. I want to put my film together on the screen. . . . This is what gives the effect of life to a picture—the feeling that when you see it on the screen you are watching something that has been conceived and brought to birth directly in visual terms. The screen ought to speak its own language, freshly coined, and it can't do that unless it treats an acted scene as a piece of raw material which must be broken up, taken to bits, before it can be woven into an expressive visual pattern."

(*Continued on next page*)

From 1923 to 1938 Hitchcock was true to his word: he did put his films together on the screen, his terms were visual, and, perhaps more than any other director of our time, his language was freshly coined.

WHAT is often called the "Hitchcock cycle" includes the six pictures he made for Gaumont-British between 1935 and 1938. They are all melodramas, and unquestionably his best work. They are also, except for "The 39 Steps" (1935) and "The Lady Vanishes" (1938), almost entirely unknown to most American moviegoers. The others in the cycle are "The Man Who Knew Too Much" (1935), "Secret Agent" (1935), "Sabotage" (1936) and "The Girl Was Young" (1937). "The 39 Steps," along with Sir Alexander Korda's "The Private Life of Henry VIII," was the movie that put the British film industry on its feet; it not only made Hitchcock's reputation in the United States, but those of Madeleine Carroll and Robert Donat as well. The sad truth is that none of Hitchcock's post-1938 American pictures, with the possible exception of the only moderately successful "Shadow of a Doubt" (1943), measures anywhere close to the six in the cycle, nor to at least two which he made much earlier: "The Lodger" (1926) and "Blackmail" (1929).

"The Lodger," based on the story of Jack the Ripper, had one scene which foreshadowed what was to come: in it, Hitchcock focused the camera on a totally black stairwell and had it follow the eerie white hand of the murderer moving down the bannisters.

A year later came "The Ring" (1927), in which Hitchcock carried his experiments with detail a step further. At one point in this film the young boxer comes home after winning his fight. He is flushed with success and wants to celebrate. He pours out champagne all around. Then he learns that his wife is out. He knows at once that she is with another man. At that moment the camera shifts to a glass of champagne: a sudden fizz of bubbles rises and then the wine stands untasted, going flat. By that one closeup Hitchcock hoped to show the mood of the whole scene. Years later, reminiscing about his precocious addiction to camera subtlety, he described another scene from "The Ring." Outside a boxing-booth at a fair, a barker is talking to a crowd. Inside, a professional boxer who has always won in the first round takes on all comers. A man comes out and whispers something to the barker. Then the camera moves to the ringside, where we see an old figure 1 being taken down and replaced by a brand new figure 2. "I meant this single detail to show that the boxer, now, is up against someone he can't put out in the first round," Hitchcock commented. "But it went by too quickly. Perhaps I might have shown the new figure 2 being taken out of a paper wrapping—something else was needed to make the audience see in a moment that the figure for the second round had never been used before."

Inanimate objects have often played star roles in Hitchcock films. In "Secret Agent" it was a button; in "Sabotage" a broken teacup, a raincoat belt, a pair of spectacles; in "The Lady Vanishes," the label off a package of tea. That technique is probably Hitchcock's soundest cinematic innovation (and one quite his own), since the most distinctive attribute of the camera is its power to concentrate on and give meaning to particular objects. It is a device which could not be used in the legitimate theatre, if only because of the failing eyesight of most people who can afford six dollar orchestra tickets. Like every facet of good Hitchcock, it is pure motion picture.

An outgrowth of this near-surrealism of detail is what Hitchcock chooses to call the McGuffin. The McGuffin is the gimmick, an object which holds a hidden key to the plot. Hitchcock described its effect some years ago in an article for "March of the Movies":

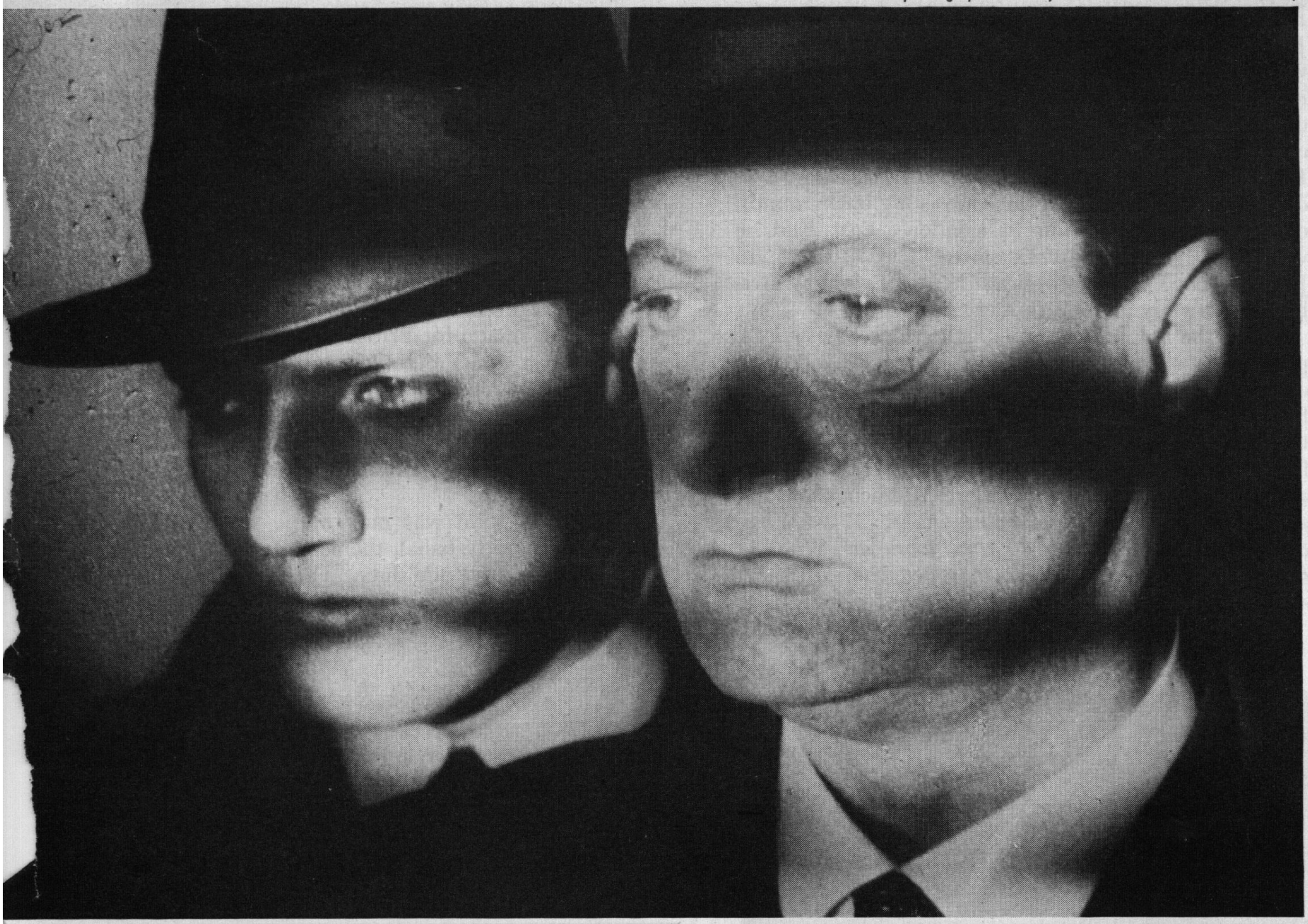
"I always feel," he wrote, "that one of the most interesting things about 'Sabotage' was the fact that there I committed the grave crime of being truthful to myself. I had a small boy carry a bomb across London, ticking away, and held the audience in great apprehension for fear it would go off. Then, lo and behold, it did go off—and with a hell of a bang! All the women in the audience were furious. They were livid with me. They were so used, over so many years, to seeing the circular saw approach the neck of the heroine and getting terribly apprehensive about it, but were awfully relieved when it never reached it. I would say that through all dramatic history this was probably the first instance of the saw reaching the heroine's neck."

It is not altogether foolish to point out that the important thing about all these devices is their success. Any reasonably imaginative person might conceivably have thought of them—but only in Hitchcock's hands did they result in superbly exciting and connotative pictures. It is in the *how* and the *why* of his technique, the technique of the cycle melodramas, that the real lesson lies. And in what that technique led to, the real warning.

IN ADOPTING an almost obsessive attention to detail—detail of camera and setting and character and props—as his chief tool, Hitchcock may not have realized how profoundly wise he was. For the movie camera is the great analytical medium of art. Synthesis is foreign to its mechanism. By its very nature the camera seizes upon continuous action and analyzes that into a series of details: the lifted eyebrow, the spoon frozen an infinitesimal space above the cup, the explosion of the crescent tear. Each sliver of life becomes a Humpty Dumpty: not all the eye's deceit can *really* reassemble them into a valid continuity. Before the movie lens, Xeno's tortoise really does escape the hare.

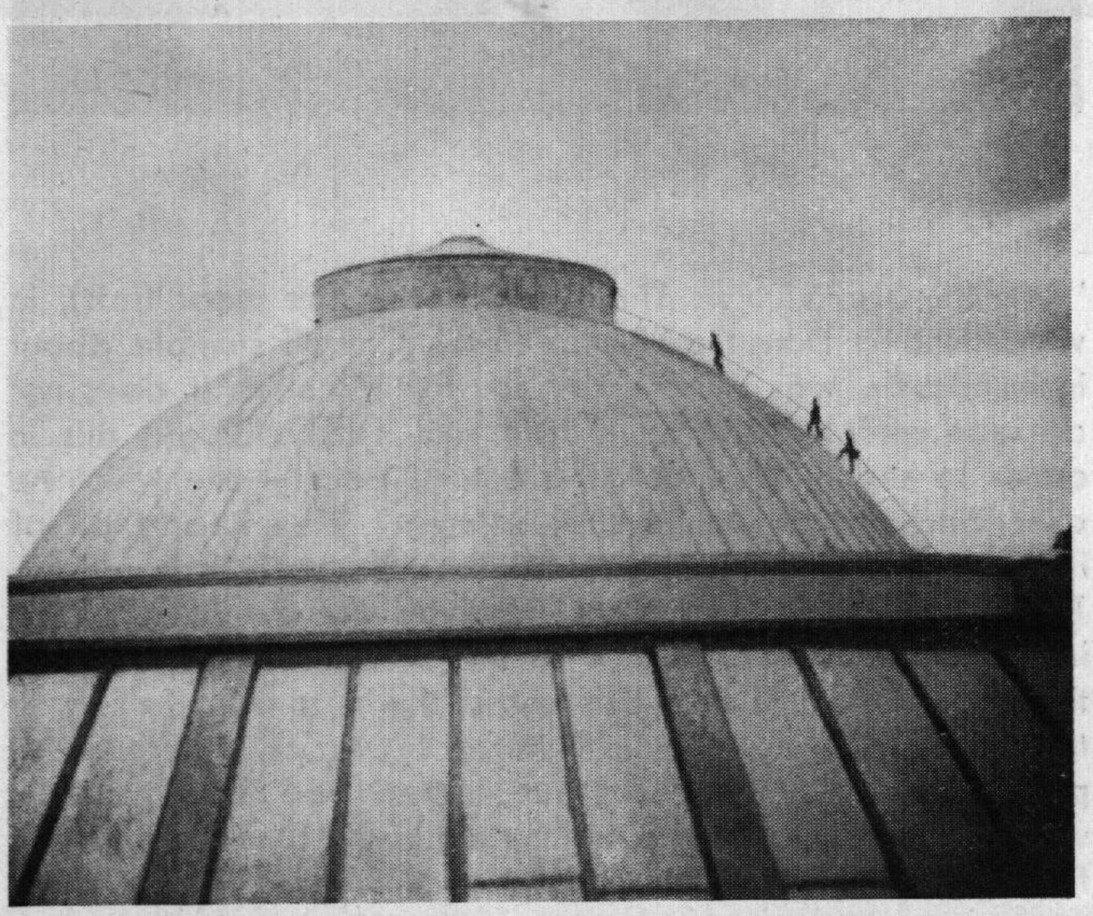
The motion picture artist, therefore, must understand his peculiar relationship to the scene he endeavors to fix on celluloid. He must train his eye, the very neurons of his brain, to be analytical. He must recognize that motion, once dismembered by the shutter's blade, can never be reintegrated. He must choose moments of time, infinitely small details, with such daedal cunning that the viewer's brain will be cheated into the *illusion* of motion. Motion itself, continuity, is paradoxically enough forbidden to the motion picture camera.

Hitchcock's quest after that degree of detail which is the secret—speaking always of his good pictures, overlooking for the moment such aborted things as "Rope"—begins the moment he decides to make a movie. He selects all his own stories, and is dominant in the adaptation, writing of dialogue, and preparation of the shooting script. (In 1926 he married Alma



"BLACKMAIL" . . . These three scenes from a 1929 picture illustrate typical good-Hitchcock techniques. The lighting on the faces of the men above is clearly derivative of German methods of the twenties, but more cleanly and economically employed. The two pictures below show a device which Hitchcock has always liked: the impending fall-from a-high-place as a method of building suspense and terror. It was repeated eleven years later in "Foreign Correspondent" with equal effectiveness.

"Blackmail" is unique in that it was planned as a silent with a view to changing over to sound should that prove necessary. In its final version, which Hitchcock himself has referred to as a "silent talkie", there are still long silent passages, and all the dialogue in the first reel is dubbed-in. The voice of Anny Ondra, who played the lead, is dubbed-in throughout. It is typical that even in this first British and Hitchcock talkie he used soundtrack tricks—an elaborately distorted play on the word "Knife," when the girl is thinking back next morning to the murder she has committed.



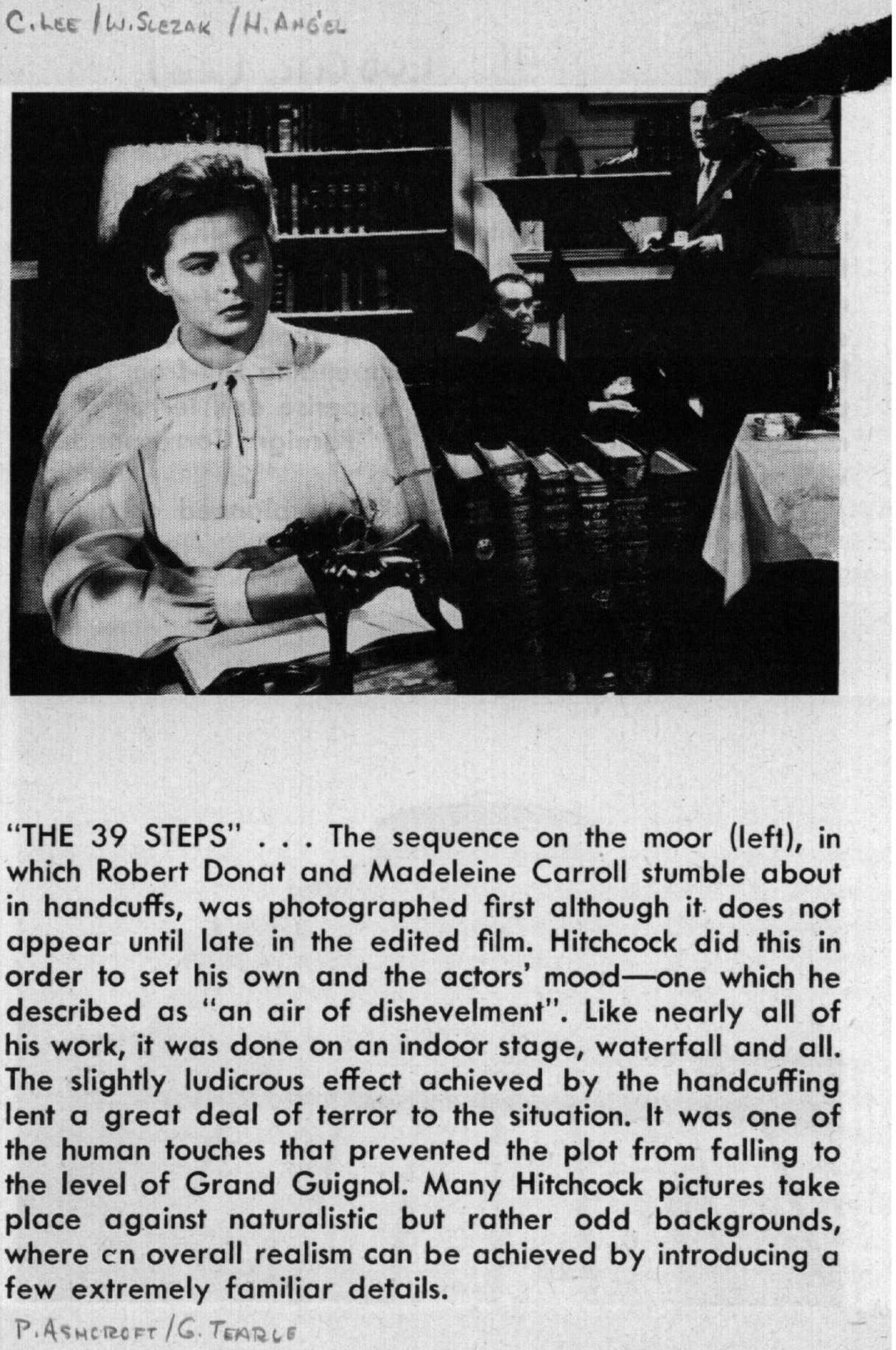
Reville, then his writer and assistant director; she and Joan Harrison, formerly his secretary, have often worked with him on screenplays in England and America, sometimes with screen credit, sometimes without.) The germ of the idea may be rather odd. Hitchcock has claimed, for example, that "The Man Who Knew Too Much" was simply the result of a desire to direct Peter Lorre against the contrasting backgrounds of St. Moritz, a mission in London's East End, a variety hall and a dentist's office. "The 39 Steps" is John Buchan's novel, in an adulterous liaison with a back-room story about a farmer's wife.

"With the help of my wife," Hitchcock has said, "I plan out a script very carefully, hoping to follow it exactly, all the way through, when shooting starts. In fact, this working on the script is the real making of the film, for me. When I've done it, the film is already finished in my mind." After the story has been selected and reduced to a half-page outline, Hitchcock and his associates subject it to searching analysis. . . . *What are these people? What do they work at? What is their station in life? How do they act when they are at home?* The result of this approach is twofold: first, it provides the astonishingly realistic background which gives both horror and believability to his tales of violence; and second, it leaves him with a uniquely detailed shooting script. A normal shooting script is divided into about fifty master scenes; the dialogue and actions of one set of characters at a particular place or time. Hitchcock's shooting scripts have had as many as six hundred numbered scenes, each one complete with sketches of the exact grouping of characters and placing of the cameras. He has even, on occasion, furnished actors with dozens of sketches showing the facial expressions he expects of them.

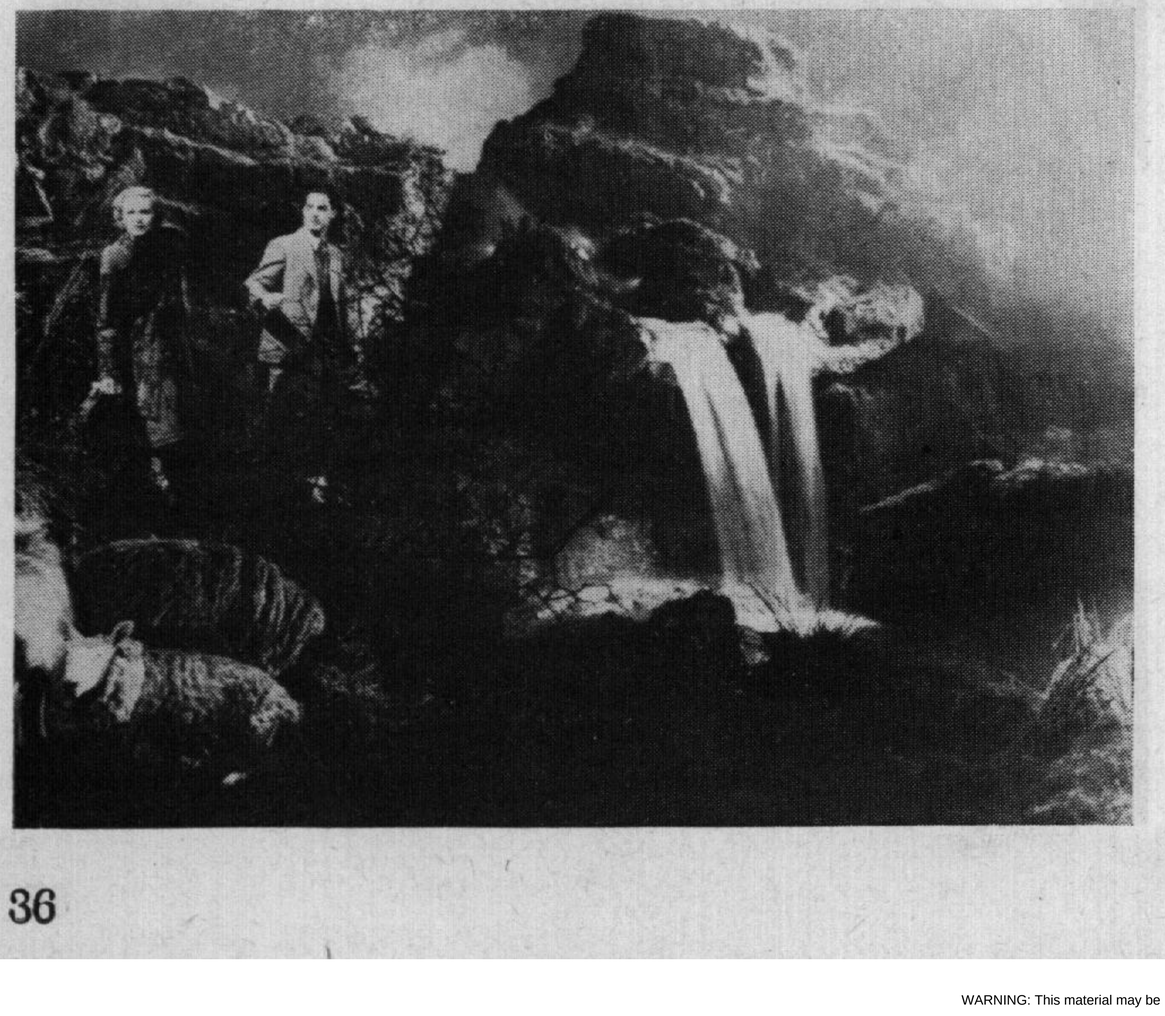
"Blackmail," made for British-International in 1929, is a film worth remembering for a moment. It is one of the best Hitchcock ever made. It was the first British talkie. It is a nice example of how he used to work—and hidden in its history, unsuspected at the time, was an ominous portent of what would befall him ten years later.

The starting point was one of the most familiar, and most frequently banal, themes in all literature: a conflict between love and duty. "The hazy pattern one saw beforehand," Hitchcock said, "was duty—love—

← "LIFEBOAT" . . . Hitchcock was roundly criticized because the only strong character in this 1943 film was a Nazi U-boat captain. It was a completely trick film, most of its effect coming from the strange spectacle of Tallulah Bankhead in the confined setting of a lifeboat at sea.
J. HODIAK / W. BENDIX / H. CRONYN / M. ANDERSON / H. HULL
C. LEE / W. SLEZAK / H. ANGEL



"SPELLBOUND" . . . One of the big money makers of 1945, this was a basically exciting picture whose artistic merit was enfeebled by embarrassingly hack psychoanalysis and shopworn camerawork. Ingrid Bergman, good in her role, will appear in "Under Capricorn", Hitchcock's next. →



← "THE 39 STEPS" . . . The sequence on the moor (left), in which Robert Donat and Madeleine Carroll stumble about in handcuffs, was photographed first although it does not appear until late in the edited film. Hitchcock did this in order to set his own and the actors' mood—one which he described as "an air of dishevelment". Like nearly all of his work, it was done on an indoor stage, waterfall and all. The slightly ludicrous effect achieved by the handcuffing lent a great deal of terror to the situation. It was one of the human touches that prevented the plot from falling to the level of Grand Guignol. Many Hitchcock pictures take place against naturalistic but rather odd backgrounds, where an overall realism can be achieved by introducing a few extremely familiar details.
P. ASHCROFT / G. TEARLE

love versus duty—and finally either love or duty, one or the other. The whole middle part was built up on the theme of love versus duty, after each had been introduced separately in turn."

The picture begins with duty, in the form of the arrest of a criminal by Scotland Yard detectives. It is concrete and undramatic. The camera follows the detectives as they take the criminal to the lavatory to wash his hands, the quintessence of routine. Then a young detective remarks that he's going out that evening with his girl. The sequence ends, pointing on from duty to love. The relationship between the young detective and the girl is established: they are very ordinary middle class people, the course of their love decidedly unromantic. The girl goes off by herself after a quarrel over having been kept waiting a few minutes—the first echo of love-versus-duty. Only now does the story line take up, but its movement is rapid. The girl falls in with the villain, he tries to seduce her, she kills him. When the young detective is put on the case in the morning, problem and conflict are completely crystallized. The audience, enjoying dramatic irony, is on the inside: it knows that the detective is trying to track down his own girl. It can't wait to see what will happen.

What *did* happen was that "Blackmail" was an immensely successful picture in England if not America, but not before Hitchcock himself had become enmeshed in a love-versus-duty conflict of quite another order. It was originally his notion that a blackmailer in the story, who chances to hold evidence which will betray the girl, should go right ahead and expose her. That would have driven the conflict to a climax with the young detective, ahead of the others, trying to allow the girl to escape; and the girl turning around to say, "You can't do that—I must give myself up!" Then the rest of the police arrive, completely misinterpret what he is doing, and say, "Good man, you've got her!"—not having an inkling of the relationship between them. Now the reason for the admirably oblique opening becomes clear. Each of the opening scenes, showing the arrest of a criminal, is repeated on the screen. The young man is ostensibly there as a detective, but the audience knows that he feels himself a lover. After the girl is locked in her cell the two detectives walk away. "Going out tonight with your girl?"

← "SABOTAGE" . . . Sylvia Sidney, Desmond Tester and John Loder appeared in this film, made in 1937 at the height of Hitchcock's style. The time-bomb "McGuffin" which made one of its many gripping moments is still the classic example of that device—and much better than the atom-bomb "McGuffin" found years later in "Notorious". The picture was also released with the title "A Woman Alone".

O. HOMOLKA

"THE 39 STEPS" . . . The music-hall scene, shown here at its climax, is one of the most effective ever made. What distinguishes it above all is its realism and the arrantly theatrical quality of the lighting. It is not surprising that this became a fine movie, for the John Buchan novel abounds in the hidden identities and oblique clues which have always been Hitchcock's best material. →

← "FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT" . . . The Atlantic airplane crash (left) which climaxes this exciting spy-picture is the nearest Hitchcock ever came to realizing one of his lifelong ambitions: a movie based on a fire at sea. Made in 1940, "Foreign Correspondent" ends with a strong note of "Wake up, America! There's a war on!" It is the only instance of a political message in any Hitchcock venture. Among the surprises was that of finding George Sanders for once not playing a heavy. The early scenes in the film, on the Dutch flatlands and inside an old mill, are brilliant, and the picture as a whole comes near to being first-rate.

J. McCREA / L. DAY / H. MARSHALL / G. SANDERS / E. GWENN / H. DAVENPORT
R. BENCHLEY / E. GANNELLI

asks the older. The younger one shakes his head. "No," he replies. "Not tonight."

That was how Hitchcock felt "Blackmail" should end, but the moguls at British-International did not agree. "I had to change it for commercial reasons," said Hitchcock eight years later. "The girl couldn't be left to face her fate. That shows you how the films suffer from their own popularity. They have to appeal to millions."

Alfred Hitchcock, having posed a love-versus-duty conflict with excellent precision, found himself protagonist of another. In that one love did not triumph. Duty, stern daughter of the voice of Mammon, did.

BUT the chagrin of what had happened to "Blackmail" did not linger. Hitchcock, born a London poulterer's child, had come a long way from the boy who had majored in electrical engineering while he took night courses in art and economics, from the young man who had lettered titles on the silent films put out by Famous Players. He went on polishing his technique. In 1930 came "Murder", in 1931 "Juno and the Paycock" and "The Skin Game", in 1933 "The Case of Lady Chamber". Then, in 1935, "The Man Who Knew Too Much" and the beginning of the cycle. Later in 1935, "The 39 Steps" and the maturity of his style.

For four years Hitchcock turned out pictures of uniform excellence. The Hitchcock style could at last be clearly defined. It resulted in melodramas told against painstakingly realistic backgrounds, taut of plot and characterization. His cameras moved with a sureness and suddenness rarely equalled. His lighting retained only the best of what the German innovators had developed in the last decade, stark but never sensational for its own sake. He had achieved that most difficult of ends: the construction of a believable world from insubstantial shadow.

"A sufficient income," Bernard Shaw once wrote in cynical vein, "is indispensable to the practice of virtue; and the man who will let any unselfish consideration stand between him and its attainment is a weakling, a dupe, and a predestined slave."

When Alfred Hitchcock came to America in 1938 to sign a contract with Selznick-International, he gave as his reason an annoyance that pictures like "The 39 Steps" (made in that same year) always seemed to end up at little sidestreet cinemas. He said that he wanted a wider audience. He did, without doubt, find it. He also received $800,000 for five pictures, a sum which even G.B.S. would admit was entirely dispensable to any mortal's virtue.

The American adventure began quite auspiciously. "Rebecca" (1940) was a skillful and exciting adaptation of a best-seller. It won the Academy Award for the next year, and if there were only a few typically Hitchcock scenes in it, nobody but those most familiar with his earlier work was disquieted. The scene in the boathouse was first rate. "Foreign Correspondent", made in the same year, was an excellent thriller. Tension was maintained by characteristic Hitchcock devices—the chase, concealed identities and switches, the threat of the fall from a high place—and again there was one superb sequence: the assassination of the diplomat by a gunman disguised as a cameraman, and the latter's escape through a sea of umbrellas photographed from above.

"Mr. and Mrs. Smith" came in 1941. It was a comedy and there was very little Hitchcock in it. This should scarcely have been surprising, since the Hitchcock technique is by its nature patently at odds with the Comic Spirit. The Comic Spirit, after the conception of Meredith, must be a sprite perched on a cloud, pursuing mortal folly with volleys of silvery laughter. Hitchcock's method is antithetical: he uses his camera to bring the spectator ever closer to the detail of daily life; to make the spectator, as it were, *descend* from the cloud of comedy.

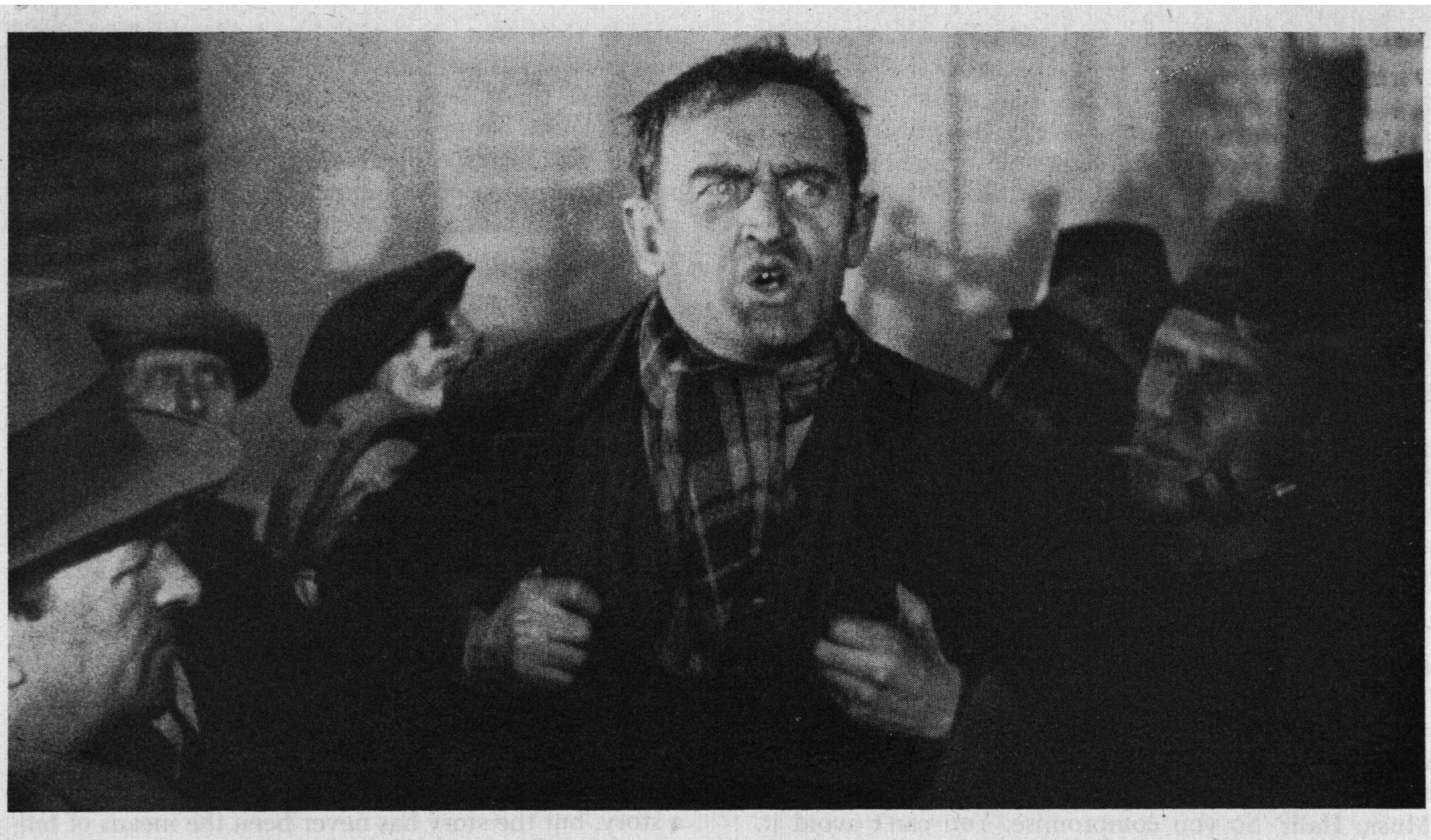
"Suspicion" (1942) proved what many had feared. The Francis Iles novel afforded Hitchcock precisely the material he could best use; and the stars in the film, Joan Fontaine and Cary Grant, rendered it impossible for him to follow through. Despite some fine opening scenes, particularly those of country life in

"ROPE" . . . The last picture Hitchcock made in Hollywood, and the ultimate in his preoccupation with technique for its own sake. Despite the tension implicit in the story, the characters remain lifeless and entirely static.

J. STEWART / F. GRANGER / J. DALL

"SUSPICION" . . . Joan Fontaine won an Oscar for her work in it, but it was the first clear indication of how Hitchcock had been ruined by Hollywood. The fraudulent ending completely destroyed the carefully built-up mood.

C. GRANT



C. LAUGHTON/M. O'HARA/R. NEWTON

"JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK" and "JAMAICA INN" . . These two good pictures are outside the main stream of Hitchcock's technique. "Jamaica Inn" (1939) was a fine blustering melodrama—in which Charles Laughton, as usual, played Charles Laughton—but by its very nature was not susceptible to Hitchcock's forte, a sure intimacy of detail and realism. Barry Fitzgerald found one of his best roles in "Juno and the Paycock" (1930), made at a time when Hitchcock, still experimenting, was principally interested in photographing stage-plays. Although "Juno" was a great critical success, Hitchcock soon afterwards abandoned that field and went back to crime or spy melodrama. He has claimed that these are the only types of story essentially suited to his motion-picture treatment.

England, the end was revoltingly compromised. The poison ate deeper in 1942. "Saboteur", made in obvious imitation of "The 39 Steps", was a commercial and artistic fiasco. Hitchcock had the temerity to complain about the feeble glow of the stars put at his disposal for "Saboteur" (Robert Cummings and Priscilla Lane), and was soundly rebuked. Who, it was asked, had ever heard of Madeleine Carroll or Robert Donat before "The 39 Steps"?

Then, suddenly, came the admirable "Shadow of a Doubt" (1943). In making it, Hitchcock and Thornton Wilder, who collaborated on the story, traveled six hundred miles from Hollywood to live with the people whose town had been selected for the location. Terror was in the picture, the terror of the familiar turned lethal. If the ending was again contrived to satisfy the censor, Hitchcock could be pardoned; the excellence of what had gone before was a highly mitigating circumstance. "Shadow of a Doubt" was not boxoffice.

"Lifeboat" (1944) put Hitchcock right back at the head of commercial Hollywood directors. It was a complete tour-de-force and also, probably, the picture which has led most significantly to his undoing. A trick film pure and simple, "Lifeboat" depended for its effects on novelty of setting and background.

"Spellbound" (1945) was immensely undistinguished from an artistic point of view. The essentially good thriller-plot was marred by kindergarten Freud, and the camera tricks were by now conventionally unconventional: a glass of milk tilted at the camera, a gun fired at the audience, the shriek of a train whistle at a moment of crisis; and, indescribably banal, a scene composed within the framework of a screen dominated by a huge closeup of an open razor. "Notorious" showed up a year later, a love story played, it seemed, entirely in closeups of Ingrid Bergman and Cary Grant. The Big Lovescene, which occurred while Miss Bergman prepared a roast chicken dinner, was intimate to

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the point of bad taste and actual embarrassment.

"The Paradine Case" was Hitchcock's 1947 entry, and the worst picture he has ever made. Characters and dialogue were as stenciled as the advertisements for the film. The realism of people, which Hitchcock had once stressed as not only the method but the meaning of his movies, was completely gone. In its place were camera tricks and an absorption with the means of production. The climactic trial scenes were shot continuously by four cameras running simultaneously, producing one master sound track to which the four visual tracks, plus cover shots, were finally edited.

FROM "The Paradine Case" the distance to "Rope" was negligible. The fullest development of Hitchcock's interest in camera technique had led, as we have already seen, to the total negation of the principles which once had made him great.

"Spellbound" cost $1,700,000 and grossed $8,000,000. "Notorious" cost $2,000,000 and had enough love in it to take in $9,000,000. Not bad figures to shoot at. "Beyond that," said Alfred Hitchcock in a 1946 interview, "there's the constant pressure. You know—people asking, 'Do you want to reach only the audiences at the Little Carnegie or to have your pictures play the Music Hall?' So you compromise. You can't avoid it. You do the commercial thing, but you try to do it without lowering your standards. It isn't easy. Actually the commercial thing is much harder to do than the other . . ."

"*Is that so, Mr. Hitchcock?*" the critic must insist. The statement about the greater difficulty of doing "the commercial thing" is one to which we have all become accustomed. We have heard it too often—from the ex-Pulitzer Prize hack who toasts himself by the Hollywood swimming pool, from the slick magazine lady-writer who once upon a time wrote a quite good novel, from the sometime painter who waxes fat and respectable on perfume ads. It is the petulant voice of the once-creative soul, crying out in self-justification as it faces the basilisk countenance of artistic conscience. Even in an age when relativism in all things is accepted, the ultimate debauchery of critical standards is this: that an artist's work should be judged solely within the limits of his intent, that to do the worthless thing well is to succeed. Mr. Hitchcock should know better than that.

The truth may be that his gift is essentially a minor one, a perfection of technique which surpasses craftsmanship but falls short of art. When this project was conceived, I whimsically resolved that there would be no mention of what is probably the most widely known of the Hitchcock legends—that Hitchcock has managed to insert himself into most of his recent films as a bit-player in some insignificant role. I find it impossible to suppress that piece of information any longer. For the most disturbing factor about Hitchcock's work is that in no single film, nor any more in their sum, can one find anything approaching a personal statement. *All* he inserts of himself, alas, is that famous frame. His is an anonymity of conviction which the genuine artist, no matter what his intent, would find it impossible to maintain. His best films were those which developed from meticulous character creation; his poorer films were those involving literary characters; his worst are and will be those in which his characters are out-and-out studio concoctions. The film to him has always been simply a means of telling a story, but the story has never been the means of telling something greater. One is left with the unhappy impression that the man himself is devoid of personal philosophy; a fact which is not only confirmed by but would seem to account for his increasing interest in technical trickery. When the child, on the rainy day, has exhausted the first sweet thrill of the new finger paints, he seizes the cat by the tail and tries to paint him green. Novelty becomes the substitute for meaning. The evils of technique without meaning scarcely be belabored too violently in this fou of the atomic age.

The world of Alfred Hitchcock, once so taut and vivid, has fallen back into the shadows of which it was built. It will continue to shine there like the perfectly polished thing it was, but its light will be rather that from a buoy marking shoals than from the beacon which signifies the end of a journey.