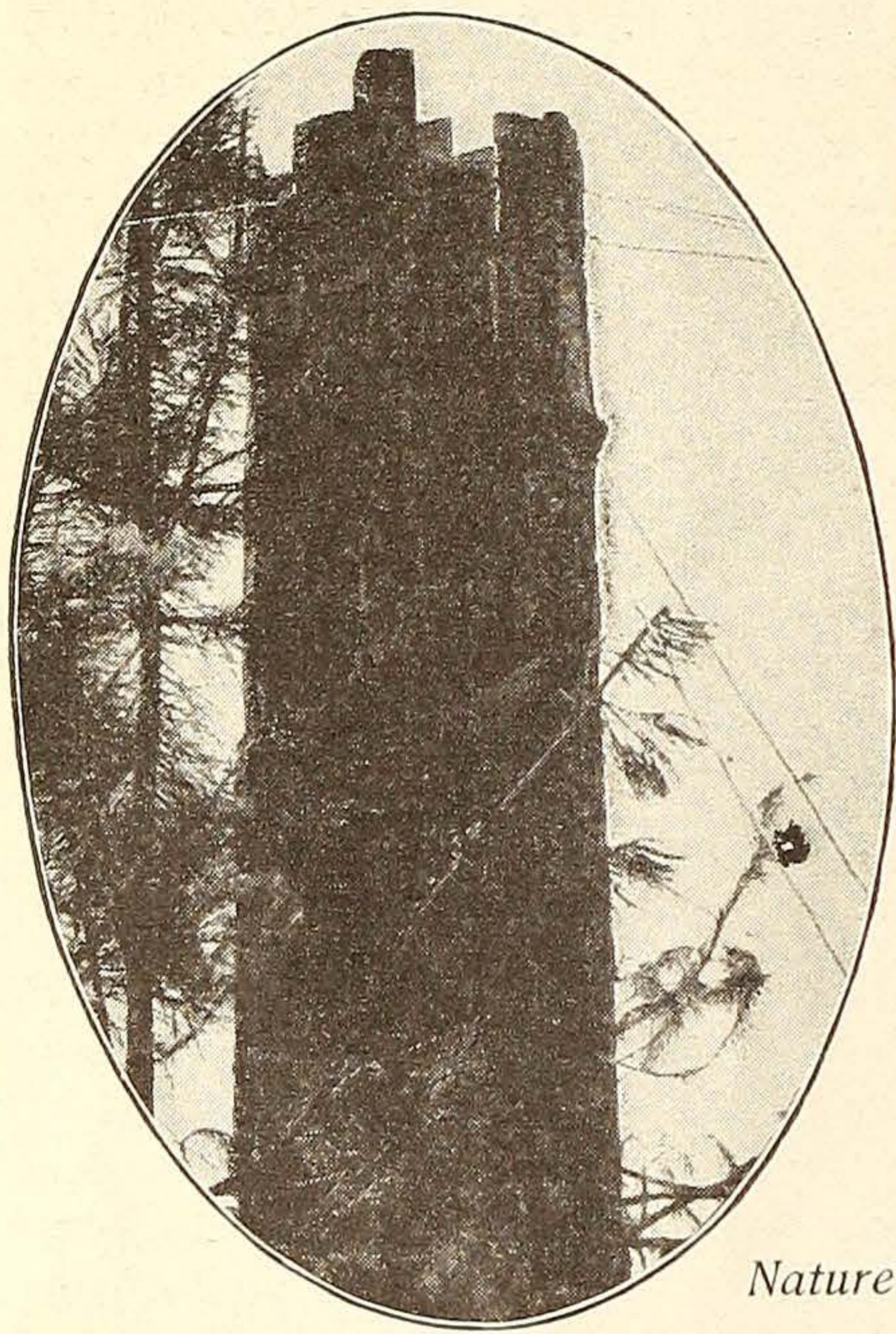
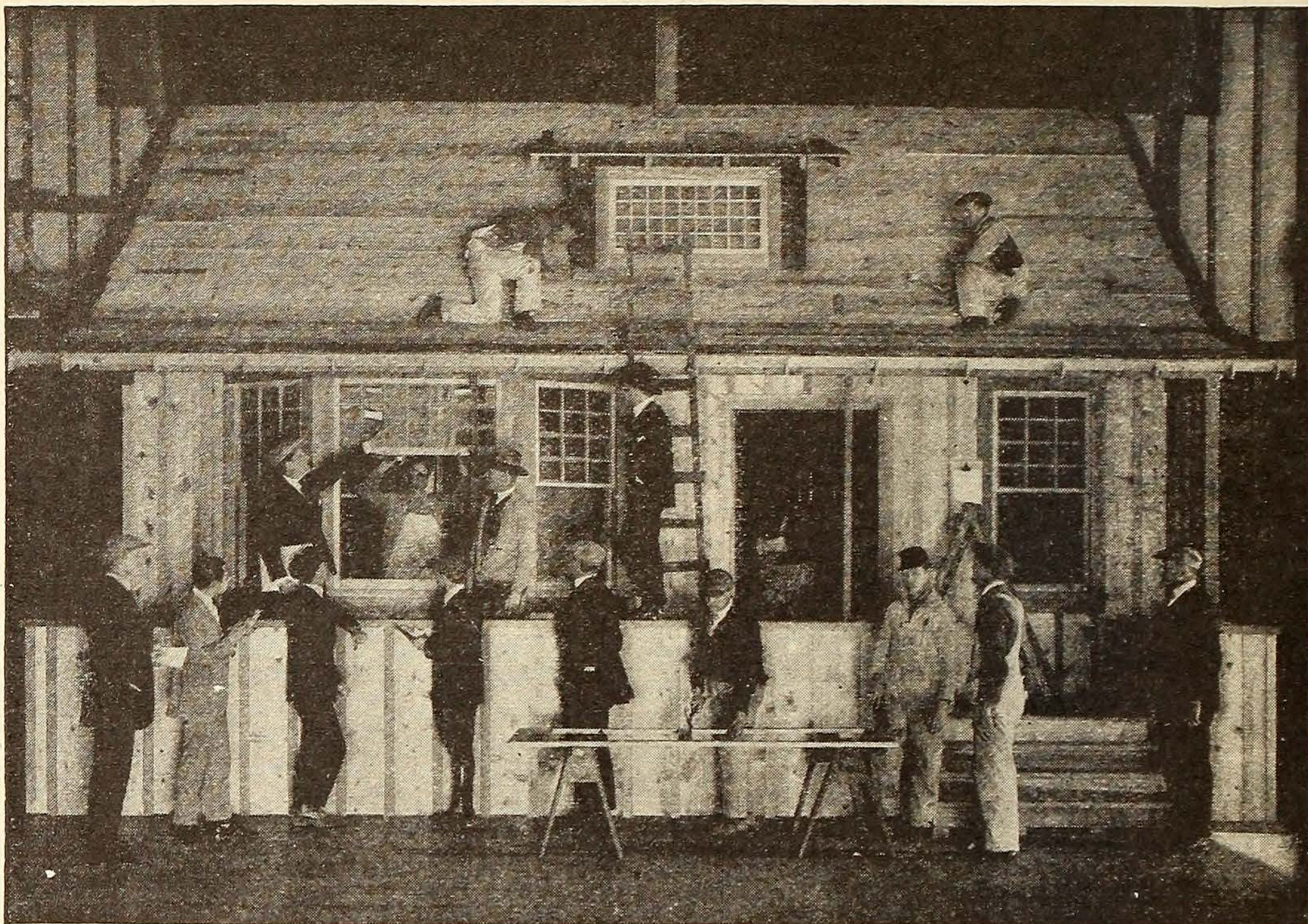

What Happens to the Story

If you sold a scenario, here's
what would happen to it.

By
Hunt Stromberg



Nature was denaturized here.



The court of last resort has to pass judgment on all sets.

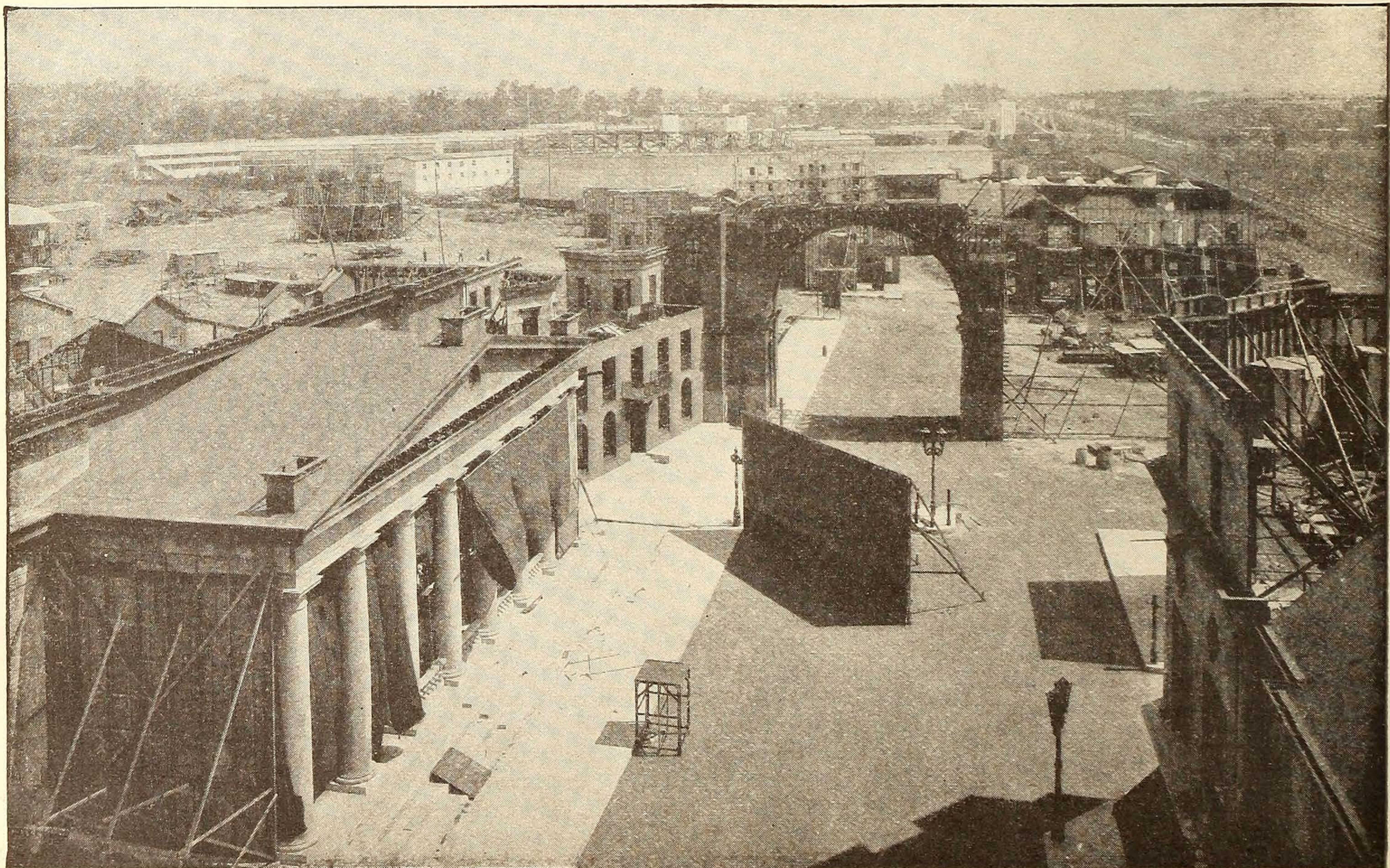
THERE'S a crackling splatter of light across the screen, and you see a giant tree struck by lightning, while the drums in the orchestra rumble, and peas are rattled in a can to simulate rain.

"Gosh! They can do anything in the movies now!" murmurs a man behind you. "Must have taken months to catch that. How do they do it!"

That same remark applies to a lot of other things you see on the screen. How do they catch a storm at sea, in which great liners are shown sweeping up to the crest of a wave and then hurled to watery depths? How do they go about making a picture, anyway—where do they begin?

It's interesting to watch the progress of a scenario through the studio just

Even big sets like these are used for but one picture.



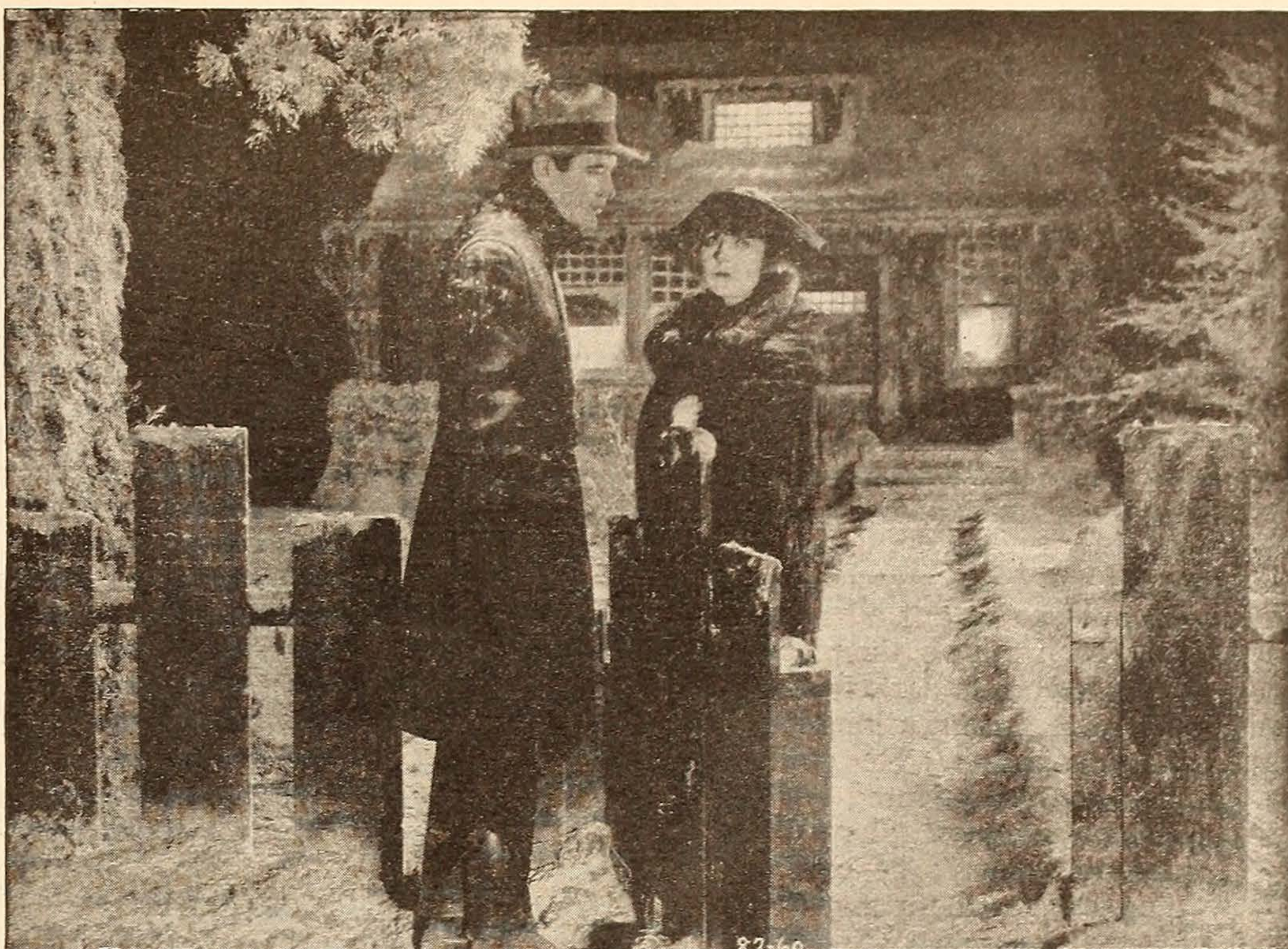
as engrossing as it is to step behind the scenes and see how nature is denaturalized, so to speak, and the fury of a storm depicted right on the studio lot. By visiting the Thomas H. Ince studio recently I learned something about this mysterious journey, and, incidentally, about some of the tricks that make picture-making what it is.

When a story is accepted for production, twelve copies of the continuity—the specially written version of the story, in which it is divided into scenes—are made and distributed among the departments concerned in the making of the picture. The heads of these departments and their assistants must become familiar with it and its general requirements, and everybody, regardless of rank or office, is asked to submit ideas and suggestions to the director assigned to the picture. This is one reason why the very best place to learn to write for the screen is from a job inside the studio.

The casting director then selects the players who are to surround the star; sometimes two candidates, possibly three or four, are chosen for every rôle, each is tried out, and finally one is selected. Meanwhile the director and his assistant, the technical and art directors, and the stage manager get together in the office of the production manager to arrange a definite schedule for the construction and placement of all sets for the picture.

With this schedule completed, the art director makes

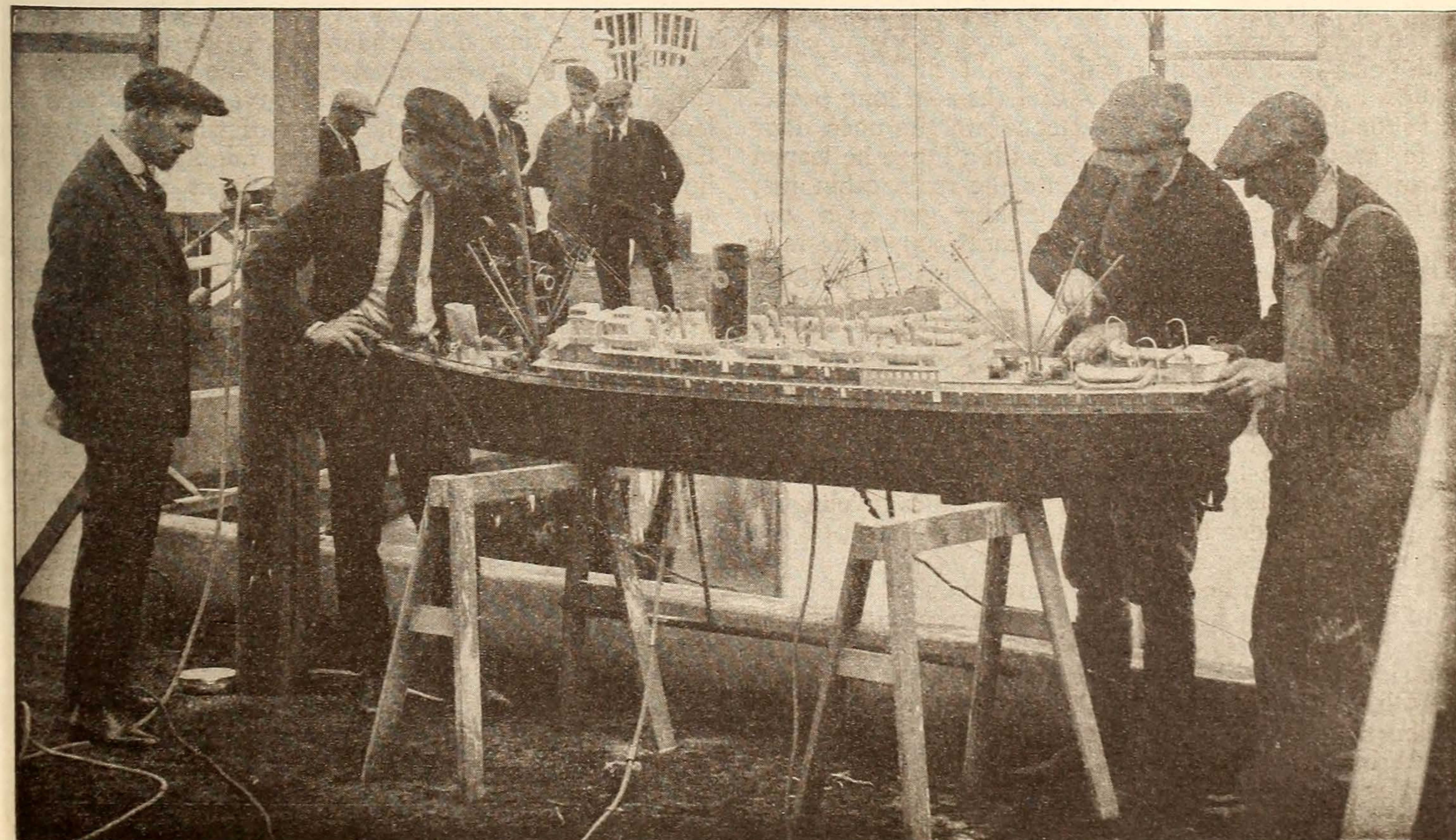
It would be impracticable to wreck an ocean liner, so miniature models are used for shipwreck scenes.

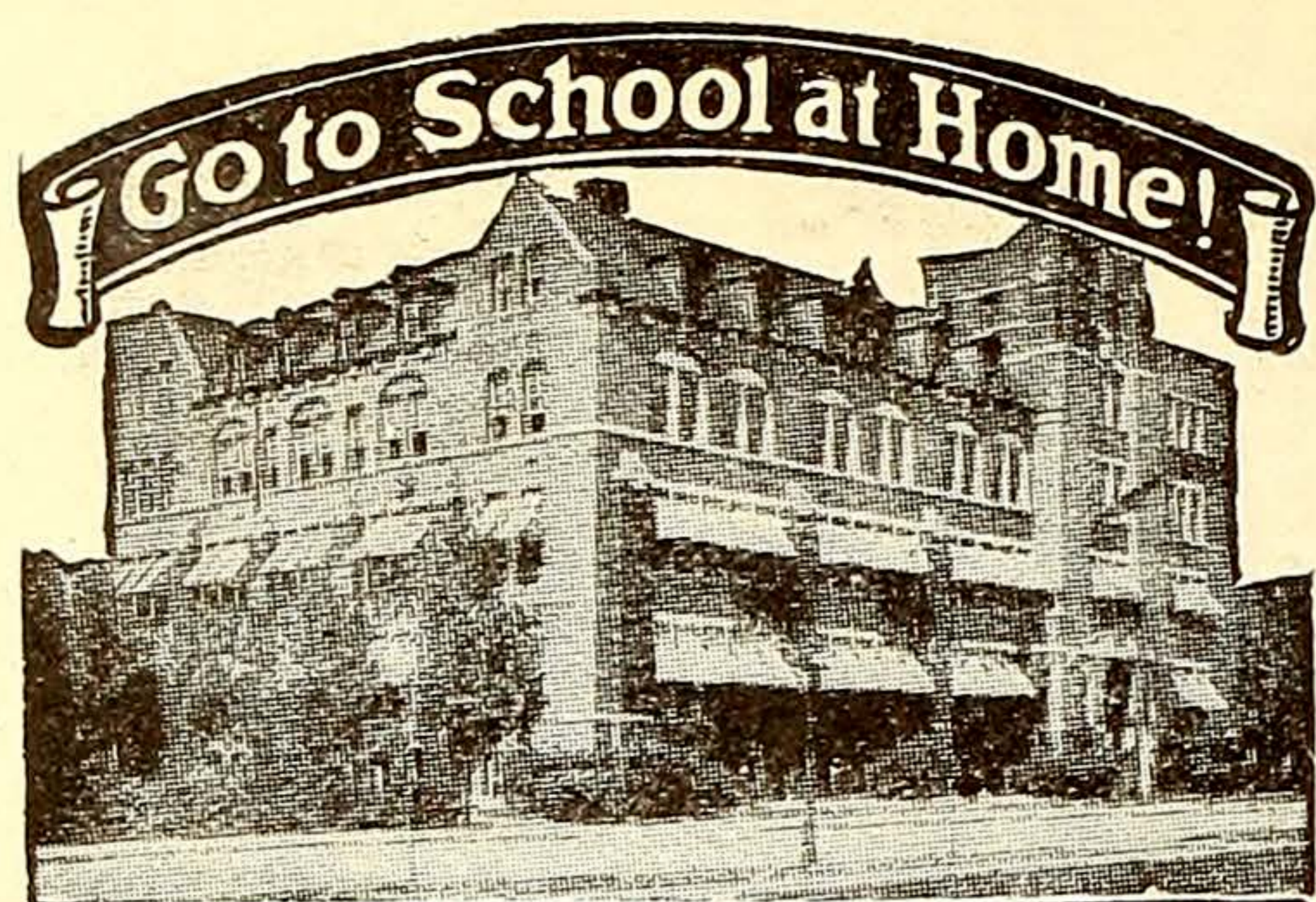


Here's the cabin shown on the opposite page, plus a studio snowstorm.

and submits to the director rough sketches for these sets; the director must stretch his imagination and make sure that such sets are in strict accordance with the action and "atmosphere" of the story—every detail must fit in perfectly with the general feeling of the story. For example, when a recent picture of Enid Bennett's, "The False Road," was in preparation, it was necessary to get sun-baked lumber, and, in the studio, build the "little cabin around the foothills" called for in the story. Wintry scenery and a realistic snowstorm also had to be created; cotton batting, tinsel, bits of snow-white paper, and a special fluid whose formula the studios will not divulge, produced the proper effect.

Continued on page 82





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What Happens to the Story

Continued from page 31

Under the head of "atmosphere" such details as furniture, decorations, and all the odds and ends of the set are included. For instance, if the heroine of the picture is blond it would be criminal to provide a light background; to gain a contrast and insure crystal-clear photography the walls of the set must be dark.

A staff of draftsmen handles those first plans of the art director's, and they are passed on by Mr. Ince, the director, and the continuity writer of the picture before they go to the stage manager and the carpenters. Usually the building of a set takes from two to thirty days. Sometimes such building takes place on the stage where the set is to be used, but in the case of elaborate sets miniature models are first made, and the actual building takes place in the mammoth shops adjoining the studio proper. The sets are then moved piecemeal to the stage where they are to be set up, and it's no unusual sight to see husky stage hands stalking about the studio bearing a Greek column or a large portion of a winding stairway to the proper destination. Samson would have found no difficulty in getting a job around the studio, and Hercules could have had a life contract as a mover of scenery, if they lived nowadays.

Finally the set is O. K.'d by that court of last resort, which I have already mentioned. Then comes the familiar cry of "Ready—lights—camera!" And actual production begins.

Now for the promised revelations regarding ways of outwitting Mother Nature. Of course, it might be possible to have camera men hang around the woods until a nice, big tree was struck by lightning, but several camera men might grow old and hoary waiting to catch such a scene. And it's much simpler to move a good, big tree to the studio lot, wire it with electricity—and then let it be artificially "struck" in full view of the camera.

As for the storm at sea—this, too, might have been accomplished by using real ships, on a real ocean, the ships being insured against loss, and the storm just being waited for until it arrived. But—to build perfect miniature models is much less expensive and far easier, and to make a storm in the studio tank is equally simple. Which all goes to show that while the makers of the movies will go the limit when necessary, they aren't averse to using commendable thrift and making clever substitutions whenever they can.

A Heart's Worth of Frocks

Continued from page 49

an easy matter to spend forty thousand dollars a year for clothes," she told me one day, when she'd been making a round of the shops and was wearing the simplest sort of little tailored suit because she knew her mood would never stand for anything more noticeable. "Yet it's much easier for me to earn five hundred thousand than to spend less than a tenth of it on clothes. Buying clothes that will express me, and will register well before the camera, and fit in with the character I'm playing—oh, for the rags and tatters of 'In Old Kentucky!' I've been trying for hours to match these shades of tulle with this metallic cloth—it has all the pastel shades in it, and my maid had given up in despair, but I know it can be done. The tulle has been dyed, but the cloth changes color just like a chameleon in between dyeings."

However, the finished frock was well worth her trouble. Anita's clothes always are, though frocks such as those she wears necessitate their wearer's going to a lot

more trouble than you and I would probably be willing to take.

For instance, there's the gown which has an accordion plaited petticoat of brown chiffon over one of bronze metal cloth. Over that is a very full skirt of brilliantly striped material which stands well out on the sides, fastened without belt or sash to a very tight bodice. The sleeves are of mauve chiffon, cut out on top of the arm, and wrist length. And with this quaint frock Anita wears a cape of taffeta trimmed with wide bands of ostrich feathers.

Then there's a black gown, suitable for teas or informal dinner parties, which is made of finely figured black lace, made over black satin. The bottom of the tunic skirt is edged with a very wide band of white lace, and another band of the same lace, somewhat narrower, forms the belt. The gown is very simple—simple as French frocks so frequently are. I know a man who said that he'd rather see his wife wear cloth of gold made in America than plain black net made in France.