

# The Man Who

Bill Farnum's grim and

*Four years' illness and idleness cost him over two million dollars*

**H**IGH-UP in the Hollywood Hills there is the home of William Farnum. From the great stone gallery that runs across the front of the house this star has been gazing down over the lights of Cinemaland for more than a year watching and waiting for something. Just what that something was he, himself, could not definitely say. He had a hope however that it was going to be a summons to come down from his roost and again take his rightful place in the ranks of those who provide the entertainment for the world.

Alone except for his dogs and his wife—alone except for the occasional close friend of yesterday who would call—"Bill" Farnum sat and fought as gallant a fight as any bemedaled hero of the late world unpleasantness. Fought it to a finish and to what seems to be a very successful conclusion.

It was a victory, but not without the paying of a tremendous price for it.

Almost four years ago William Farnum appeared in the last picture that he has made up to this time. That picture was made for Paramount and its title was "The Man Who Fights Alone." I saw that picture the other day, in a private projection room at the Paramount laboratory. I was forcibly struck by the similarity of the theme of its story and the actual facts in the life of William Farnum which necessitated a star as talented as he, with so tremendous a fan following, retiring from the screen.

The following is a verbatim extract from the synopsis of the story of "The Man Who Fights Alone":

More painful than Bill Farnum's illness were the months of convalescence, dreaming, and waiting for the call to the studio that would take him back to the work he loved



# Fought Alone

By  
Frederic  
H. Schader

courageous battle for life

Photography by Stagg

*Now Bill is making pictures again, looking better than ever*

*"'The Man Who Fights Alone' is a dramatic presentation of the power of love to triumph over human ills. It is the story of a strong man—a lone fighter—who, beset by tragic misfortune, achieves regeneration through the abiding love of his wife and child.*

*"As a great engineer, William Farnum in the title rôle makes the desert bloom and provides the power that turns the wheels of industry. He, with his best friend, loves the same girl. Farnum marries her. On the day their daughter is born he is stricken with paralysis leaving him helpless from the waist down.*

*"Four years later he is still confined in a wheel chair—"*

That, almost, is the real story. So near that, one wonders whether it is possible for screen shadows to forecast the future.

A LITTLE more than four years ago William Farnum, then at the height of his career, was drawing a salary of \$10,000 weekly from William Fox. He had been with the Fox organization for many years. He signed with Fox after having attained his great triumph in the original screen production of "The Spoilers." This picture was the initial attraction at the Strand Theater in New York, the opening of which created a historical moment in the exhibition division of the motion picture industry.

The contract with William Fox was about to terminate and William Farnum wanted to make a trip abroad. He did, and when he returned he entered into a new contract with the same organization which called for his appearing in five productions. For each of these he was to receive a flat sum of \$65,000. The last of these five pictures called for nine actual days of work on the part of the star, which will give you a rather definite idea of the earning power of Farnum four years ago.



Having completed the five picture contract with William Fox, he went over to the Paramount studios to appear in a single picture for that organization. That picture was "The Man Who Fights Alone." His leading lady was Lois Wilson.

IT was in the making of this picture that William Farnum sustained a slight injury which necessitated an operation after the production was completed. From this slight injury there is a long and definite line of misfortune and illness, a line broken only by tremendous personality of Mr. Farnum and his will to surmount the difficulties that beset him and his career.

The will to live and the personality behind it eventually triumphed. Today William Farnum again stands, a well man, on that great stone gallery surrounding his hillside home. But the cost! In money alone it is almost \$2,500,000. And who can tell what the sum total might have been, for had William Farnum been active during the last four years—a time during which the picture industry has been making its greatest forward strides—he might have today been the greatest of all stars. Instead he is beginning once again to take up the threads of an interrupted career. He was, at the time that illness overtook him, conceded the foremost "he man" star of the silent drama, his



PHOTOPLAY'S little editorial about him brought a flood of inquiries to Mr. Farnum, a flood of requests to come back

in legion, his pictures avidly awaited and the producers were vying with one another for his services.

Not only was this true of pictures, but of the legitimate stage as well. Arthur Hopkins, who gave the spoken stage John Barrymore in classical rôles, had just signed a contract with Mr. Farnum and had one play in rehearsal when the first of his illnesses overtook the star.

Farnum had gone to New York for his "slight operation." The operation successfully performed, he came to terms with the theatrical manager for the production of a play, "The Buccaneer," and rehearsals were started. As they progressed the star became weaker and weaker, until just ten days prior to the opening night, which was to have taken place in Philadelphia, Mr. Hopkins noting the fact that Mr. Farnum wasn't himself physically, ordered him home to rest.

THAT was the star's last conscious hour until one day about a week later he came to his senses in a room and noted the fact that there were a number of men present. His first thought was "What has happened? Hopkins has changed the entire cast on me." Then he saw that it was Dr. Royal S. Copeland, since United States Senator from New York, standing at the foot of his bed. With the doctor there were almost a dozen other specialists, including the famous surgeon, Dr. Erdman.

"What is the matter, have I been sick?" he managed to murmur to Dr. Copeland. He received a nod in reply and then slipped off into oblivion again, and remained unconscious for the next eleven weeks. On his next return to consciousness his ears heard the rustling of a newspaper and his eyes discovered his brother, Dustin Farnum, seated at his bedside. Dustin had been there for six weeks, for during that entire time the life of William had been despaired of.

Then came a long, long period of convalescence, almost a year in fact, the greater part of which was spent at the [CONTINUED ON PAGE 97]



From the heights of his Hollywood home, he wondered if the public and the studios had forgotten him

# The Man Who Fought Alone

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Farnum home at Sag Harbor, Long Island. When the following September came around William again thought that he had sufficiently recovered his strength and vitality to return to the public. He felt that he owed Arthur Hopkins and those players who were to have been in the cast of "The Buccaneer" with him a debt for having forced them out of an engagement through his illness, so at the beginning of the theatrical season of 1925, he again started rehearsals of the play.

**T**HEN after five weeks of actual playing, after the rehearsal period was over, it was found that the star could not possibly endure the hardships of traveling "on the road" with the play. It was closed down and the star returned to New York, again to enter a hospital and this time remained there for nine weeks.

When he finally emerged his physicians informed him that under no consideration must he try to do any kind of work. A complete rest for a full twelve months was ordered and Farnum informed that if he did not heed the advice the physicians would not be responsible for the result. That was almost eighteen months ago. Part of that time was spent in the East

on Long Island and part of it in his home in the Southern California hills.

For the first few months in the East the enforced period of inactivity was not so irksome, but, as the months passed and renewed strength poured through his veins, Farnum began to fret and fume.

He had been too active in his earlier days to lose the desire to do things. His days of broadsword fighting, those of deep sea fishing and other active out-of-door sports came crowding back and he wanted to be up and doing. Finally he was permitted to work off some of the excess energy through golf.

But even golf isn't enough for William Farnum—as a matter of fact, had rowing, boxing, bowling, hunting, fishing and hiking all been rolled into one it would not have been enough, for William Farnum is an actor, from a line of actors, and the theater is his place. That is the one and only thing that will complete the cure for him. And it seems that the cure is about to take place, for William Fox and Winfield Sheehan have welcomed William Farnum back to the studios. His first picture is to be Donn Byrne's "Hangman's House" and John Ford is directing it.

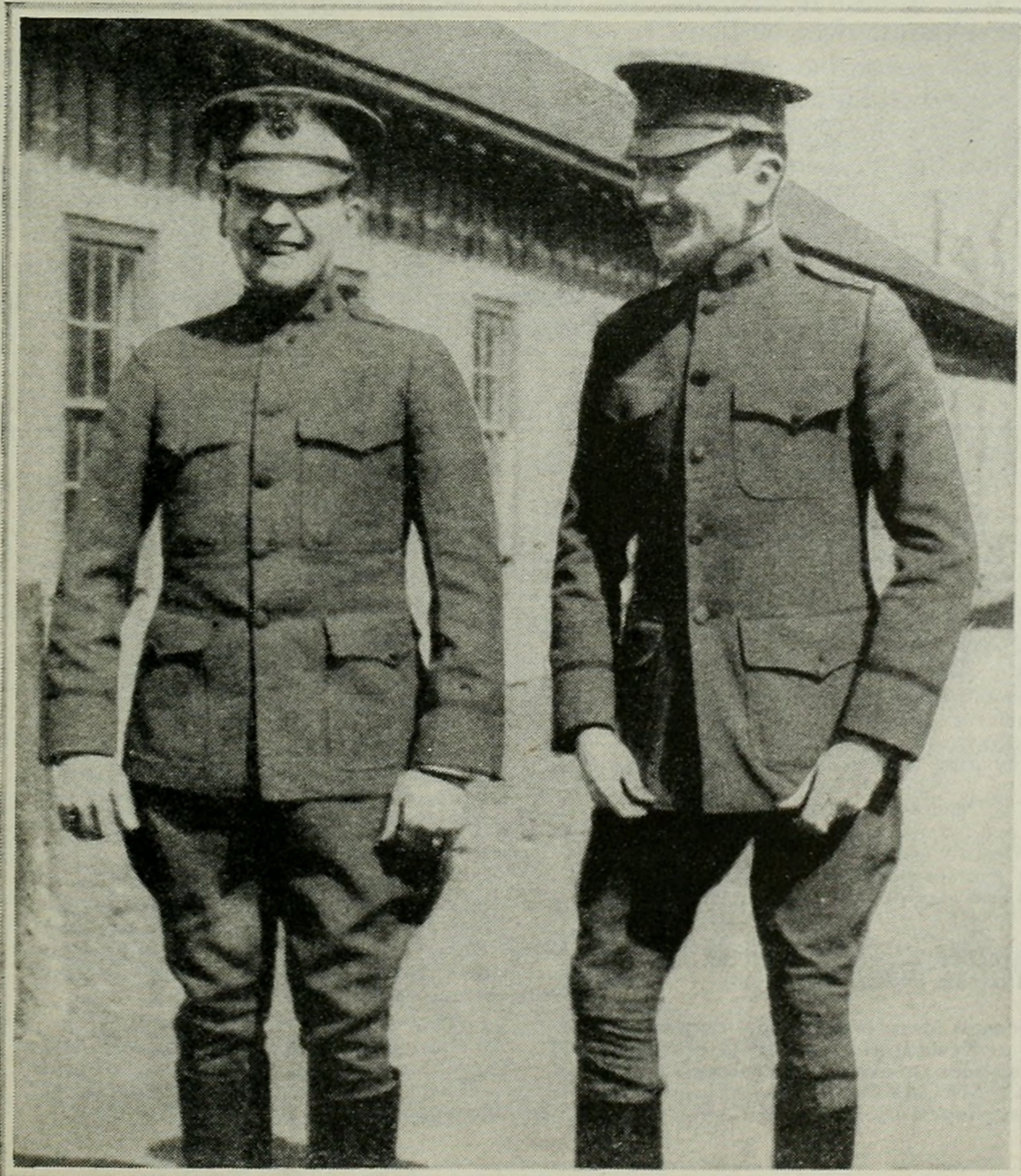
The call of the studios did not come

along, however, until Farnum had been sitting for month after month looking down over Hollywood and wondering if they would ever send for him again.

He told me the other afternoon that the watching and waiting were much harder to bear than the long weeks in the hospital, for in the sickbed he felt sure that he would get well, while here, back in his full strength, he dreaded what the picture producers were going to do. But it was only a few days after the October issue of PHOTOPLAY appeared before he began to get a telephone call or two; some came from producers, others from artists' representatives. Then finally the call from his old studio. That cheered him more than anything else.

**O**F course no matter how wealthy one is, four years of enforced idleness, coupled with illness, represents a lot of money. In loss of salary it represents to Mr. Farnum just \$2,080,000. In addition to that, his nurses and doctors cost him in the neighborhood of \$250,000 while the overhead of his homes amounted to \$150,000. Possibly William Farnum's \$2,330,000 doctors' bill is the greatest pill that any one man ever had to swallow.

## They Called Him Captain



It's an extraordinary fellow who can look interesting in a passport picture. Above is the photograph that identified Captain Adolphe Menjou when he went to France to serve in the Intelligence Division. At left: Adolphe and brother Henry as army officers