

Photo by Gene Kurnman

Harold Lloyd and his leading lady, Mildred Davis, are the best of friends both in and out of the studio—which is the strongest sort of recommendation for both the actor and the man.

## Doctor Giggle and Mr. Hide

The screen Harold is left at the studio when Lloyd scrapes the celluloids.

By Peter White

**I**N addition to being the Land of the Arlight Sun, Los Angeles and its environs is a land of surprises. One rarely finds what he expects to find. For example, the "Ship" is merely a seaside eatery with jazz attachments; it is no roosting place of stars, no checking room for reel crowns. And furthermore, directors do not all wear puttees, nor do all camera men wear their caps on backward—or wear any at all inside the studio. The novitiate goes to the celluloid colony

struck me as a giggle grabber par excellence, a low comedy king of distinct merit, a dynamo of horseplay. But when he met me for a quiet chat over the luncheon table at the "Cider Mill," situated midway between Ince's film foundry and the Lloyd chuckle cannery, I found him to be an entirely different sort of chap. Away from work Harold Lloyd is bashful, quiet, retiring. He is not the same young man who does those

looking for bacchanalian revels, and, instead, he finds home-brew and Victrola dances, porch parties and Ford picnics.

Similarly with the people themselves. Such luscious titbits as Phyllis Haver and Marie Prevost never leave the chaperonage of their mothers; Buster Keaton looks most commonplace off duty; Bill Hart loses his equine countenance to such an extent as to render him indistinguishable from the rest of the guests at a sizable gathering; the very ones you had expected to whoop things up sit in the corner swapping stories, and extras from the Studio Club lend the air of gayety to the affair.

So I was prepared for almost anything when I went out to Culver City to see Harold Lloyd, whose rise in popular favor has been nothing short of meteoric—rivaling the war-time rise of sugar, or Dubonnet, or malt. He has become almost the première comique of the flickering pastels, second only to Charlot himself.

At the Hal Roach studios, we were told that Mr. Lloyd was working, but that he hated to be seen, so we went right ahead and watched. It's no fun at all watching some one who is only too delighted to have an audience.

Mr. Lloyd *was* working. He was in the center of some three thousand feet of telephone wire, madly attempting to free himself, while the camera clicked merrily on. In addition to furnishing action, Lloyd was directing.

"Cut after I start unraveling!" he shouted, increasing his exertions. "All right now, get it! Cut!" And as he worked a leg free the sharpshooter behind the Bell Howell ceased shooting. Two aids ran to him and extricated him from the wire.

Before the camera the adroit young comedian personified the spirit of jazz; he

## Doctor Giggle and Mr. Hide

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absurd things in Pathé comedies. And it was like pulling teeth to make him talk.

"I never do know what to say," he said softly, as he hunched himself up to the wooden table. "Things suit me, in general, and I'm satisfied with the world. What do you want me to say?"

It was evident that he wouldn't talk about himself. I asked what he thought of Bebe Daniels' rise. He discovered her.

"Bebe is a clever kid," he remarked. She has every one of us rooting for her. She's a great little pal."

When Lloyd had the accident with a too-genuine comedy bomb during the making of a picture with the lustrous Bebe, she nursed him for weeks. He retained his eyesight fortunately, but he lost two fingers from his right hand.

Any one who would expect him to resemble the screen Lloyd would be distinctly disappointed. There is nothing humorous about the offstage Harold, little savoring of the comedian, nothing smacking of the actor. He is quiet to the point of reticence, diffident to the point of shyness. His modesty is appalling, but genuinely sincere. He refuses to make public appearances, because he believes the people enjoy his comedies more than they would enjoy him. And perhaps his psychology is correct.

Questions are poor things to attack players with, for two reasons: if they are not retiring, reticent creatures, they leap at the question, tear it to pieces, and answer it for minutes at a stretch, while if, as in the case of Harold Lloyd they are not loquacious individuals, questions warn them to watch their tongues the more closely. So I tried something else.

"I hear," I said untruthfully, "that you are going into straight comedy."

"Wrong," he said. "I'm sticking to slapstick-with-a-reason. Comedy with a kick, in other words. The people seem to like me in that, so why change?"

When we returned from luncheon, almost all the way in silence, and Lloyd joined his troupe again, I was all the more strongly impressed with the dual personality of the man. Once on the set, he snapped into action, assumed the gayest sort of manner, accomplished the most insane postures. It was his camera self: Doctor Giggle, perhaps. And the regular Lloyd is surely a Mr. Hide!

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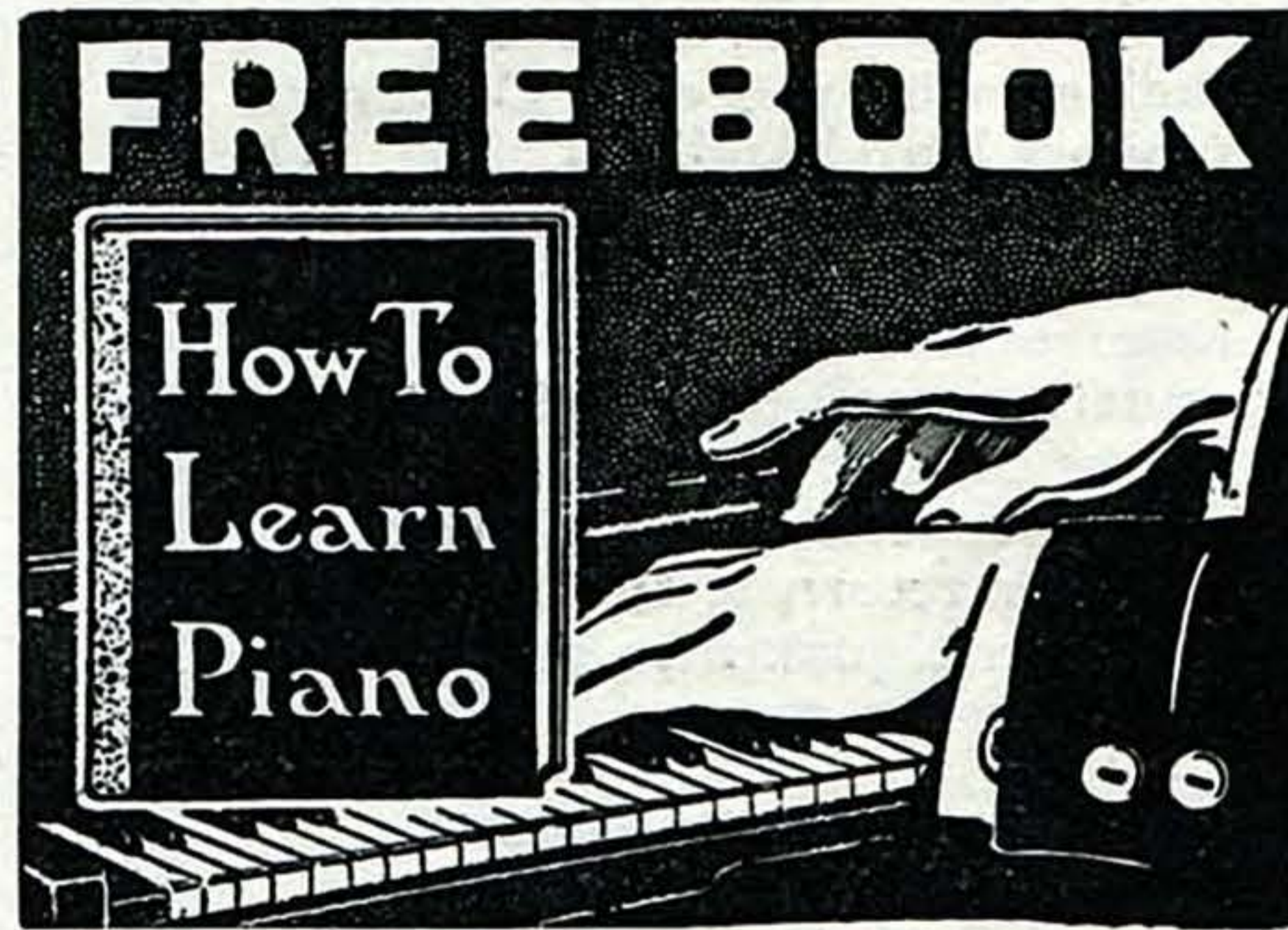


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