

# Lasky's Brook

Properly cast, Clive will  
go on forever

*By Ruth Waterbury*

**O**NE day Clive Brook came to Hollywood. The next day no one important knew it. Nor the day after that. Nor the following month. He was just a charming English leading man in a town already overcrowded with charming English leading men. True, he worked fairly regularly. He played leads at Warner's, leads at First National. He even appeared in that hunk of cinema cheese yclept "When Love Grows Cold," starring Mrs. Rudolph Valentino. But nobody in the inner circle knew and nobody seemed to care. Then overnight Hollywood be-

**A low, dirty part, the bum in "Underworld," in which Clive Brook reached new heights**



**One of those charming people, Clive Brook is an English soldier, a scholar and a gentleman**

gan talking of him. He played two leads with Florence Vidor. He played in "Hula" and "Underworld" and "Barbed Wire." Everywhere I went I heard conversations about him. Women's conversations. Women's whispers such as they used to whisper about Tommy Meighan when he played in the De Mille comedies like "Don't Change Your Wife"; as they talked of Eugene O'Brien when he first was Norma Talmadge's leading man; as they talked of Ronald Colman after "The Dark Angel."

**A**STAR who had recently finished a picture with him told me, "I had to remember all the time that he was devoted to his wife and small daughter."

A girl in the Paramount press department sighed, "Don't let anything keep you from interviewing him. He's simply marvelous."

A script girl who had worked on the Lasky lot during two of his pictures confessed, "Just to have him say 'Good morning' made my day perfect."

So I called him up to get the answer to the riddle. We met in a clattery little restaurant across from the De Mille studio where Mr. Brook was working on "The Devil Dancer." The room was full of celebrities. Rupert Julian, the director, was lunching with Joseph and Rudolph Schildkraut. Phyllis Haver and Jacqueline Logan sat together against the wall next to William De Mille and Clara Beranger. Julia Faye, in a corner, had a book propped up against a glass of milk. Extras mobbed the place and waiters went about carrying their loaded trays high in the air.

Yet when Clive Brook appeared the roomful stopped eating for a moment and looked at him. There was no reason [CONTINUED ON PAGE 105]

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for it. He came in quietly enough. But ordinarily the twelve Apostles could have walked through that room in a body without receiving a single glance.

Madame Glyn named the quality IT. Barrie called it "that damned charm." Whatever it is it was as tangibly present at our luncheon table as the sugar bowl and the ketchup bottle. It made me want to break forth into the mountain tops at dawn, English hearts at home under an English heaven style of writing. (Stand by. I won't.)

"I'm most awfully sorry but they've given me only fifteen minutes for lunch," announced Clive, ordering tea and muffins, with cream, not lemon. "I've been looking forward to talking to you, knowing you've come out from the East. The New York mind is so much closer to my London mind than the ones here in the West. There's writing, too. I used to do a bit of it. I'd like to talk on that. But fifteen minutes! I'm most awfully sorry."

I NOTED his long-lashed, quizzical grey eyes, the cleft in his chin, his very lean English figure.

"What happened to you," I demanded, "what made you a sudden vogue?"

A mocking glance from across the table, the same kind of glance *Rolls Royce* in "Underworld" flung at the enamoured *Feathers*. "I ceased to be an actor and became an aphrodisiac," explained Mr. Brook. "A stimulant, you know, something taken to make the heart flutter. Take 'Hula' for example. Fancy a child like *Hula* falling in love with an antique personage like myself who has to struggle against the coming of a second chin. Fancy myself falling in love with an unholy terror who ate with her fingers and brought her dog to the table. Yet they injected me into that plot. Miss Bow took one look at me and her heart began to flutter. For all the acting I did they might as well have poured me out of a bottle."

"There was 'Underworld,'" I reminded him.

"YES, there was 'Underworld,'" said Mr. Brook, "and there was 'Barbed Wire,' thank heaven. Adult rôles both of them, the only ones I've had in America. Now I'm again being the cold shoulder to an unrepressed lady. I am a kind of English lure for 'The Devil Dancer.' You can see I'm obviously miscast."

The mocking glance again amid the muffins.

"You sound as subtly blasé as John Barrymore," I commented, "and you're much more quietly clever than Jack Gilbert. How do you get that way?"

"You want the biography?" asked Mr. Brook.

"I want the biography," I said.

"I was born in London in 1891, the son of George and Charlotte Mary Brook," he said. "My mother was an opera singer and she wanted me to be a barrister. I dutifully attended Dulwich College



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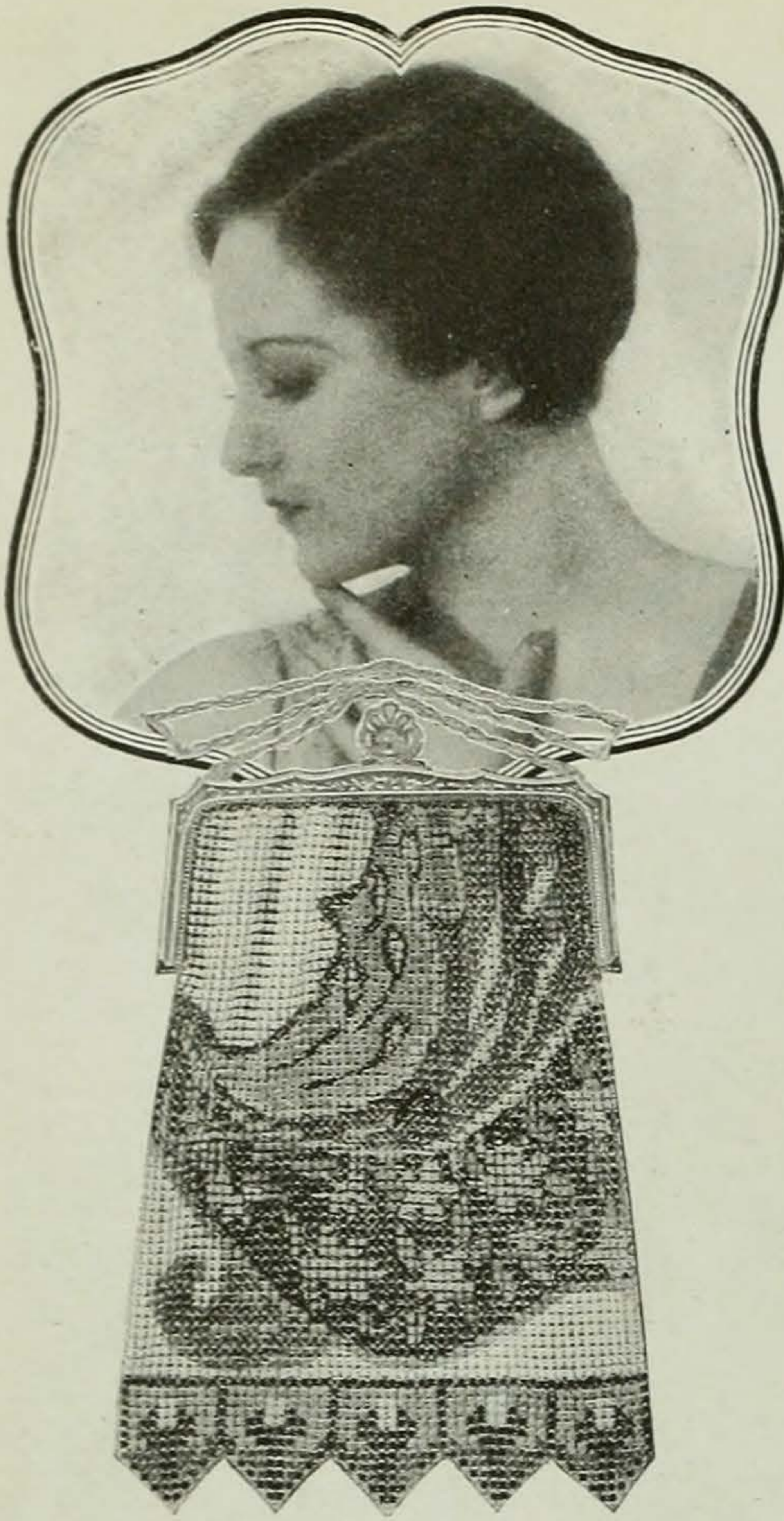
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with that end in view until I was fourteen, but I spent my leisure playing in amateur theatricals and studying the violin. Then the family fortunes turned over, I left school and happily forgot the law.

"A nine years' lapse. I can't remember half the things at which I tried to turn an English penny. Once I was a reporter. Once I taught horrible elocution. Once I achieved the post of assistant secretary at the Colonial Club and all the time I was attending classes in acting at the Polytechnic. Then the war broke.

"I JOINED up with the Artists' Rifles, a unit composed of professional and university men, as a private. That was in 1914 and when the unit was dissolved I was an officer with a machine gun section stationed on the East Coast of England looking for Zeppelins.

"Shortly thereafter I was sent to the front, went through a number of battles, particularly the battle of Messines in which our army mined so tremendous a portion of the earth that the explosion was heard in London. I was one of the men literally buried alive. But they got me out and sent me home on ten days' leave. I thought myself quite all right until one night when I had started for the theater I awoke to find myself in a strange part of London with no knowledge of how I got there.

"They kept me home then to drill troops. One midnight I stepped out on the parade grounds and began vigorously drilling troops which were not there. After that mental lapse, presumably, they decided they might as well kill me fully and I was sent back to the front again. But both my memory and I returned, my memory good and myself a Major.

"FOR the first time then I tried the professional stage. Sir Alfred Butt gave me the leading rôle in 'Fair and Warmer.' That started me. I played several other things after that and it was in the theater that I met my wife, Mildred Evelyn, who was one of the most popular leading women on the British stage. We played together in 'Over Sunday' and 'Sacred and Profane Love' and married in 1920. I went into films then, one of my first pictures being with your own Betty Compton. But pictures in England are not good. We are hampered by lighting, by old favoritisms, by the fact that our intellectuals in England scorn the cinema worse than the intellectuals here scorn it. So neither the pictures nor the actors get anywhere unless the actor comes to America, as I was delighted to get the chance to do. I like it here tremendously though I could wish for a little more conversation in California. That's my whole history."

"Clive Brook," I said, "you're an intelligent, cultured, intensely human being and all this infinitesimal small talk of yours about being an aphrodisiac doesn't deceive me a bit. You're bored with this strong, cold Englishman casting inflicted upon you and you'd like the chance to play some real parts. Why not say so?"

His mocking glance returned. "Listen, child," he said. "I have, with the exception of my two favorite pictures,

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walked around. In the final scene I have arranged my profile so that it wouldn't get in the way of the leading lady's profile and we have faded out together. But some day I shall forget. Some day I shall throw a shadow on the leading lady's nose that won't photograph well and then my career will be over. It's a terrible destiny for a grown man and the reason for not raising your sons to be actors."

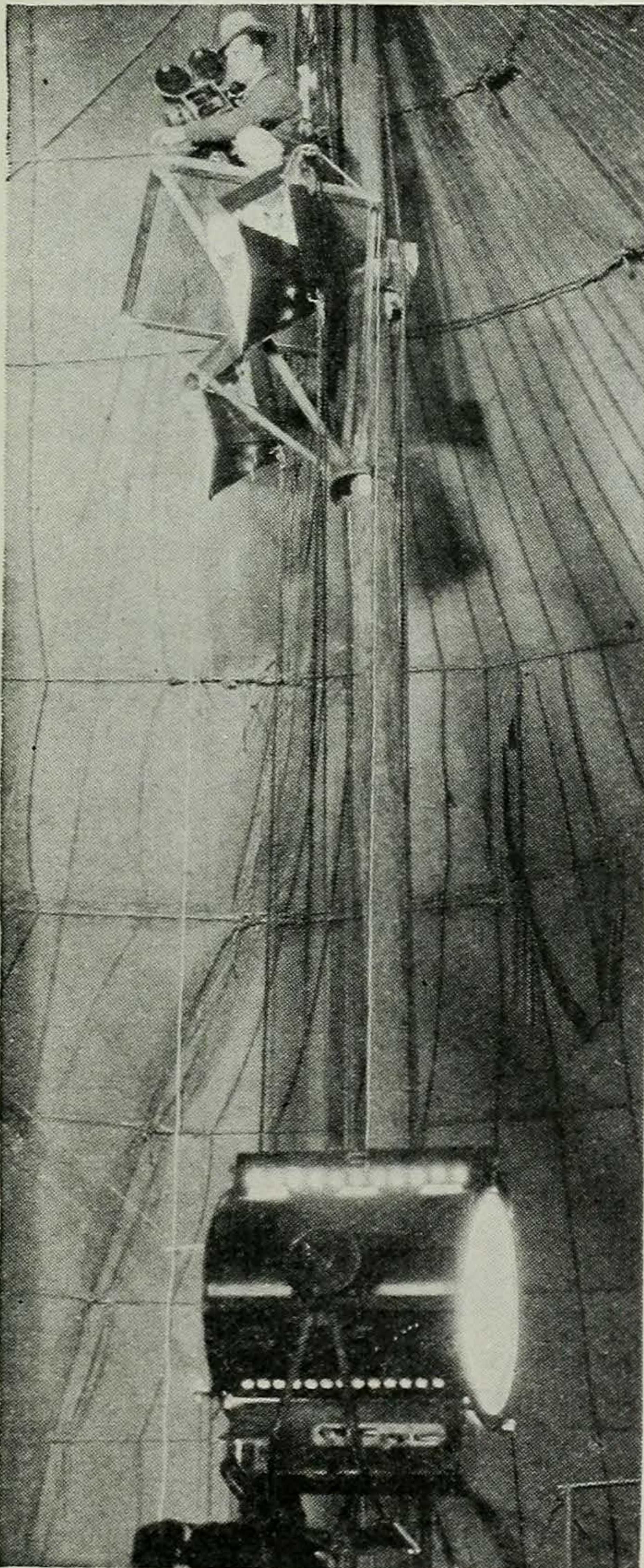
An assistant director came in to whisper that Miss Gray was waiting on the set. Dutifully Mr. Brook departed.

But I'd like to give Mr. Lasky a suggestion. There was another famous brook. It belonged to Alfred Tennyson who put it in a poem and according to the legend it went on forever.

Now there is a great space on the screen for intelligent, cultured gentlemen. Women want some star who will suggest an ideal husband to them and the success of Adolphe Menjou proves what a gold mine such appeal is.

Cast this Brook in honest domestic dramas. Then he, too, may well Tennyson-on forever.

I hope, Mr. Lasky, that I do not have to speak of this again.



The high-flying camera or the boy who worked his way to the top. Here is a camera placed in a perilous position to get some trick scenes for "Monkey Business," a new Dane-Arthur comedy

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