

Meetings and How to Conduct Them

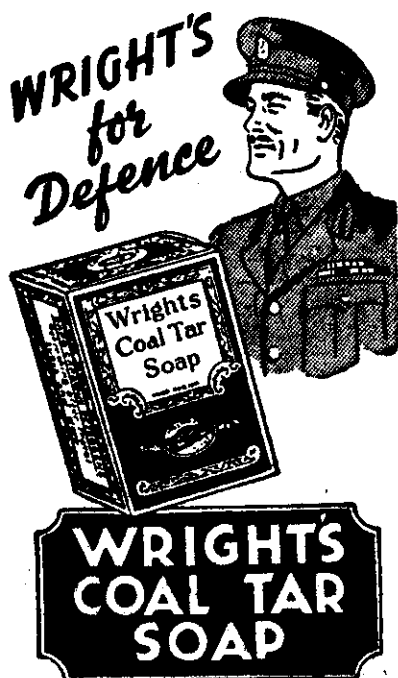
Many people are called upon at some time or other to serve upon committees, and a guide to correct procedure is therefore of very great assistance when any special points arise. No. 17 of the popular Simple Guide Series deals with all important subjects of chairmanship and the conduct of meetings 1/6

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The Films, by G.M.

PHANTOM LADY

(Universal)

TO Whom It May Concern (and it should concern everyone who likes a good and unusual picture)——

This is to introduce Miss Joan Harrison, aged 34, who used to be Alfred Hitchcock's secretary, and who is now winning another victory for the feminist movement by proving herself almost as good as her former boss and better than two ordinary men when it comes to making a motion picture. Miss Harrison's first assignment as a fully-fledged producer is *Phantom Lady*: for technique and edge-of-the-seat action it leaves most Hollywood thrillers in the also-ran class.

Phantom Lady has all the plot ingredients of a commonplace shocker—a murdered wife, a husband wrongly accused, a paranoic killer, a bunch of detectives, an insane woman, dark streets and dirty deeds. It might have been terrible, but isn't. And though the film never quite achieves the polish and sinister suspense of Hitchcock in his best *Shadow of a Doubt* mood, it is easy to see where Miss Harrison got some of her ideas from. It is also easy to see that she has some ideas of her own.

Most of the action revolves round a hat—an exotic contraption, for the designing of which a certain Mr. Kenneth Hopkins is given a line all to himself among the credit titles. Perhaps he deserves it. The Hat is worn in the first sequence by a silent, melancholy Lady drinking by herself in a bar. She is persuaded by a distraught young architect (Alan Curtis) who has had a row with his wife, to accompany him to a theatre for which he has bought tickets. There she is winked at by the drummer in the orchestra, and glared at by the Mexican singer on the stage because she is wearing exactly the same model hat as the singer. After the show the Lady disappears into the night, leaving no name. The young man returns to his flat where he finds that his wife has been strangled in his absence and detectives are in possession. His only alibi is the Lady in the Hat, but she has disappeared—and neither the bartender, nor the taxi-driver who took them to the theatre, nor the drummer boy, nor the Mexican singer, can be persuaded to remember having seen either her or her headgear.

The law is satisfied about the young man's guilt. Not so his secretary (Ella Raines), nor the detective in charge of the case (Thomas Gomez). With only a week or so to go before the unfortunate architect is executed for murder, they join forces unofficially to try to discover who was willing to take so much trouble and pay so much money to cause those lapses of memory in so many people. But just when the bartender is on the verge of remembering that both the *Phantom Lady* and her phantom hat were as substantial as flesh and trimmings could make them, he is run over by a car; the drummer boy is strangled; and the Mexican singer leaves town.

About this point the story drops its mystery by disclosing that the person responsible for all this loss of memory and life is the condemned man's friend (Franchot Tone). But it drops comparatively little of its sinister suspense; for the culprit is suffering from a particularly nasty form of insanity which very nearly proves fatal to the heroine before it proves fatal to him.



NEW VICTORY

The Woman Who Made

WOMEN have always held the centre of the stage in Hollywood, but have rarely been very prominent behind the scenes. Before Joan Harrison's debut as producer of *Phantom Lady*, only three or four women (of whom Mary Pickford was one) have ever acted in that capacity. Female directors are even rarer—Dorothy Arzner is the only one who comes to mind.

According to an American magazine, when asked in what respect she differs from other Hollywood producers, Joan Harrison grins and replies "I use my sex." When, against Universal's better judgment, she became a Universal producer, the studio sent round a cameraman to immortalise the event. "Well," snapped Miss Harrison, "do you want some leg-art?"—and posed accordingly. But besides using a pair of shapely legs, she also uses a mind trained at the Sorbonne in Paris, at Oxford, and by England's shrewdest director.

Ten years ago, a friend aroused her from sleep one morning with the news that Alfred Hitchcock was advertising for a secretary. Miss Harrison, then 24 years old, hurried 30 miles to London, bluffed her way past 12 waiting applicants, and beat 40 others whom Hitchcock had already interviewed for the job.

Highly Esteemed—But Desperate

According to herself, Joan Harrison was a terrible secretary. But she did one important thing very well. Hitchcock will never read a prospective script or even the synopsis for a script. It became Miss Harrison's job to give him stories by word of mouth. Soon she began to improve on the originals as she went along, and so became more and more useful to her boss. In 1937, with *The Girl Was Young*, she did her first piece of screen writing. In 1939, with *Jamaica Inn*, she did her first full script, and received her first screen credit. By 1941, she was (1) perhaps the most highly-esteemed member of Hitchcock's permanent crew (2) desperate. Her desperation was simple: she had ideas and ambition, and she was too close to a great man to do what she wanted with either. So she left Hitchcock.

In the next two years, several of Joan Harrison's

JOAN HARRISON, producer of "Phantom Lady," is seen in the photograph at the top of the page. Robert Siodmak, director, on her right, and Franchot Tone, anchor, on the left.

Below: Ella Raines, the almost unknown actress who gives the film a very subtle performance as heroine.

