

*"I was working on the Triangle lot as director with Fairbanks and the Gish girls, and, beyond this piece of advice, I had nothing at all to do with the making of Intolerance. Griffith, in fact, was across the street, on another section of ground, where he had big set. Nobody knew what he was making until it was practically ready for release—we just knew he was making a big picture. In one of my pictures I had a poem—I always like poems to express things—and in it was a line : "the tolerance of opinion and of speech..." Now I had that ready, and since Griffith saw all scripts, he had read this one. He called me in and asked me if I'd mind dropping the poem.*

*"Not particularly," I said. 'But why?'*

*"Well" he said. 'I'll tell you, if you'll keep it confidential. I'm using that very thought in the picture I'm preparing—the big one. In fact, my title is Intolerance—and you've accidentally struck the key of what I want to do.'*

*"I agreed to drop the poem, and after a period of time, his cameraman, Billy Bitzer, came to me and said. 'The boss wants to know if you'd mind talking with me about a problem we've got—because he knows you're an engineer.'"*

*Bitzer told Dwan about the shot Griffith had in mind. The camera had to be able to rise up to the top of the colossal Babylonian set, and then descend to ground level again.*

*"Neither Griffith nor Bitzer could think how to do it. They first had an idea that I immediately pied—they planned to build a ramp, and slide the camera up that ramp. The problems attached to rolling a camera up that thing with any degree of steadiness were enormous. And you'd have to build it like a piece of pie in order to get it level. It would be difficult, it would be expensive, you'd have no control over the exact angle or height, and you'd have no flexibility.*

*"I finally induced him to construct a device on a railroad track with an elevator in it. The device was very simple, built of tubing so it could easily be dismantled and put together. I designed the idea of what to work for and suggested the use of railroad tracks, made utterly smooth so there would be no vibration, and railroad wheels.*

*"To do this shot today would require a boom—but we have no boom that would go that high. If we did have, it would need a very long arm and the vibration would be severe. This had to be rock-steady. And it was controllable—you could stop it where you liked, continue it from where you liked. It opened from donkey engines with a system of signals."*

**Allan DWAN<sup>1</sup>**

9 – Allan Dwan / *The Parade's Gone By...*, Kevin BROWLOW, 1968  
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<sup>1</sup> "Allan Dwan—ex engineer, ex-inventor—was a man whose mechanical skill brought him into the industry..." K. B. *Interviewed in Hollywood, Dec. 1964*