In the faint hope that some exploratory finger will pull it out, this book is presented, with many kowtows, to one of the shelves in the library of

Hollywood
May, 1929

Woolford Beaton
Has the screen become a stagnant art?

Pictures need a few people who'll take a chance

The Spectator comments on its second birthday

Reviews by the Editor

MIDNIGHT MADNESS  LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT
HONEYMOON FLATS  CZARINA'S SECRET
ONE MAD HOUR  FOREIGN LEGION
SECRET HOUR  SPRING FEVER
SKYSCRAPER  WINGS
WEST POINT  LOVE

Reviews by Donald Beaton

WEST POINT  BABY MINE
SPRING FEVER  SKYSCRAPER
FEEL MY PULSE  ONE MAD HOUR
MIDNIGHT MADNESS  DRUMS OF LOVE
PRINCE OF PEANUTS  HONEYMOON FLATS
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Spectator Celebrates
Its Second Birthday

This is The Spectator's second birthday. It's a rather healthy younger now, and has outgrown those moments during its first eighteen months when it wondered whether it was worth while for it to go on living. I suppose that there was no time during the life of the infant when I should not have been completely satisfied with its progress, for there was no reason why anyone should take it seriously until it had established the fact that it was entitled to serious consideration. For the first eighteen months apparently I was the only one who took it seriously. Then the salary cut crisis arose, and I wrote an open letter to Jesse Lasky. It acted like an explosion with an element of humor in it. Within thirty days the circulation of The Spectator more than doubled, and it has turned over a couple of times since. I think it now has twice the combined circulation of all the other film papers published in Hollywood. All it need do is to continue its present rate of progress for one more year and it will have a greater circulation than any film trade paper published in America. The quality of its circulation is the most gratifying feature of its development. Apparently all the thinking people in Hollywood who are connected with pictures read it, and to them during the past half-year have been added thousands of exhibitors as well as an extraordinary number of Eastern people prominent in dramatic, literary, and financial circles. I am relating these facts because I think they will interest those people in Hollywood who have demonstrated so earnestly their friendship for the paper, and all of us are interested in the progress of our friends. The success of The Spectator justifies the idea upon which it was founded: that there is in every line of endeavor a market for absolute honesty. I argue so persistently in these pages that it is not humbly possible that I should be right all the time, but I have not advanced one argument that I did not believe in sincerely. Whatever degree of respect that this policy has gained for The Spectator is its chief asset. It is a policy that never will be changed. It is easier to write honestly, and it is better business. Honest opinions in a paper are like honest emotions on the screen. Both are market-
able. When I first came to Hollywood to uplift the screen by writing stories for it, I endeavored to write honest stories. I made old men and old women human, and wrote of fundamental emotions. I did not sell my stories. I was told that you can not interest audiences in old men and old women, and that sentiment had no market value as screen material. Such was the sincere belief of producers, with whom I did not agree, a disagreement, however, that did not create a market for my stories. A couple of years ago William Fox announced that he had made enough money and that hereafter he was going to make the kind of pictures that he always had wanted to make. The presumption was that he expected to lose money. I've had some articles in The Spectator to the effect that producers would get farther if they forgot trying to guess what the public wanted and made pictures to suit themselves, consequently I awaited the outcome of the Fox plan to prove or disprove my contention. Fox made pictures to suit himself, and he is making more money than he did before. In any line of endeavor the way to make most money is to forget money. Concentrate on your output and the income will take care of itself. The success of The Spectator demonstrates it. I did not start The Spectator to uplift the screen. My sole idea in starting it was to uplift my bank account. At no time have I deemed its mission to be anything except to make money for me. But I beat Mr. Fox to it. It was after he made his money that he decided to make pictures to suit himself, an idea

ROMANCE

By GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN

Romance!—theme of the ages—
Of your beatitudes poets have sung;
Your brow is enwreathed with roses;
Upon your proud shoulders is hung
The cloak of our intricate fancy.
You are lord of our dreams and our passions;
Our loves; the celestial fire
That illumines the garden of friendship;
That flames in the breast of desire.

You are, to our lips, a chalice
Brimmed with a vintage rare;
To our eyes, a glimpse of Heaven,
And the favored who congregate there.
When you fold your garments about us
We are gods; and the lifting cadence
Of a song that but hearts may hear
Resolves Love's old enigmas:
A glance, a smile, a tear.

Not enough is material comfort—
The reward of the cautious wise—
The soul feels an impulse upward
To the light of romantic skies;
It has savored the fragrance of living,
And yearns to drain the cup,
As the plant from the humble sod
Yearns aloft to supernatural gardens
That encompass the throne of God.

But alas, for our ardent yearnings!
And alas, for the prayers we pray!
Romance draws his cloak about him
And turns from the crowd away,
Walking the shadowy by-ways,
Seeking for hearts of valor
Daring some bold emprise
For Love, or for mere Adventure—
And a fig for the cautious wise.
that I had when I established The Spectator. In writing each number I make no effort to please its readers. My only endeavor is to please myself. In this I have not been successful, but in my striving I have pleased more people than I could have pleased by forgetting myself and thinking only of them. I am going to persist in my attempt to please myself and I hope that I will succeed in getting close enough to it to please you.

* * *

Some Thoughts That a Birthday Suggests

CRITICISM of the older arts has become stabilized. Definite standards have been established and the arts have profited greatly from the constructive thoughts of those who write about them. Motion picture criticism has assumed no definite form. The majority of those who write about the screen know nothing about it, consequently what they say has no constructive value. Many of its critics look down upon it, and seem more anxious to demonstrate their own cleverness than to be helpful. They strive to bury their ignorance beneath avalanches of words. Most of those nearest the industry allow their criticisms to be affected by business and personal considerations. When John Ford was directing Four Sons an advertising salesman representing the Los Angeles Times visited his set and endeavored to sell him space in the Times annual hold-up number. Ford would not buy. For three days Ford and members of his cast were annoyed by the salesman, who finally had to be asked to stay away from the set. Three weeks before Four Sons opened at the Carthy Circle Ford was told that the Times criticism of it would be unfavorable. Two days before the opening Ford told me to look for a roast in the Times. It came. Because Ford would not advertise in the Times, the readers of that paper were deceived grossly as to the merits of his picture, the review going to the length of omitting the name of Margaret Mann, who, in a sense, is the whole picture. Perhaps she also refused to advertise. I could relate scores of such instances. The greatest grafters among the papers display the greatest venom. "Variety" is the king-pin of them all. But screen people make the grafting publications possible by supporting them. When I started The Spectator I had the hope that a paper devoted to fair criticism, the only kind I could write, would receive the enthusiastic support of those who work in pictures. From the standpoint of circulation it has. But the advertising patronage has disappointed me. Writers, directors and actors know that my comments can not be affected by anything that does not appear on the screen, and they seem to prefer to spend their money with papers that can see virtue only in the work of an advertiser. They are stupid fools if they can not see that the most favorable reviews in such papers can not influence those whom they are trying to impress: the producers. Do you imagine that any producer is such an ass as to be affected by what the Times said of Four Sons? Hundreds of thousands of dollars are extracted from film people's purses every year by papers that give no returns whatever. I had hoped to make The Spectator an instrument to stop this waste. A small card in this paper regularly is all the advertising that anyone needs. Contract players need it to keep the industry informed of the pictures in which they are appearing; free lances need it to keep their names before the industry. If screen workers would unite in support of The Spectator the grafting journals would be put out of business. I do not want anyone to spend a lot of money. It would be foolish to do so, and I retain for myself the sole privilege of being foolish in these pages. I have great ambitions for The Spectator, but they are based on the expectation of support from the industry. In return I can offer no more than I have given for two years—common honesty applied to the task of writing about the screen.

* * *

Trying to Settle the Status of Screen Art

A NUMBER of us were discussing screen art. In the group were Douglas Fairbanks, Conrad Nagel, Mil- ton Sills, Fred Niblo, Barney Glazer, and Will Hays. I charged that already it is a stagnant art; that it is giving birth to nothing new. Fred Niblo claimed that in its short career it had outstripped the stage, had got away from painted rocks and canvas forests and had become real. Will Hays vigorously challenged my statement. He said he certainly did not approve of my sweeping indictment, claiming that pictures are an Arabian Night's dream; that the industry is a stupendous one, attracting in this country alone ninety million people to theatres every week; that its progress has been extraordinary, as proven by the fact that at the present time it is bewiidered by the rapidity of the development of sound devices, television and such things; that it stood aghast when it contemplated its own possibilities. And still I say that screen art is stagnant, that it is giving birth to nothing new. It is not responsible for any of the things about which Hays boasts. The ninety million people made it a gigantic industry, and the sound devices and television originated in brains unconnected with the industry. If there be one major mechanical or technical improvement that started in the brains of someone working in pictures I have not heard about it. This is not the fault of those thus employed. They have the brains, but the whole progress of the screen thus far has been one of resistance to new ideas. It is idle for Will Hays to boast about an industry that has done nothing whatever in the first quarter of a century of its life to develop the source of supply of its raw material: stories. Up to within two years ago any producer could take a pencil and a piece of paper and prove conclusively that an original story could not be made into a successful picture. To-day it has changed its mind about original stories, but has not changed its attitude towards those who write them. If the screen had been born with common sense its first step would have been to establish its own literature; if it had acquired common sense in the past twenty-five years it would be doing something about it now, but it hasn't and it isn't. It has discouraged initiative and every step forward that it has taken has been a grudging concession to an outside force too insistent to be ignored. And as an art it has not advanced as much as it has as an industry. It is doing to-day the same old things that it did a quarter of a century ago. That was my charge, which Will Hays combatted with arguments regarding features unrelated to the art—about as sensible as meeting an indictment of modern portrait painters with the claim that the frames being made for their work reflect steady progress. Before considering in detail its
artistic development let us consider the welcome it has extended to a distinctly successful mechanical development. In Technicolor the screen has available in Hollywood a process by which all feature pictures can be made to look natural by reason of showing everything in its own color. This process has been developed and perfected outside the industry. For the past few years there has been no reason why the screen should show a red rose as a black object, but it keeps on doing it. Is that progress? Producers can understand the necessity of doing something about voice reproduction, for that is noise, and noise is something blatant, which they can understand. But to reproduce the glorious coloring that nature shows us is art, and they do not understand art, which is why it is stagnant.

Screen Too Backward In Making Experiments

THAT what the screen lacks most is a spirit of adventure I have said before. The business is conducted in a manner that does not permit of experimentation. It strives to make every picture yield a profit, consequently each of them contains only those features that we have seen time and again in pictures that have been successful at the box-office in the past. It is a system that utterly bars progress by refusing to take a chance with a new idea. We can understand why a small, independent producer who risks his financial future on every picture he makes, would be adverse to indulging in experiments, but we can not excuse the big producers for a similar hesitation. Financially the thing that is of importance to them is their balance sheets at the end of a year. If their net profit is satisfactory, it matters little how much money each picture has made. They are in a position to make experiments, and each experiment should be made for the purpose of ascertaining the manner in which it can add to their profits. A manuscript was submitted to Simon & Schuster, book publishers. Any publisher could have proven to the firm that a book made from that sort of manuscript would be a failure. The author was unknown, he was illiterate. He did not know how to construct sentences, how to spell or punctuate; there was no story; his writings were rambling and unrelated narratives of experiences in Africa; he was a garrulous old man without the slightest knowledge of literature, an uncultured peddler of tinware who could not know what the reading public wants. Simon & Schuster must have taken all these defects into consideration. But the book was published, and if its specifications had been submitted to me I would have been willing to bet its publishers that it would have been a flat failure that would not return enough to pay for putting it in type. Simon & Schuster further invited disaster by making a large and handsome volume out of the revolutionary manuscript. The book appeared in June of last year, an issue of thirty-five hundred copies. The experiment succeeded. The forms were put on the presses again at once and another issue of thirty-five hundred copies sent to bookstores; in July ten thousand more copies were bought up eagerly; in August another ten thousand; in September a similar number, and how many since, I do not know. The book is *Trader Horn*, and although it has in it just about everything that a book should not have, it is one of the most fascinating volumes that I ever have read. Imagine me saying that of a book that is punctuated even worse than motion picture titles! The publishers, whose future profits depend on the advance of literature as an art, realized that they must experiment in the interests of the art. They publish many books in the course of a year, and if the experiment were a failure they have all the other products over which to spread the loss. They were not interested in how much profit one book made, their chief concern being the profit on an entire year's operation. If our picture producers could grasp the same idea, and cease being reluctant to try something new, occasionally they would uncover such a gold mine as *Trader Horn*, but even a failure would mark a definite step forward by indicating something that hereafter must be avoided. The trouble now is that there is no way of ascertaining if a given idea be good or bad, as producers will not risk a dollar in an effort to make the discovery. They want only the old ideas, and an art that will not welcome a new one is a stagnant art, Will Hays's Arabian Nights tales to the contrary notwithstanding.

Not So Bad, Even Though It's Moral

ROWLAND V. Lee scores in two ways with *The Secret Hour*: he wrote the screen story and directed it. He performed both jobs acceptably. It is a Pola Negri picture, one of four in which Lee has directed her. The first of the series, *Barbed Wire*, I put on my list of ten best pictures of last year. It had what *Secret Hour* lacks—a great background. An orange grove is not as impressive a background as the world war, and it is in an orange grove that most of the action of *Secret Hour* takes place. Perhaps more than any other American director, Lee has a grasp of European psychology, and makes pictures with European settings seem real when they reach the screen. And European settings have more pictorial possibilities than American settings. Over there things are old and massive, and the cities have not the mathematical precision of ours. That is why most of our big pictures have foreign locales. *A Seventh Heaven*, a *Barbed Wire* or a *Four Sons* would have lost a great deal of its pictorial attractiveness if it had been laid in this country. All this is by way of preface to the statement that although it is strong in drama, *Secret Hour* will be considered a small Negri picture. It is an intimate story of three people, a screen version of *They Knew What They Wanted*, a play that was presented in only a few places, consequently not many people will share my disappointment over the fact that the picture lacks the punch of the play, an emasculation that was necessary to make it suitable for screen purposes. I am sorry that I saw the play, for I like to take my pictures straight, not with a dash of memory of what they might have been. In the play the girl who is about to become a mother is not married, which is more intriguing than the picture has it. In *Secret Hour* a justice of the peace mumbles words that are not dramatic enough to compensate for the drama of which they rob the story. *But Secret Hour* is a good picture, measured by any standard. Miss Negri gives a splendid performance. She plays an American girl whom we encounter first as a waitress in a cheap restaurant. Later she goes to the orange ranch to marry Jean Hersholt, an Italian, who owns it. Jean woos her by mail,
THE FILM SPECTATOR

March 3, 1928

Ted Sloman Gives Us a Crackerjack

When The Foreign Legion is released Edward Sloman is going to be given a place in the front rank of directors. He makes a splendid job of it, and gives to Universal a production that is good enough to be shown in any house anywhere. He had a good story to start with, and Charlie Kenyon gave him a finely written screen version of it, but the director can not be denied the chief credit for the entertainment value and dramatic strength of the picture. The story is set in Morocco with the exception of a cut-back to an English sequence, and we are given some of the most striking desert scenes that ever reached the screen. The photography is excellent throughout, being of a rich quality that registered with me even though the projection room in which I saw it did not do the film full justice. In no one of his previous pictures has Sloman displayed such a fine sense of composition and grouping. There is only one flaw in grouping during the entire film. Mutilous soldiers crowd around their colonel, but leave a wide lane down which the camera points to pick him up. Why WILL directors persist in making that mistake? What possible reason could excited soldiers have for stopping at an imaginary line and craning their necks to look down it to see something that they could see easily by taking a step forward? However, this is the only sin that Sloman commits. He uses medium shots and long shots effectively, which treatment has the advantage of retaining all the photographic and pictorial values while putting over the story even better than close-ups would. But the greatest feature of the direction is Sloman's good judgment of dramatic values. The picture is a powerful drama containing many strong scenes. Every one of them is directed admirably, Sloman pausing at the point of perfection that lies between too much repression and overacting. He tells his story quietly, refraining from too much emphasis of scenes that in themselves are sufficiently dramatic to need no acting to make them more so. Norman Kerry and Lewis Stone are the featured players in The Foreign Legion. I don't think either of them ever gave a better performance. Norman is becoming a better actor all the time. In this picture he has a most sympathetic role, and brings out all its values. Lewis Stone is distinguished from most other screen actors by his excellency as an actor, and from all other screen actors by the fact that he does not read The Spectator. I wish someone would tell him that I think his performance in this picture is very good indeed. Craufurd Kent has a heavy role, unredeemed by a single virtue, and he puts into it the intelligence and mastery of mechanics that characterize all his screen work. I believe, however, that his part would have been more convincing if he had been allowed to show some sign of decency. If I had been directing him I would have had him being kind to a dog or a horse, which would have made him still more the heavy by accentuating his villainy by contrast. Mary Nolan has an important role in this picture, the first big one I have seen her in. She has beauty and ability, and I see no reason why she should not have a successful screen career. June Marlowe is another member of the cast who gives a good account of herself. I like her. I like all our screen girls who look sweet, refined and intelligent. There are not many. Universal has given The Foreign Legion an adequate production. Morocco is a fascinating locale for a motion picture, and in this picture all the fascination is brought out. Edward Montagne supervised the story, and if he, Kenyon, and Sloman can continue to give us such notable pictures as this one I hope Carl Laemmle will give them a chance. Universal has turned out bigger pictures than The Foreign Legion, but it never turned out a more perfectly made one.

Howard Higgin Makes Roughnecks Delightful

The Skyscraper, directed by Howard Higgin for De Mille, is a good audience picture and also is one that should interest Hollywood. It defies so many traditions. It has practically no story. It has no elaborate interior sets. It has no heavy. It has only atmosphere. Most of the action takes place within the gaunt skeleton of a rising skyscraper. Accepting the scenes at their face value, the characters perform their daily tasks at a dizzy height, bringing to the audience an impression of the hazardous occupation steel workers follow. In his opening sequences Higgin plants effectively what would be the soul of a skyscraper if a skyscraper had a soul. He shows the thin line that runs between life and death on such a job—a careless footstep, then the street below. He plants this atmosphere with some of the most delicious comedy I have seen in months. Alan Hale and William Boyd are steel workers. Even before a title tells us that they live together we grasp the fact that they have for one another that manly love that means lifelong friendship. We are sure of it the moment they start their first quarrel; and they don't stop quarreling or fighting for as long as we
see them on the screen. In the last Spectator I gave it as my opinion that Alan Hale should play comedy. I was not aware at the time that he had such a role, but I am glad to point to it as proof of the soundness of my idea. He is a capital comedian. Bill Boyd never did as well in any other picture in which I have seen him. The continuous warfare between him and Hale will keep any audience in a constant roar of laughter. Thanks to the excellence of Higgin's direction we lose sight of the fact that there is no story. Every foot of the film entertains us, and that is all we ask of any picture. There is a slim romance between Boyd and that altogether delightful Sue Caroll. It is the kind of love story that we can be interested in only to the extent that we are interested in the parties to it. Higgin first builds up our interest in the characters as individuals, after which it doesn't matter much what they do; they are our friends and our interest extends to anything that they do. That is what interested me most about the picture. In the opening sequences no story is planted and nothing happens later in the picture ties up with anything. Higgin merely plays around with his characters until we know them thoroughly, after which it is no trick to keep us interested in them. The characterizations so ably portrayed by Hale and Boyd are consistent to the end. There is not a single sentimental moment in their relations. They are at war constantly and no effort is made to present them as anything other than a pair of roughnecks. They are almost the whole picture, and they make of it a sparkling comedy quite good enough to appear in any house. This is the first sample of Higgin's work that I have seen. It is free from all the standard directorial weaknesses that I criticize so frequently. It betrays an understanding, sympathy and tenderness that should make Higgin in demand as a director, even if his delightful sense of humor were not enough to recommend him. Ralph Block supervised The Skyscraper. He hasn't been out at the De Mille studio very long, but he is beginning to put his impress on production. Tay Garnett wrote the screen story and no doubt is entitled to credit for a good share of the skilful character drawing. He also acts. He appears in a brief bit in which he is called on to make love to Sue Caroll. I hope Tay had the decency not to ask for pay for that day's work.

* * *

"Wings" a Truly Great Picture

WINGS is a magnificent picture. Perhaps more than any other production that yet has been brought to the screen, it shows us what stupendous deeds the motion picture camera can perform. It is rich in entertainment value, but richer in what it promises in the way of future development. It is Paramount's most valuable contribution to screen art, and dignifies both its makers and the art. No picture ever made revealed an equal cleverness in blending miniature shots with life-sized ones. The nature of my calling demands that I view pictures critically, and as I view them I scribble notes which later become the basis of my comments. I made no notes on Wings. I sat back and enjoyed it, which, in as far as I personally am concerned, is my greatest tribute to its excellence. The thrills that came from the gigantic screen were all that mattered. The amazing photography is enough in itself to make the production notable. The theme and the comprehensive manner of its presentation dwarf everything else that composes the picture, and make its faults unimportant. But there is a lesson which the faults teach us. Some weeks ago I argued in The Spectator that love stories are not necessary to all pictures. Wings is a striking example of the kind of picture that is weakened by conventional treatment. It is so tremendous that the private affairs of the characters in it are trivial. That excellent little actress, Clara Bow, manages only to be a nuisance. There was no story reason for taking her to France. The flutter of a skirt has no place among whirring propellers. The picture deals graphically and dramatically with the affairs of war, and the presence of a girl behind the line for no other reason than to conform to the movie convention that there must be a girl in a picture, detracts from its strength. Only the fact that Wings is powerful enough to carry the load kept it from being ruined by its story. I would have shown the girls only in the opening and closing sequences, and when the characters are in France I would have injected nothing to distract the audience's attention from the serious business of war and the part played in it by the men for whom interest had been developed. That Paramount did not know what to do with such story as it had is shown by the fact that it does nothing to clear the reputation of Clara Bow who was sent home from France in disgrace. The audience knows that she is innocent, but the picture ignores the fact that there is a blot on her record. The whole drunk sequence never should have been shot. I know that our fine boys who went to France did such things, for I saw much of it over there myself, but it should not have been dragged into a picture to which it contributes nothing whatever. There is nothing half-way about a motion picture; what does not strengthen it harms it. The Saturday Evening Post may be taken as a gauge of the public's taste in fiction, a taste identical with that to which pictures cater. That publication, which is amazingly prosperous because it contains stories the public likes, realizes that a love story is not essential. I have not kept tab, but I feel that I am safe in saying that not half its stories endeavor to focus our interest in girls. If the screen were right in its conviction that every picture must have a love interest, the Post would not be the success it is. During the past ten years the Post has contained scores of war stories in which no girls figured. wings would have been a much better picture if it had reduced the girl interest to a minimum. But, even so, it is a great picture. It is one you must see, and one that every exhibitor should book. It is a distinct triumph for William Wellman, its director.

* * *

Something About Young Directors

OM Meighan is fortunate in having Lewis Milestone to direct his first picture for Caddo Productions. In both Two Arabian Knights and The Garden of Eden Milestone demonstrated that he is one of the coming directors. He is the fortunate possessor of a rare sense of humor in addition to a fine appreciation of dramatic values. If I were asked to make a list of the young men who give promise of having a brilliant screen career, one of the first names I would set down would be that of Lewis Milestone. Tom Meighan still possesses the screen
personality that made him a favorite, but he has appeared in a succession of pictures so hopelessly bad that he has retained but little of his box-office value. If any director can bring him back it is Milestone, and I hope Tom has sense enough to put himself in his director's hands. There are some other young fellows who are doing notable things now and from whom more notable work may be expected in the future. Sam Taylor is one of them. He made a splendid picture of My Best Girl, and jumped from that human little story to The Tempest, a John Barrymore production which is strong in drama and rich in production value. It is a wide range to cover, but I have so much faith in Sam's ability that I am confident that he will repeat in the big picture the success he achieved with the smaller one. Bill Howard is another who will bear watching. He is intelligent, versatile and daring, attributes that make for success in directing. He has not given us yet a big production, but has done so well with modest ones that if I were a producer I would have no hesitation in entrusting him with the biggest story on my list. Joe von Sternberg has the queerest record of any director. With only two pictures to his credit and both of them box-office failures, he makes a splash with two big Paramount pictures, Underworld and Last Command, two productions that appealed alike to critics and the public. These two successes have placed him in the front rank of directors. He has done something that for some strange reason few directors do: he has followed one success with another. The recognition of Jack Ford as a director dates back farther than that of the others I have mentioned, but he has come to the front so rapidly of late that he can be regarded almost as a new director. The Iron Horse and Three Bad Men were good pictures, but they did little more than hint at the greatness of Four Sons and Mother Machree, both of which will rank well up on any list of the most worthy contributions to screen art. All the critics who have viewed it bear tribute to the outstanding quality of Mother Machree, and they credit its success to Ford's direction and Belle Bennett's magnificent performance. With these two pictures Ford has duplicated Von Sternberg's two-in-a-row feat in a mathematical sense, and has surpassed it in giving us two better pictures than those of Von Sternberg. Ford now has a different kind of story on his hands. Hangman's House does not offer him an opportunity to strike the deep human note that makes Four Sons and Mother Machree great pictures, but it is laid in Ireland, a locale dear to Jack's heart, has definite characterizations and considerable drama. If he can make out of it a picture that ranks with the other two, and I believe he can, Ford will come mighty near to being entitled to recognition as our greatest director. Harry D'Arrast is another young fellow from whom we may expect none but good pictures. He brings more polish and finesse to his work than any of the others, but has yet to demonstrate his ability to handle a big story. All those I have mentioned use their intellects. From them we may expect the

new note that screen art soon will strike. There are some others whom I might discuss among those whose future is promising, but they have not yet demonstrated their abilities as emphatically as have those whose names I have mentioned.

* * *

"Her Mad Hour" Is Not Quite Sane

ELINOR Glyn should come to Hollywood when they are making a picture from one of her stories. She is a brilliant woman with a logical mind, consequently she writes stories that are both brilliant and logical, but Her Mad Hour is neither. It is a picture made by First National from a story by Madame Glyn. Joseph C. Boyle directed. My objections to it are not such as to lead me to advise exhibitors not to book it. It has considerable production value, and much trashy stuff that many people like—the kind of people who will not be disturbed by the fact that the major premise of the story is illogical. Sally O'Neill and Alice White get beastly drunk in an early sequence, and next morning Sally wakes up married to the gentleman who is sharing a bedroom with her, a scene that morally is quite sound. The preview audience was given the privilege of seeing Sally having a shower bath, attired as one generally is when engaged in that exhilarating pastime. To an extent the water acts as a screen, an irritating one, but, even so, the preview audience was more fortunate than any other audience will be, as a scene of that sort never will get beyond even a blind censor, which is as it should be. After the husband's father has disowned his son, Lowell Sherman, whom it always is a pleasure to see on the screen, happens along and becomes a good samaritan in order to perform some villainy with much finesse. Although he is a stranger to the couple, Sally and her high-born husband live off him until Sally is given a package of stolen jewels to return to the grande dame from whom they were stolen, the object being to get the reward offered for their recovery. The police get Sally, and it is there that the story runs wild. Instead of telling the police the truth and assisting in the capture of the thieves, Sally becomes heroic and refuses to talk. The story demands that she go to jail, and she gets one year for grand larceny, notwithstanding the fact that the audience knows that under no possibility could she be convicted of such a crime, even though she refused to explain how she secured the jewels. Possession of stolen property is not proof of larceny. Sally's husband has the marriage annulled, which he could not do, divorce being his only way out; Sally goes to jail, a son is born to her, and the husband takes the baby away from her. All this is tough on Sally, but it is not convincing on the screen because it is not logical. It could not have happened. Sally's action in shielding the gang of thieves who made a catspaw of her is utterly ridiculous. Being so, everything that happens to her thereafter is simply motion picture, and can not be taken seriously. I am sure these faults were not committed in Elinor Glyn's manuscript. No drama can be any stronger than the premise upon which it is based. Sally forfeits all claim to our sympathy when she goes to jail as a result of her own stubbornness, consequently when we see her scrubbing the jail floors we yawn and wonder what is coming next. If she had tried to keep out of jail, but had been railroaded there by a logical sequence of events,
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we would have had some sympathy for her. It is a queer thing that people in studios seem to be incapable of grasping such elemental truths when they go about the business of making motion pictures. Her Mad Hour almost is redeemed in its last hundred feet. Sally discovers her former husband being married to another girl, and at the same time finds out that she can not recover her baby. She steals an automobile and starts a wild ride that terminates when she drives the car over a cliff. During the drive we see her face in close-up, and I must congratulate the young woman upon doing some superb acting in that long sustained, intimate shot. On her face is depicted all the misery she is suffering, and I was surprised to see how well she did it. Apparently we must take her seriously as an actress.

Let's Look at the Money Side of It

A SUBSCRIBER writes me to the effect that he is getting a little tired of reading about close-ups, although he feels about them as I do, and is sorry that Griffith happened to think about them. This reader must take into account that I am addressing a dull audience in my campaign against this blight on screen art, and it takes a long time and much persistance to impress a dull person. If there were no dull persons in pictures there would be practically no close-ups. All the really intelligent people approve my arguments against them. To make any impression whatever on the others I must keep hammering at them. It is accomplishment, not advocacy, that measures a publication's value to any cause it serves. I am convinced thoroughly that the senseless use of close-ups is costing the motion picture industry millions of dollars annually. Take Love, the Metro picture starring Greta Garbo and Jack Gilbert, and directed by Edmund Goulding. I was talking about it with Louis B. Mayer the other day. He told me that some critics said it was one of the best pictures ever made and that others said it was one of the worst. The criticism that I read came under the second heading, and I agree with them. The adverse criticisms must have had an effect at box-ettes, a tendency that adverse criticisms have, although producers scoff at the idea. It follows that if there had been no such criticisms the picture would have made more money. Love was given an elaborate and artistic production, and contains excellent acting by the two principal players and by Brandon Hurst and George Fawcett. With such assets it should have satisfied the tastes of the critics. But it did not. The story was no worse than most stories, consequently we must ascribe its lack of appeal to the treatment given it. It was treated almost entirely in close-ups, and to them, and to them alone, I attribute the picture's failure to give general satisfaction. If it had contained about half a dozen close-ups, instead of over three hundred, it would have been a good picture; it would have given the audience the full benefit of the fine production and preserved the dramatic value of all the sequences. In the form in which it was presented to the public it is one of the most stupid pictures I have seen. There is a close-up of a butler announcing a caller; another of a servant bowing to her mistress. I challenge the whole Metro personnel to advance one argument in justification of such utterly absurd shots. Granting their absurdity, and that of some three hundred others equally as senseless, how can a picture containing them be a good one? With such a cast and such a production Love should have been an outstanding picture. Close-ups have made it a poor one. Add to it the hundreds of other pictures that each year are made poor in the same way and it is easy to see how close-ups are costing the industry millions of dollars annually. This loss can not be stopped suddenly for we have few directors who have sufficient ability to shoot pictures as they should be shot, but it will have to be stopped some time, and the directors who bring about the reform will be the ones who will command the big salaries in the future. Of course, the story of Love may be contributing somewhat to the picture's failure to be an outstanding success. The public is not accustomed to heroes who run away with other men's wives. It is done, it is true, but in pictures it is done by villains who get theirs in the end. In Love the husband conveniently dies to permit the picture to end with the standard clinch, which presumably restores the hero and heroine to good standing in the community. Anyway, Love reminds us what excellent artists Gilbert and Miss Garbo are, and what a master at artistic settings Cedric Gibbons is. Also it gives us Phillippe de Lacey in a role that allows him to demonstrate what an extremely clever lad he is. He is charming on the screen.

Harmon Weight Shows Progress

HARMON Weight is a young director who gives definite promise of becoming an important one. I've seen but two of his pictures, The Symphony, which I gave a place on my list of ten best pictures of 1927, and Midnight Madness, which he recently completed for De Mille. I was fortunate enough to see the first production before Universal gave it the final massage which no doubt squeezed out of it all the quality that made me enthusiastic about it, including the name which has been changed to Burning Cocktails, or something else so ridiculous that I can not recall it. Perhaps the public will not give Symphony the same rating that I did, but the public will not see the picture as I saw it. Midnight Madness will cause no excitement. It is a little thing that will pass unnoticed by all except those who have some knowledge of screen technic. It interested me primarily as an example of intelligent direction. Weight was given a story written originally by Shakespeare, and which attracted some attention under the name Taming of the Shrew. Robert N. Lee gave the theme modern treatment, but did not have enough to go on to provide the director with a script that left nothing to his originality. Clive Brook, a wealthy man, asks Jacqueline Logan, Walter McGrail's secretary, to marry him. She agrees, and later Brook overhears her telling McGrail that she is marrying for money. Brook does not back out. He marries her, poses as a poor man, and makes Jackie like it. There's the whole story. Weight tells it in a way that makes it interesting. It is not smeared with close-ups. He has two and three characters on the screen at the same time speaking titles and there is no doubt about which one is speaking. Directors have defended close-ups on the ground that they were necessary to distinguish the origin of spoken titles. There is one shot showing Brook kissing Miss Logan while they are seated at a table in a crowded restaurant. You often see
such shots. They are ridiculous, as well bred people do
their kissing with more privacy. No doubt the Midnight
Madness script called for the action, but Weight takes the
curse off it by making both characters look silly and con-
fused after the deed has been committed. Most directors
shoot it in a matter-of-fact way, as if a restaurant were
run as much for making love as for serving soup. In
handling his characters the director shows a marked sense
of dramatic values. The three leading characters give ade-
quate and intelligent performances. Brook is particularly
good. He is one of the most accomplished actors we have,
and even in such a little picture as this one makes his
part stand out as a fine example of intellectual charac-
terization. I never have seen Jacqueline photographed as
well and I do not think she ever gave such a good per-
formance before. McGraul is a heavy with a sense of
humor, quite a refreshing departure. When he is putting
over something on the girl he does not sneer at her in
the approved manner of villains; he laughs heartily and
seems to be enjoying himself hugely. We should have
more heavies who do not take themselves seriously. In his
scenes with Brook he is easy-going and gentlemanly, and
there is nothing in his demeanor to suggest that his
motives are not lofty. In one sequence Frank Hagney does
creditable work as a heavy of a rougher type. But the
picture is Weight's. If given a chance with something
bigger, I am quite sure that he would do it justice. I
believe he has something new to offer, and heaven knows
we can do with a few directors who will wander from the
beaten path and reveal fresh angles of screen art.

* * *

Bill Haines and the
Etiquette of Golf

THEY'RE overdoing Bill Haines as a smart alec. In
an altogether satisfactory printed story or motion
picture there must be a central character who com-
mands our sympathy, respect and liking. If we can not
become interested in some one in a picture we can not
become interested in the picture itself. It is upon this
theory that our wholly pure hero has been developed. He
is in the picture as the magnet for our sympathy, and
he is kept more than humanly good in order that he will
not forfeit it. To the extent that we are interested in
him are we interested in the unfoldment of the story. I
have seen Haines play nothing but a smart alec, which
probably is all he can play, and a smart alec is a most
obnoxious person. In most of his stories, however, he was
given some redeeming feature that commanded at least a
little respect for him. But in Spring Fever he is obnoxious
all the way through. He can not maintain his popularity
if he be given a succession of such parts as he plays in this
picture. Metro made quite a picture out of it, and Ed
Sedgwick directed it acceptably, but how can a picture
please us when the chief character, the one whose fate the
story deals with, is an altogether unpleasing person? Bill
plays the part all right, and can not be blamed for the
characterization, but a hero who does not perform one
gracious act in the entire picture is the kind of hero that
the public soon will tire of. He is a bumptious ass in
the opening sequences, but it is not until he reaches the
country club that he becomes altogether impossible. Only
his golf game is creditable. He has a good stance and a
fine swing and it was a pleasure to watch him use any of
his clubs, but anyone who behaved as he did on a golf
course would have been thrown over the fence before he
had been there one hour. He speaks to Joan Crawford,
whom he does not know, as she takes her stance for a
drive. How did Bill become a crack golf player without
learning what an unpardonable sin that is? He knows it,
Ed Sedgwick knows it, and the scores of golf players on
the Metro lot know it, yet an important scene in the picture
is one containing this bad breach of golf etiquette. The
picture is the only one I have seen that seems to have been
made primarily for golf players, which is a good idea, as
there are many millions of them throughout the world,
yet it makes its hero do things that will irritate every
golfer who sees it. Why deliberately offend the audience
that a picture is aimed at? Metro would offer in its
defence that Bill does the irritating things to get laughs.
In farce you can disregard the conventions, but in straight
comedy you can not. Spring Fever is not a farce, for in
a farce all the characters are abnormal. In this picture
Haines is the only character who is not normal. If there
be any value in the comedy, it will appeal most to people
who are familiar with golf courses and country clubs, and
the farther it gets away from the atmosphere of such
places, the more it weakens the comedy. The country club
atmosphere is not maintained. The club is run like a
hotel. Haines registers and is shown to his room by a
bell boy. I never have been in that kind of country club.
The other phases of the story are as absurd as those I
have mentioned. Haines, to win Joan Crawford, lies to
her, an astonishing thing for a hero to do. A maudlin
attempt is made to gloss his infamy by showing him leav-
ing her on their wedding night. Everything in the picture
is forced. It contains a weakness common to many pic-
tures, a hero whom the heroine could not possibly love.
Such a girl as Joan is shown to be would despise such a
hopeless cad as Haines characterized. Imagine a hero who
peeps through a keyhole to get a glimpse of a girl in a
bedroom! Comedy? Well, if that be Metro's conception of
comedy it should try its hand at something else. Spring
Fever is impossible all the way through except when Bill
swings at the ball. He is quite all right then.

* * *

On the Necessity of
Making Hero Likable

THE screen needs new ideas, but in our search for
them there are established conventions that can not
be ignored altogether. I have protested against
heroes who are too good to be human. An all-good char-
acter is monotonous, but we have to be careful how we
add the spice to take away the monotony. The main con-
sideration must be to keep the audience in sympathy with
the hero. We may make our hero a thief if we so estab-
lish the reason why he is a thief that the audience will
get his viewpoint, and sympathize with him. In The Noose
we forgive Dick Barthelmess for being a hijacker because
it is established that he was brought up by a crook and
knows no other life. Had his upbringing been conventional,
and had he become a hijacker in spite of it, he would not
be entitled to the sympathy of the audience. In West Point
Bill Haines is characterized as about the lowest form of
animal that we can have as a hero. He is presented to
us as a hopelessly conceited cad, a wisecracking nuisance
who would not be tolerated for one hour in any decent

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HONEYMOON Flats, directed for Universal by Millard Webb, and starring George Lewis and Dorothy Gulliver, is a delightful little picture. It deals with well dressed young people in pleasant surroundings, and has a capable supporting cast composed of Kathryn Williams, Jane Winton, Bryant Washburn, Ward Crane, and Phillips Smalley. It opens with a wedding scene of considerable pictorial value, and thereafter deals with the affairs of the bride and groom. It is a happy little thing, and such tribulations as befall the principal characters are serious to them, but amusing to the audience. Webb handles it with the best of taste, his direction being intelligent throughout. We should have more pictures of the sort. The seamy side of life is stressed too much on the screen. We can stand more youth and beauty, and less ugliness. George Lewis gives a capital performance. He improves with each picture and justifies the confidence I had in him three or four years ago when I took him to Jesse Lasky and urged that he be given a chance on the Paramount lot.

At that time Lewis had never been inside a studio and had not seen a motion picture camera, but I had seen him in high school theatricals in Coronado, and had persuaded him to come to Hollywood and have a go at pictures. Nothing came of the Lasky visit, and for some time it was with extreme difficulty that I kept the boy from starving to death. But he is getting a nice salary now, soon will marry his Mary Lou, and move into a honeymoon flat of his own. All of which is very nice. But I was talking about Honeymoon Flats. Dorothy Gulliver gives a pleasing performance, as do all the members of the cast. The picture will not cause a furore, but any exhibitor who books it will give his patrons some pleasant entertainment.

Sorrell and Son was made from a successful book. The book is a well written one, the work of an educated, cultured author, who makes it a creditable contribution to current literature. The screen takes it. In transferring it into a picture it was necessary to use the same medium of expression that the original author employed. There is nothing mysterious about the use of the English language. The rules that govern it have been established by a thousand years of evolution. They are fixed, and anyone can learn them. Given a thought, there is an established method of expressing it. One title in Sorrell and Son reads: "Thank God! He had you to do it for him." The man who wrote the
title knew what he wanted to say, but he did not know how to say it. What he meant was: “Thank God he had you to do it for him!” What are the people with sufficient intelligence to enjoy Sorrell and Son in book form, going to think when they see such a sample of gross ignorance in a picture made from it? The punctuation of the titles is simply atrocious, as it is in practically all the United Artists pictures. I am surprised at Joseph M. Schenck. He is one producer who in every other feature of his productions always gives the public honest measure. He has a fine taste in screen fare and no doubt has an ambition to be as successful in making pictures as he has been in his many other enterprises, yet every picture he turns out is evidence of his indifference to illiteracy being one of its most striking features. It's beyond me!

* * *

THE Czarina’s Secret is another artistic gem of the series that Technicolor is making for Metro release. There are to be six, each presenting a great moment in history, and this one is the fourth. Dr. Herbert T. Kal- mus, president of Technicolor, and a scientist with an international reputation, is the producer of the series. He applies his scientific mind to the material side of picture production, and having demonstrated with his superb two-reelers that pictures can be shot on schedule and within estimated cost. He is about to extend his operations to include seven-reel features in color, and will apply to their making the same common business sense that has made him a successful producer of shorter subjects. The Czarina’s Secret deals with the moment in Russian history when Catherine II became empress, supplanting her weak and vacillating husband, Peter III. Dramatically it is a splendid picture, and the Technicolor process has made it gorgeous pictorially. Olga Baclanova, an artist famous in Russia before she came to Hollywood, puts a great deal of feeling and dramatic power into her portrayal of the role of Catherine, and David Mir contributes a masterly characterization of Peter. Sally Rand and Lucio Flamma have secondary roles and handle them adequately. R. William Neill directed the picture splendidly, and Aubrey Scotto supervised its production. Technicolor has brought its process to a point of perfection that our big producers can not ignore much longer. They can not keep on giving us only white and black creations when such a color process is available.

* * *

A DIRECTOR, defending close-ups in a conversation with me, claimed that most actors are so weak in facial expression that they can put over very little in a medium shot, making a close-up necessary. I am aware of that. The trouble is that we rely too much on facial expression, and have carried it to a point that has made audiences tired of faces. A man can stand with his back to the camera and put over indifference by a shrug of his shoulders quite as well as he can express it with his face in a close-up. The shot of the shrug would retain the pictorial value of the set and add variety to the scenes. My chief quarrel with close-ups is that they are done to death. We never will have the new note in direction that pictures lack so badly until directors cease adhering to one method of expressing themselves. Even a brainless person in an audience can appreciate a display of brains on the screen, and it takes no brains whatever to shoot a scene in close-ups. I have heard it argued that only by breaking a
scene into close-ups can enough footage be obtained to carry a picture to its required length. That is absurd reasoning. The length of any picture should be only what is necessary to tell the story. Expanding it by torture is a fool idea. If a picture must run into seven reels, there should be seven reels of action written into the script, not five reels of action and two reels of close-ups. No argument can cover up the fact that most directors rely on close-ups because they haven’t enough brains to avoid them.

* * *

The thing most interesting to me that I have learned during the two years that I have been writing The Spectator is that my own activity has definite limitations. I find that I can not do half the things that I would like to do. I cannot read people’s stories and advise them how to sell them; I cannot take tourists through studios, get people jobs, give strangers letters of introduction to those of my friends who are prominent in film circles, read scripts or arrange for tests. I would like to do all these things, and I have endeavored to, but as I start The Spectator on its third year I have to reorganize myself. The circulation of the paper is so great that it is entitled to all my vigor. I cannot interest myself in other people’s affairs all day, and put vigor into what I write at night. All art is but properly applied vigor, and the physical man is as important to it as the mental. I have been so fearful of earning a reputation for high-hatting that I have given appointments to all those who have requested them, and it has been astonishing to learn what a wide variety of miracles people expected me to perform. I must put a stop to it before it grows any worse, and to be fair to myself I am forced to limit my interviews to those with people who tell me in advance why they want to see me. Then if I determine that I can be of any value to them I will call them back and make an appointment.

* * *

Harry Langdon has turned out another terrible picture in The Chaser. When he began to make his own pictures he was recognized as a prominent star, but what he has given us has been of such poor quality that he no longer is to be taken seriously. Langdon has ability as an actor and none as a producer, and he serves in both capacities. In an early Spectator I predicted precisely what has happened to him. It is pitiful to see marked talent sacrificed to an unwarranted ambition to boss the whole show. The Chaser is not worth the space a review of it would occupy.

* * *

A SCENE in The Foreign Legion, a splendid Universal picture directed by Ted Sloman, is held on the screen long enough to enable me to count the people in it. It is a long shot containing twenty-six people, all being shown

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in full figure. In the extreme background Lewis Stone sits at a table. He just has discovered that the soldier he must sentence to death for mutiny is his own son, and despite the fact that he is shown in such a long shot none of the drama of the scene is lost, his physical action amply making up for anything we lose in the way of facial expression. It is what I have been preaching right along. One of the craziest notions that exist in studios is that it is only by close-ups that drama can be put over. Sloman knows how to do it in a long shot.

* * *

A LOVE scene, being a tender and sentimental affair, should be enacted in secluded surroundings. In Spring Fever Joan Crawford and Bill Haines have such a scene in the open. Their tender embrace is witnessed only by the birds in the tree above them, by the shy buttercups that bloom at their feet, by the summer breeze that floats by them, and by eighteen hundred people who formed the gallery that watched Bill beat Edward Earle at golf. Except for the gallery and caddies, the lovers had the place to themselves, giving the scene that air of privacy and intimacy that makes such scenes so appealing.

* * *

ONE thing in The Foreign Legion greatly astonished me. A title reads: "Stop? I should say not! We must carry on." What astonished me is that the title is punctuated just as I quote it here, an amazing thing to find in a Universal picture.

* * *

WITHIN certain limits punctuation, like pie, is a matter of personal taste. I do not quarrel with screen punctuation because it does not follow the same system that I do. My complaint is that it goes beyond the permissible limit. This is a title in Secret Hour: "How about the baby—ain't I got something to say about that?" No amount of argument can justify such punctuation, not even the old wheeze that the screen has a language of its own. The title should read: "How about the baby? Ain't I got something to say about that?" One question mark cannot be spread over two questions.

* * *

THERE is one clever feature in Love, the close-up deubauch in which Metro presents Greta Garbo and Jack Gilbert. In many places the closing title in one sequence serves as an introductory title for the sequence that succeeds it. There is a fadeout after the title, "Then I will see you at the grand duke's ball to-night," and a fade-in on the ball, without any further explanatory title. It's an idea worth stealing.

* * *

THERE is a battle scene in D. W. Griffith's Drums of Love. The soldiers are divided into two classes: those who are wholly alive and those who are very dead. There are no wounded. D. W. handles his mobs splendidly, but the battle sequence would have been more convincing if some of the people on the ground had moved. A few of them crawling to safety would have made the scenes more real.

* * *

JUST by way of showing that there is something else to find fault with, I rise to remark that most of the people with whom I converse are not particularly careful with their use of English. Perhaps it would be a good idea to publish a few brief lessons in grammar. Don't say, "Between you and I." The correct way is "Between you and me."

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By Donald Beaton — The Spectator's 17-Year-Old Critic

In Feel My Pulse Bebe Daniels at last is in a picture which is somehow amusing. There are some very funny gags in it, but of course there is the usual amount of silliness. However, when a fine actor like William Powell has to waste his talent in a silly comedy, the whole picture is spoiled for me. Powell doesn't let his work become inferior just because he is in an inferior picture. That is the sign of a true artist. Gregory La Cava, whose pictures as a general rule are amusing, directed Feel My Pulse. He must be responsible for whatever merit the picture possessed. The story was quite original, at least it was more original than those of the average motion picture. There was the usual amount of inconsistencies, of course. The run-runners and the hi-jackers have a battle. The hi-jackers bring a gun, which looks like a one-pounder, to shell the bootlegger's retreat on an island. A few miles away a coast guard cutter is anchored, yet the men on it never heard the reports of the gun. Also, the run-runners were operating right under their noses and they never even got suspicious. Bebe Daniels has a very funny drunken scene with Heine Conklin. It was the high-spot of the picture so far as humor went. Her work, and Conklin's, was splendid. As I saw the picture at a preview, I suppose it will be cut and tightened up a good deal. As it was, it dragged considerably in spots. Toward the end the action began to come fast and furious. When everything moves swiftly like that, things which might not be very funny if much attention were paid them become very amusing. Richard Arlen contributed his very excellent screen personality to the general strength of the cast.

THERE is supposed to be a lot of symbolism to Skyscraper, one of De Mille's latest pictures. However, it went right over my head. There was supposed to be a great deal of splendid comedy in it. About every third attempt at comedy was amusing. There was supposed to be a lot of good direction in it. I will admit that there were some good bits, but there were also some bad directorial lapses. The first "funny" gag was Bill Boyd's playfully burning Alan Hale with a blow-torch. How anyone could expect two grown men to do a thing like that in real life is beyond me. And the picture was about real life, or was supposed to be. Hale retaliated for being burned by dropping a red-hot rivet into Boyd's hip-pocket. Outside of the fact that no one could drop anything ten or fifteen feet, as Hale did, into any pocket, the thing was absurd. Any workman who tossed rivets around as though they were pebbles would lose his job so quickly he wouldn't know what had struck him. Boyd brought some fixed dice into a crap game. One die was all sixes, the other was all ones. To imagine that any person who was not deaf, dumb and blind could look at those dice and not notice that they were phoney was absurd. There was a scene in a hospital with Boyd and Hale in adjoining beds. They were talking back and forth, and the camera kept switching back and forth from
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one to the other. The continued switching back and forth was terrible. The whole scene should have been shot so as to get it in one take. In another scene, which might have been very good, the girl came and stood behind Boyd's chair. He was going to send her away, because he was crippled. That whole scene was shot in a series of one-takes, first one chair then another.

As a result, the entire force of the scene was lost by the continual interruptions. That was another scene which should have been taken in both characters at once.

There were several bits of good comedy. Most of these were when the cast was on the Oregon Island. There was another good bit when Hale and Boyd rescued the girl and fought over who should carry her. There were numerous good touches, but they were offset by the bad ones. Howard Higgins, who directed Skylcraper, managed to keep his picture in character very well. The titles by John Krafft, which were very good, also helped to keep them in character. I think I liked Bill Boyd better in this than I ever have before.

The part suitably played by Parke on the screen was not. Hale and Boyd gave one of the perfect performances which always come from him. Sue Carrol, as the girl, demonstrated that she has ability in spite of the handicap of having beautiful legs. Movie traditions seem to demand that if a girl has legs they must be the big features of her performances. Legs being an almost universal commodity, they soon begin to pall upon audiences. Esther Ralston was a year or so living down the fact that she had beautiful legs, and not until Spotlight, in which her legs weren't prominent, was she ever mentioned as being able to act. It will be unfortunate for Miss Carrol if she has to follow in Esther Ralston's footsteps. Wesley Barry, whom I haven't seen for a long time, did well in a small part, as did Alberta Vaughn.

SPRING Fever is mildly amusing in spite of being silly. William Haines is, as usual, the smart, wise-cracking youth who finally becomes very noble. There are some funny scenes at the golf course when the picture is just starting. Haines has to get down to earth and not until Spotlight, in which her legs weren't prominent, was she ever mentioned as being able to act. It will be unfortunate for Miss Carrol if she has to follow in Esther Ralston's footsteps. Wesley Barry, whom I haven't seen for a long time, did well in a small part, as did Alberta Vaughn.

UNIVERSAL, to judge from The Prince of Peanuts, regards the public as half-witted. However, the public isn't any more half-witted than the person who conceived this picture. The picture started out as though it might be funny, but after a little while, it degenerated into a lot of old, stale gags, none of which was funny. I saw a Universal picture one time where they said before-hand on the screen that the picture was going to be a bit of rebusment and the audience was not to believe any of it. Thus any silliness was excused and the picture was enjoyable. If Universal is going to make many more like The Prince of Peanuts, it can't have a good picture stuff out of them. The comedy in Midnight Madness is very good in a quiet way. There is more left to the imagination in this picture. Weight gives the audience credit for having some sense, while the majorities of directors don't. Clive Brook gave a good performance, and so did Walter McGrail. Jacqueline Logan was quite satisfactory as the girl.

ONE Mad Hour is rather typical of Elinor Glyn. There is the usual stuff in it. It starts with a wild party and ends with the girl killing herself. At first the picture was rather slow and dragged considerably, but towards the last it began to become interesting, and in the final scenes where the girl was running along the road in a car, trying to get up courage enough to drive the car over the edge of the road and kill herself, the picture became quite gripping. However, it would only rate as second or third rate. Lowell Sherman was supposed to be a very clever crook and all that, but he stole some jewels and demanded that a reward be paid for them. He told the women who owned them when and where to get them back, and made no attempt

F.

HARMON Weight has made a very entertaining picture out of Midnight Madness. The story is old, but there are so many clever directorial twists that it is refreshingly new and original. There are very few closeups in Midnight Madness, a thing which makes the picture surprisingly easy to watch. There are several interesting situations, all of them handled very cleverly. Mr. Weight seems to be making quite even the most trivial things and make good picture stuff out of them. The comedy in Midnight Madness is very good in a quiet way. There is more left to the imagination in this picture. Weight gives the audience credit for having some sense, while the majorities of directors don't. Clive Brook gave a good performance, and so did Walter McGrail. Jacqueline Logan was quite satisfactory as the girl.

D.RUMS of Love is full of the usual D. W. Griffith stuff. There is a battle and many soldiers and a fingerprint-chewing heroine. However, the scene to Cooper is as well have been made by any one of a hundred other directors. There is nothing particularly great to distinguish it from the average run of costume pictures. Splendid performances by the three principals. Not a lot. Orville Haines was good in the handicap of the Griffith motions or emotions as the case may be, did the best work she has done since The Merry-Go-Round. She shows a capacity for more subtle acting than she has hitherto shown. Lionel Barrynet in the up in a disguise which rivals Lon Chaney's, gives a performance which is free from the over-acting which he sometimes indulges in. As a result, his work is the best he has done. Don Alvarado has distributed. Griffith is to be congratulated on the way he has brought out the talent in Alvarado, who gives a fine, even performance all the way through the picture.

Griffith does not lack a happy ending on a picture when it does not fit. Drums of Love ended unhappily, at least as far as having the two lovers living happily ever after is concerned. The ending was quite satisfactory, however. When Barrymore comes in and finds his wife and his brother together, he does not immediately engage in a furious battle with his brother. He has a few moments of more or less friendly talk with them, and then he cuts their throats. The only thing the matter with that scene is that Alvarado, the brother, should have given Barrymore a knife the minute he came, rather than let him kill him. That would have been more compatible with his character.
to outwit the police. As a result, he had to flee for his freedom, and all the time and money spent on the robbery was wasted. He wasn't such a clever crook.

One Mad Hour had an unhappy ending, which seems to have become the norm for the genre. Unfortunately, the endings have been logical; but pretty soon the vogue for them will have spread so that they will be put into pictures on the slightest provocation. It will be a senseless procedure, but a lot of motion picture procedures are senseless.

All acting can be divided into three classes. There are born actors; there is the acting which comes from intelligent people who have learned how to act to a certain degree; and there is the class of acting where the persons doing it are too dumb to learn how and have not had it born into them. As examples of the first class we have Janet Gaynor and Emil Jannings. There are others, but these two come to mind first. They wouldn't know how to do it all and how to act. With them it is instinctive, it is something that has about the same degree of effort for them as breathing has for most people. In the second class we have Conrad Nagel. I can remember very vividly reading a criticism of a picture he was in a few years ago. His work was dismissed as “his usual careless performance.” Nowadays he doesn’t have a part which he doesn’t make stand out by reason of fine work. He brought his intelligence into his work, and as a result, he has become one of our finest actors. As for the third class, its numbers are legion.

M. G. M. should have the sense to make the next William Haines picture one in which Haines does not play the wisecracking kid. West Point, his latest, is the best he has made since Brown of Harvard. However, this type of characterization will begin to get tiresome if he makes any more and uses it. He has demonstrated time and again that he has acting ability and would be good in something else. Now, when he has made a hit, he should start on other stuff. West Point, as I have said, is very good. The performances of the entire cast were splendid. The story isn’t new; in fact, he has done it many times before. However, it was done more adroitly than usual. As we came in after credits were given, I don’t know who directed West Point, but I think that the line of dialogue by Joe Farnham. They were too funny to have been done by anyone else. Although the football game is old stuff, in this instance it was very well done. There were some very good shots of the football game last year, but there was a terrible drop which stuck out like a sore thumb. In a picture where there was so much money spent it seems that M. G. M. could have spent a little more and got a real crowd in the background. Another thing which got on my nerves was the way Billy Bakerwell, who was supposed to have concussion of the brain, was allowed to move around.

There was nothing lacking in the performances of the various members of the cast. Haines has never been so good before except perhaps in Brown of Harvard. William Bakewell, who supported Haines, as the adoring friend, was splendid. He gave a performance which was one of the highlights of the picture. He should be given bigger stuff, because he has ability. Joan Crawford was better in this than in anything I have ever seen her do. The fellow who is Haines’ rival was good, too, but I didn’t get his name.

Millard Webb has made a very delightful comedy in Honeymoon Flats. There is nothing apart from the story. It is just a simple little thing about the trials and tribulations of a young married couple. George Lewis and Dorothy Gulliver have the leads, and they are splendid. George is becoming one of our cleverest young makers of films and Dorothy is an admirable foil for him. At no time is the comedy overdrawn and made silly. That is one of the delightful qualities of it, the characters are all human, and as a result anything they do meets with the sympathy of the audience. There is an amusing scene where the young husbands leave home in the morning to go to work and their wives bid them good-bye from the windows of the apartment house. There were also some good bits of business with Washburn, who was very good, told George to be careful that his wife didn’t deceiving, while all the time Washburn’s wife, Jane Winton, was carrying on a flirtation with Ward Crane. Miss Winton, who is one of the most beautiful girls on the screen, demonstrates again that she has ability. It is too bad she doesn’t get larger parts. Ward Crane, whose villainy is pleasant to watch, comes to light again in this. I haven’t seen him in a long time. There were several things the matter with Honeymoon Flats. One was a scene where George was supposed to be going fifty miles an hour in a section of traffic where it was a physical impossibility to go more than thirty-five. Another was a place where Ward Crane and Jane Winton made love to each other in a summer house which was right in plain view of all the guests at a dinner party. However, the picture was so far above the average in entertainment value that little things can be excused.

Oasis

By James Brant

In a Canyon of Native Palms, Palm Springs, California

Here is a green streak in the bottom of a deep and narrow cut, by, with a sparkling stream fresh from the shaded recesses of mountain tops. A vista that soothes and rests and instills in the mind thoughts of far beyond. An oasis with a rippling melody, a touch of nature in a wilderness. In a place where the native Indians had its freedom before destructive civilization hemmed it with limitations.

From a vantage point there spreads a desert valley of sand and dormant scratches that seethes in the hot heat of summer and in the springtime, freshened by little drops from the clouds, is a sea of fluff from the blossom of desert flowers. A natural state far removed from the caves of temen and apartment cliffs.

In motion pictures, in the upbuilding and development of which you are so much interested, vulgar coarseness and suggestive sensuality is far removed and has nothing in common with ideals of purity and progress. The muck of the gutter is a blight that withers verdant beauty and fouls ripples freshness.

It is a picture filled up with thoughts and runnings. No act but a thought precedes it. Picture plays are the physical evidence of a thought or a morbid dream, they instill virtue or incite immorality, and have for such specific reason an educational value of vital import and potential force, to the extent that the production and distribution of motion pictures is essentially and properly and rightly an educational institution. * * *

Motion pictures are national and international in scope and their distribution is interstate and for that reason, and because they are educational, motion pictures are rightly subject to control by the Federal Government under and by a law of Congress.

Censorship by states, wherein a politically appointed individual, or a committee where in one individual has the deciding vote, dictates to five million people what they shall have or shall not see. Such a power savor of despotism and has little in common with democracy. Such censorship, varied to suit the whim and caprice of some squint-eyed vote getter, or the pet of some squint-eyed vote getter, renders the production and distribution of motion pictures a haphazard guesswork, whereas such production and distribution should be free and untrammeled and subject only to reasonable and proper limitations prescribed by national law. There are already too many laws restricting and regulating the varied activities of the general public because a few, a minority, sometimes a very small minority, have not the sense to behave nor
the decency to observe common rights. It would seem that the time has arrived when it would be eminently proper for the law to provide for the intelligent freedom of the general public with teeth to force the usurping minority to behave or get the hell out of the country.

The enactment of a law by Congress to control and supervise the motion picture industry and to establish a secure foundation on which to build a structure of enlightenment, education and uplifting entertainment is not only a proper subject, but is also a vital subject, for the consideration of the government.

Such a law, in the first instance and as primary to future enactment, might properly and justly be very broad and very liberal, almost without restriction or limitation, in order to avoid the hampering of a great industry. Such a law could be aimed at the establishment of a special federal court to decide the right or wrong, or the propriety, of any matter in or any question affecting the production and distribution of motion pictures, and the court could constitutionally provide trial by jury, and the jury, instead of being picked on a gamble from a wheel of fortune, might properly be selected from the enlightened citizenship of the dominant race, or races, that them and should control the general culture that is to build for the future, in order that the potential force of motion pictures be directed and exerted to a desirable end.

**Writing for the Fan Magazines**

By Madeleine Matzen

There is a wealth of glamour and anecdote round and about the studios. All the world is more or less interested in the making of pictures and in cinema personalities. But almost nothing of real interest is written about them. This, of course, is due to the fact that almost all the magazines have a policy governed entirely by those who advertise in their publications. The studios are the heaviest advertisers so the editors of the fan magazines are obliged to edit with two blue pencils called "Policy" and "The Public's Reaction" sitting on their desks.

Fan magazines (of which there are at least nine important ones with wide circulation) are not published to please the fans but to please the producers. Why they are called "fan magazines I can't imagine unless it is because they are dedicated to fan into flame the dying interest of the public in waning stars and poor productions.

No writer of fan articles will tell the truth about anything or anybody in the picture world—not if he expects to sell the articles. If a star or a director happens to have an original or an interesting idea and it is embodied by a writer in an article the editors promptly consider just whom such an idea will offend. And there are always people whom ANY SORT of grossness or vulgarity or ignorance offends. So an article with an idea in it is promptly "killed." That is why the "ga-ga" article and the "blah" story reign supreme in the fan magazines.

Blindly the producers force the editors of the magazines which represent their industry to print articles about their people in which these same people appear as utterly unintelligent, low grade morons. And then the producers wonder why they are losing money—not just their own money but the money of those who have trustingly invested in their concerns.

A good story is always a good story—any press agent will tell you that. But when it is so utterly far-fetched and unsuited to the personage around whom it is obviously concocted—it no longer is a good story. And the fan writers continue to invent insipid myths about screen personages when there are true stories galore connected with every person who has amounted to more than a row of pins in the industry.

So carefully expurgated was the publicity that concerned The King of Kings and the members of its cast that the public have grown to feel that this picture was produced and played by a group of automatons sans brains and personality. I fancy that H. B. Warner, a most skillful and intelligent actor, must have many interesting things to say concerning his playing of the role of The Christ, or he might have something startling to say about his interpretation of it. But he was not permitted to say anything! None of the cast had anything to say! The articles printed about them and their roles in the picture were too trite, too colorless to be reading matter.

To pretend that the picture was produced under a sort of hocus-pocus of divine inspiration or guidance is absurd. To pretend that it was too holy a thing to be discussed in print seems to me too arrogant a pose on the part of the public and too false a pretense of it. But it was not permitted to say anything! None of the cast had anything to say! The articles printed about them and their roles in the picture were too trite, too colorless to be reading matter.

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If you can write stories about screen personalities that deal only with the most superficial matters and contain no germ of interesting, unique or honest thought—you can always sell them. It seems to me that such a condition is stupid beyond belief! Furthermore it's an insult to the public and the publishing profession. And it is right about a change in the makeup of fan magazines. They are publishing fewer and fewer articles and using rafts of pictures. And the articles that they do use are very brief. It appears that the long suffering public are loyal enough to their favorites to buy pictures of them but they'll be darned if they'll read the publish that is written about them! Why publish fan magazines anyway? Why not issue huge rotogravure supplements and be done with it?

Added to the difficulties that the writer encounters in the policies of the different magazines is the additional difficulty of graft between the picture people and the writer.

There is no reason why the writer should waste his mind and any small talent he may have in writing gush and mush about some woman or man who has no gift, and occupies his or her position in the cinema world because they are a favorite of some person in power who ought to know better. But the writer of fan articles receives gifts or sometimes money, silk stockings, imported bags and perfumes, tickets to the fights, etc.—these things are usually sent to the writer a day or so after the interview in hopes that the pleasure the writer feels in receiving these gifts may in some way influence the tone of the article.

Certain stars, even producers and directors, are noted for their generosity along these lines. These are the personalities whose names and photographs you see most frequently in the fan magazines. And they are seldom the personalities in whom the fans are interested.

The producers claim that they want the public to choose their own favorites. Miss Diamond does the fact of a newcomer, discovered by the public, appear in a picture periodical.

Once upon a time Hollywood had as its citizen a wit who could write most entertainingly about the film colony. That man was Will Hernd. But if Mr. Howe grew discouraged over conditions—his articles grew scarcer and scarcer. Finally he made so much money juggling real estate that he ceased writing. And so one of the keenest minds in the industry was completely eclipsed by
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dark and dull policies—and too much real estate.

* * *

Not long ago a little actress from across the sea came to Hollywood to make pictures. Shortly after her arrival here she was invited to a tea to meet many of the best known women stars. Delighted, she put on her prettiest frock and hat and went. It was a bit late when she arrived and found the party in full swing. She was introduced to all the stars and to a well known press woman who was also present. After the formalities of introductions were over the hostess rose, seized a silver platter of small cakes, dumped the cakes out crumbly on the top of the tea table and with the platter in one hand made a speech.

This speech was something of a revelation to the little foreign actress who had been considered an artist and something of a social acquisition abroad. The hostess said that Miss So-and-So (the press woman) had honored them with her presence and now she, the hostess, wanted to show their appreciation of her—and to show it substantially. To the foreign actress’ horror the hostess passed the platter among the guests. Bills and gold pieces were showered upon it and the sum collected was handed to the producer. The little woman was left without batting an eye as her just due.

The foreign star was hugely embarrassed for she was not in the habit of carrying much money with her when attending afternoon teas. With scarlet cheeks and scared apologies she said, "Thank you, ma’am, but I can’t accept."

The hostess, added her "bit" and took her departure. Of such things is "society" in the cinema colony made.

* * *

Trying to get a real story about a film celebrity is like trying to rob the First National Bank. It can be done but it’s no use to try to get it printed. The producers holler all the time about censorship—but nowhere in the world is censorship more short sighted or steel bound than it is for those who write about the motion picture people. If the public discovered that the stars and directors whom they adore were human beings first of all they would no doubt love them the more deeply. It is not a crime to be human, it’s often darned interesting. Everyone tires of perfection. In real life it’s nice to see the go-between and the handsome one every time. If a star had a mind and used it, and once in a while used it so that all the world might read it, his popularity would rival that of the late Valentino. Take the ease of Will Rogers. Will is far from a handsome man, but his wit and sage sayings have made a shining screen star of him. But no, the stars must remain dumb and beautiful and absurd—the producers have decreed it so. Rogers is the only one that they have not been afraid round with censorship. Trying to censor Will Rogers would be like trying to clip the tail off a comet—it can’t be done.

The main requisites of a popular fan writer are that first of all she must be feminine. Secondly she must have no sense of humor—if she does have she won’t be able to write the gushing effusions that sell so readily. Then she must play bridge well, dance, appreciate smart luncheons and know how to order a carpet. She should be a yes-yes-lady if possible. Most stars would faint with horror if a no-no-lady came and interviewed them. And as for being able to write—that is a matter of very small importance when it comes to pleasing the producers.

It seems to me that if I were a producer I would seek out men and women who first of all were humanitarians and psychologists, who had personalities and who could write—when I wanted my stars interviewed. If I happened to have under contract a star or a director who had ideas about life and his work I’d advertise that matter to the skies via the fan magazines. Think of the rejoicing among the poor bedeviled editors if interviews containing real reading matter began to flood into their offices! And think of the excitement if the public once discovered that their stars were human beings just like themselves!

VOICES FROM THE WILDERNESS

JUNK—AND ACTORS

Dear Mr. Beaton:

As one long since departed from the business of the theatre, but nevertheless intensely interested in it, in all its ramifications and activities, and particularly in the welfare of the actors, I am a little surprised that the actors in the picture field are so slow in getting under the protecting wing of “Equity”. Probably most of the people who have been derived from the legitimate stage are members.

Andy mint of the excitement members since “Equity’s” bitter fight for recognition, and remember the conditions that prevailed in the theatre in the years previous, when the actor was at the mercy of the producers, and was often left stranded miles from home, to get back as best he could.

“Punch” Wheeler, an old time advance man, dead now, but alive in the memory of all who knew him, used to tell of organizing a company in a box car in Texas with ten members and third dollars, and they worked their way back to New York in the face of all kinds of adversity. In one town in Mississippi, the advance man had gone on a bat and given out so many passes that they had to play two nights in a one night stand to get them all in.

But the condition of the actor in those days is best illustrated by a story that the late Nat Goodwin used to tell. Mr. Goodwin speaking: “We had gone out with a turkey show, that old Doc Stover had booked out of his office in Barney Ragan’s saloon on 14th Street. His desk was on the head of the third barrel from the door, and we had got up to Troy when the enterprise died. I remember that when the curtain went up, there were just four people out front, a fireman, two policemen and one other, but I went down to the foot and made a little speech to the effect, that notwithstanding the small attendance, we were going to give just as long a show; just as finished a performance, as if the box. And then that ‘other’ spoke right back: ‘All right, but make it snappy. I’m the janitor and I want to close up.’”

“Well, we got down as far as Albany the next day, and before night three or four of us had negotiated passage to New York in the deck house of a barge loaded with junk. There were no sleeping accommodations save a few battered chairs, and the floor, but during the night we dozed fitfully, and were brought up standing when we heard the watch hallowing to a boat going up river. ‘Ahoy, there. Who are you? Tug Oneida with a string

Showmanship

For Exhibitors

A complete new section of showman ship ideas will be found in the 1928 FILM DAILY YEAR BOOK published by THE FILM DAILY and which is now being distributed. These ideas are grouped so that the exhibitor who has a certain type of production to put over can quickly turn to that section and find countless ideas on how to exploit and sell his picture to his patrons. It has taken months and months to collect and prepare these many stunts for publication, and the exhibitor who does not get for himself a copy of the 1928 FILM DAILY YEAR BOOK will be doing himself an injustice. These money-making stunts are all practical, they are not just theory as so many stunts submitted to exhibitors are these days. They are stunts that have had the personal approval of some of the best showmen in the business to-day. They are presented briefly and clearly so that exhibitors may readily grasp the idea and put it into practice. This is only one of the many interesting features that will be found in THE FILM DAILY YEAR BOOK which is given free with each yearly subscription to THE FILM DAILY, whose offices are located at 1650 Broadway, New York City.—Advt.
of barges. "Where bound?" "Jersey City." "What are you loaded with?" "Junk and actors." That’s the way it was, junk first, actors last.

From what I read, and with a knowledge of the conditions that existed in the theatre before Equity was organized, I am afraid that unless they get in, the film actors will find themselves as Nat Goodwin used to tell it: last.

FRANK E. HATCH, 
Boston, Mass.

A REAL UNDERWORLD

Dear Mr. Editor:

Evidently it depends upon whose ox is gored as far as criticism of picture is concerned.

After seeing Underworld, by a strange co-incidence, the next picture I saw was The City Gone Wild, of exactly the same type. After reading the fulsome praise accorded to the former, the way the latter was panned was quite galling.

As a picture of the underworld and its ways, The City Gone Wild was truer to fact than was Underworld. The latter, however, was produced by a large and powerful "Corporation", and the former by the independent company, which evidently emptied its coffers on the star and director and had but little left to make the picture.

In the first place, in Underworld, a big mistake was made in the very beginning, namely, casting a crook in the leading role, and then trying to make a sympathetic character out of him. While Bancroft gave a good performance, the characterization was to the last degree stagey, and not in the least conforming to the general idea of a gangster.

Contrasted with the same character, as portrayed by Mailes, I found it entirely lacking in conviction. Again, throughout the picture, I kept wondering whether "Feathers" was really a crook’s girl or was a girl playing at slumming. She had none of the earmarks of a "Mol". On the other hand, I would guarantee to go down in the Loop, any day, and pick out a ringer for Louise Brooks, in any one of a dozen joints affected by such people.

In The City Gone Wild as long as the story stuck to the crooks and their attorney, it never wavered, it was only when it dipped into Society that it wobbled and becamemoviesque. It is true that the "bumping off" of the district mob is a bit outside the usual methods of gang procedure, but we can also credit this to a desire for effect. In reality he would have been picked up on some pretext or another, and "taken for a ride in the country". Another thing overlooked by the author of Underworld, is that gangsters are not independent bank robbers or bandits, but are strictly satellites, who live on the proceeds of the graft which they sustain. The modern gangster is distinctly a product of Prohibition.

Again, as none of the real, leading characters, namely Mailes and Brooks, asked for our sympathy, there was no necessity for any maud-
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Hays tries to diagnose the ills of pictures

Wall Street action inevitable result of inefficiency

What will be the effect of Sound devices?

We finally get a look at Von Stroheim opus

RED HAIR
THE DOVE
HIS COUNTRY
WEDDING MARCH
HAS ANYONE SEEN KELLY?

BABY MINE
SERENADE
SHOW DOWN
BEAU SABREUR
SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS
Good Bye, Los Angeles!  . . Hello, New York!

Having successfully tried out my play, "RELATIONS" at the Vine Street Theatre, Hollywood, where it ran for nine weeks, I am taking the play to New York, for production there. I sincerely regret having to leave the picture business, and the many loyal and staunch friends I have made here, though only for a while, since I am coming back to you as soon as I have completed my task in New York. Au revoir, my very dear friends in L. A., and Hello, ditto, in N. Y.

EDWARD CLARK

Harold N. Hubbard, in Hollywood Daily Citizen:
"Relations", which was given a hilarious greeting by a large audience last night at the Vine Street Theatre, is NOT just another one of those Jewish plays." It has "IT" and is sufficiently clever and human in its delineation of certain phases and characteristics of Jewish life to command interest. Edward Clark, the author-producer, takes the leading role of "Uncle Wolfe" Michaels, and succeeds admirably in his portrayal, a genuine accomplishment, considering an author-producer-actor's difficulty of maintaining proper perspective.

Harry Burns, in Hollywood Filmograph:
Last Monday evening, at the Vine Street Theatre, Edward Clark presented his Jewish-American comedy, "Relations." The show was well staged, and one of the best professional first-night critic audiences just sat there and roared to its heart's content. Clark not only wrote and produced the play, but takes the leading role as well. His portrayal of "Uncle Wolfe" is by far the best piece of acting that any character player or star has brought to the stage of the West Coast in many a day. His Jewish characterization couldn't offend the most critical Hebraic critic. He actually lived and moved in the soul of the character he was portraying.

Marquis Busby, in Los Angeles Times:
"Relations", a new Jewish-American comedy by Edward Clark, which opened the long-dark Vine Street Theatre last night, differs from the "Abies" and the "Potash and Perlmutter" series. Its chief claim to distinction is the fact that it does more than merely scratch the surface of race psychology. It presents a rather keen insight into certain aspects of the Jewish race.

Llewellyn Miller, in Los Angeles Record:
Edward Clark's "Relations", which re-opened the Vine Street Theatre last night, is double-time comedy, cleverly played, and directed with a keen dramatic sense. Overwhelming honors go to Edward Clark, who plays the lead of "Uncle Wolfe" to a steady comment of laughter from the audience. It is indeed a distinguished piece of work.

California Jewish Review:
At last! A Jewish-American play that does not deal with mixed marriages, that does not depend for its humor and pathos on inter-racial friendship or hostility, and yet is a good play, good from every angle. To utter prophecies about "Relations" now showing at the Vine Street, is a dangerous procedure, as in the case of all new plays, but the critic will take a chance this time. He predicts that "Relations" will be as big a box-office success as the perennial "Able's Irish Rose". To say that it is better, more natural, less burlesque, and far more true to life than the Anne Nichols dish, needs no keen dramatic insight nor divine guidance. And to the readers of this paper and their friends the critic says, "If you want to see the best legitimate show in years, go and see "Relations"."

New York Variety:
It remained for Edward Clark to dramatize a familiar topic and weave around it a story of Jewish family life without the aid of an Irish motif. Its principal appeal lies in the character of a middle-aged Jewish merchant whose troubles with relatives is one long recitation. As drawn by Clark, it teeters with laughs to tears with comedy punch lines thickly interspersed. Clark's intelligent characterization of "Uncle Wolfe" is outstanding. He gives a splendid performance.

Gregory Goss, in Los Angeles Examiner:
Edward Clark's comedy, "Relations" depicts the ebb and flow of a Jewish merchant's fortune as he allies himself with and against his relatives. He exploits the theme that "Blood is thicker than water." Clark himself plays the role of "Uncle Wolfe" with great understanding. He shades his comedy and pathos with careful discrimination and clarifies the dialogue with a fascinating play of facial expressions.

Harriet Clay Penman, in Hollywood News:
Those who expect to find "Relations" a follow-up of "Able's Irish Rose" will see nothing of that overworked plot. It is neither salacious, cheap in its humor, nor commonplace in treatment. It is more than a play—it is really a human document.
Calling Wrong Doctors
For a Very Sick Patient

THE Hays organization is trying to find out what ails the industry. It has made the stupendous discovery that pictures cost too much, and to find out why, it employed as investigators people who know nothing about pictures. Quite stupid, but it is a stupid organization. The industrial engineers advocate the collective buying of materials; the interchanging of sets, lights, and wardrobe; a central garage for transportation, and a central costume and wardrobe department. Why it was necessary to hire anyone to point out the desirability of these reforms I cannot conceive. They are little things that sensible business men would have adopted long ago. They will take care of the pennies, but will not stop the waste of dollars. The excessive cost of picture production is not so much a result of its inefficient conduct as a business as it is of its manhandling as an art. The sole business of the industry is to make pictures, and until they are made sensibly there will be waste. Cutting ten per cent. from the cost of building material is not as important as saving all the cost of the materials that enter into the building of sets that do not appear on the screen. Reducing the cost of a costume will not save as much money as will the elimination of the costumes that are made for people who do not get beyond the cutting-room floor. Some money can be saved by the improvement of the system of taking people to location, but still more would be saved by refraining from taking them on trips that yield no footage for the completed picture. The Hays organization can hire all the most expensive industrial engineers in the country; it can look into the cost of concrete, and complain about the high price of glycerine, but it can never effect any real saving in production until its members insist upon and get perfect scripts. Pictures cost too much because the people in charge of making them do not understand how they should be made. When work starts on nine out of every ten neither the supervisors nor the directors know where they are headed for. They laugh at the suggestion of a perfect script, and talk a lot of rot about it being fatal to curb inspiration by limiting a director to the action previously outlined on paper. No

Perfect Pictures to Come
Only From Perfect Scripts

Even if perfect scripts were not possible under the present system a way would have to be devised to provide them before the industry could practice the economy it must practice to become financially sound. Either by congressional action or by the dictates of the courts the pernicious block-book system will be terminated and producers will have to sell their pictures solely on their merits. They will be financially remunerative to the extent that they achieve perfection as vehicles of entertainment. If the present producers can not be made to see that perfect pictures can come only from perfect scripts it will not mean that we will not have perfect scripts. It will mean that the present producers will have

ONLY A DOG
By GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN

An ownerless dog he was—flotsam of life—
No one to call his friend.
What were the thoughts of the mangy cur?
Scum of the gutter! I ask you, Sir,
Wouldn't you be at outs with life
With none to call a friend?

And the starved soul of him looked from his eyes,
Seeking a kindly glance—
Brown eyes they were, lonesome and sad—
But all looked askance, thinking them mad.
Ah, Sir, I wonder how your eyes
When denied a kindly glance.

Puzzled he was, and hurt, that his gods withheld
That thing of his greatest need.
Caught in the net of Circumstance,
Scorned—Why, Sir, even you, perchance,
May know how it feels when all withold
The thing of your greatest need.

Only a dog—a vagabond! Nothing to proffer
In requital of a kindly deed
Save the great heart of him, loving and leal;
For only the half-soul of a dog can feel
That all that he has is a worth-while proffer
In requital of a kindly deed.
to step aside and yield their places to others who have sufficient brains to secure them. Screen art is so sound at the core that it will slough off the rottenness that now retards its growth. Under the new selling conditions that will be forced on the industry there will be a market only for pictures with merit. During a conversation with Florence Vidor the other day she likened a motion picture to a jig-saw puzzle. The completed picture is like the puzzle before the saw is applied to it. After it is cut into hundreds of pieces its makers know where each piece belongs only because they have seen the whole thing. The perfect script is the puzzle before it is cut, and each piece is a scene. To make the perfect picture the director must know the exact relationship of each piece to the whole. Lacking such knowledge he can not direct each scene intelligently. Under the prevailing system whereby a sloppy script is given to a director it is as impossible for him to create a perfect picture as it would be for the jig-saw puzzle people to make a puzzle that would fit together perfectly if the thing they cut up were not a perfect design to start with. The scenes of a picture will fit together to make a perfect whole only when the original is a perfect design. When you have worked out a jigsaw puzzle there are no pieces left over. When the pieces of our present pictures are put together there are scores left over, consequently those used do not fit together perfectly. An effort is made to hide the cracks beneath titles, but the rough spots can be seen through them. Ernst Lubitsch maintains a higher average of artistic perfection in his pictures than any other director. This is because he never starts shooting until his script is perfect. When he shoots a scene he knows exactly what relation it has to every other scene in the picture. As he has a perfect whole before he cuts it up into scenes the scenes fit perfectly when he puts them together again. He starts with a perfect picture on paper and gets back to it when he completes his cutting. Occasionally we get a good picture under the present system, but never one that costs only what it should. After I first saw Four Sons and before it opened at the Carthay Circle two reels were cut out of the last five. Not by collective buying could Fox save the cost of the materials that were used in the two reels that did not reach the screen. Nor could the pieces fit together perfectly after two-fifths of them had been eliminated. But Four Sons is an exception. We have not many masters like John Ford who can pare perfection and have perfection left. The average director can give us only what he finds in his shooting script, and until he gets a perfect picture in his script he can not give a perfect picture to the screen.

Disgruntled People Can't Turn Out Good Pictures

Why is the Fox lot turning out the best pictures? It buys its stories in the open market. Its contract players are no better than those on other pay-rolls. Its scenario department has no great names on its roll. In short, the Fox organization is in no better position than any other to command talent. It is giving us the best pictures, and from present indications will continue to do so, because it appreciates the important part that morale plays in film production. Last summer I criticized it for its treatment of some of its players. These players now are satisfied. Like all others on the Fox pay-roll, they are happy in their work. Winfield Sheehan in the past year has become the greatest producer because, in as far as his lot is concerned, he has undone the harm the Hays organization has done on all the other lots. The producers as a body have reduced the general morale in Hollywood to a level that is reflected in the inferior quality of the great majority of pictures. Their policy has been one of active antagonism to those upon whom they must rely for their pictures. The unsatisfactory financial condition of the industry is attributable to the manner in which the Hays organization has conducted its affairs. Last summer's attempted salary cut was the greatest economic blunder the industry could commit. It is directly responsible for the spirit of unrest that has prevailed in Hollywood ever since and which has made screen workers indifferent to the quality of the pictures they make. The screen is a subtle art. Like all other arts the principal item of its diet is enthusiasm, and it can grow strong only on the stimulation it derives from it. The Hays organization has robbed it of its enthusiasm, without which it can not do its best work. If the industry had been managed intelligently, it would have attracted only the envy, and not the disapproval, of Wall Street. The fact that it is a borrower is due to the further fact that it is incompetent. Manufacturing a product capable of earning enormous profits, the longer it operates the heavier it borrows. Metro recently put fifteen million dollars of preferred stock on the market. If it made its pictures with the ordinary business efficiency that prevails in all other industries it would have that much money to distribute among its stockholders. Universal blunders along with its production until it has over eight million dollars locked up in films and it has to go to the length of wrecking its organization by shutting down until receipts again fill its money drawers with working capital. Warners have made such inferior pictures that their receipts have not kept pace with their expenditures, and they are faced with the necessity of meeting four million dollars of paper which matures this year, and to pay which there is no money in sight. The Warner studio ceased production, a forced, but false, economic move, as it stops the output of the product upon which the company must depend for receipts to meet its obligations. Only by grossly inefficient management could an industry potentially so remunerative get itself into such a deplorable mess. No one in a responsible position in it, except Sheehan perhaps, seems to be able to grasp the elemental fact that the screen can prosper as an industry only to the extent that it maintains its status as an art. It can do good business only if it makes good pictures. Yet the people who can make good pictures are robbed of their incentive to do so by the blundering incapacity of those for whom they work.

Nothing to Worry About, as Future Is Promising

ANY student of screen conditions can view the future only with optimism. The present is all that need give anyone concern. When pictures first went to Wall Street for sustenance they formed contact with what some day will be their salvation. The inefficiency and waste that now characterizes the conduct of the business
THE Vicious Editor Pettijohn, who wants the song *No. 17* will America's quite popular. Then they do it. Does one read it? Am I a memorandum made by the Spectator? More wanted. The screen is a showman's business, he contends, and bankers are not showmen, consequently they will leave the conduct of screen affairs to those who are. I am not acquainted with the individuals who form the firm of Dillon, Read & Co., although The Spectator has several subscribers among them. I may be wrong, but I do not imagine that there are any automobile mechanics among the partners. Yet the firm handled the tremendous Dodge Brothers deal and dictated just what was to be done about it. When the banks took Judge Gary out of his law office and made him head of the steel trust I am quite sure that they did not make him pass an examination on the method of making steel girders. Schallert seems to be laboring under the impression that before Goldman, Sachs & Co. tells Warner Brothers that they can have no more money, the members of the banking firm should qualify as showmen by staging a song and dance turn up and down Wall Street. Instead of gathering an audience to their souls from the thought that bankers are not showmen, motion picture executives should indulge in the more disturbing reflection that Wall Street is peopled exclusively with show-me men. It is such reasoning as that in the Times article that has fed the overwhelming egotism of our screen barons and given them a false feeling of security. Nothing is surer than the fact that Wall Street some day will take over the screen industry, and when it does it will be a happy day for Hollywood. The very fact that the bankers realize that they are not showmen will make them more careful in their selection of those who are, and to the men who are selected will be given the management of the larger producing organizations. The bankers will see that ethics enter the picture business, and that is all it needs to make it profitable. No business can profit unless it be respectable and honest, and the film business has been neither. The Brookhart bill to curb block booking, a vicious practice, probably will become a law. It should. I have formed this opinion from a careful perusal of a memorandum on the bill prepared by C. C. Pettijohn, general counsel of the Hays organization, which opposes its passage. I have read nothing in support of it, but if the dumb arguments of Pettijohn are the only ones in opposition to it that can be presented, I do not see what possible reason a congressman could have for voting against it. Its passage will force a certain amount of decency into the picture business. More will come when the bankers, who now are carrying the industry on their shoulders, begin to smell their loads. It will not be long. Then the people in Hollywood who have brains to contribute to the screen, will have their day.

**Taking Leave of All Sense of Modesty**

**WHEN** I asked some of my friends if they thought it would be immodest of me and out of keeping with the general tone of The Spectator to publish a few of the flattering comments made upon it, they assured me that it would not be one or the other, and that I was foolish not to let my Hollywood readers know what notable authorities elsewhere thought about it. I was grateful, because I hoped my friends would say what they did. I am not given much to tooting my own horn, which does not mean that I do not want it footed. I think tooting is delightful, but I lack the necessary nerve to use my own horn when indulging in the delight. I intend to advertise The Spectator in some Eastern literary papers, and for the purpose have set down a few remarks about it made by literary people. I am tremendously proud of them and I want you to read them. That is why I am grateful to my friends for advising me to do what I wanted to do—and what I undoubtedly would have done anyway. Omitting the top and the bottom, this is how the advertisement will appear:

Samuel Hopkins Adams: 
Read The Spectator? Of course! Where else could I find the same spirit of courage, conviction, and joyous contempt for consequences?

H. L. Mencken: 
I read The Film Spectator with increasing interest. There is vigorous and excellent writing in it.

Arthur D. Howden Smith: 
The Film Spectator reveals its editor as a writer of practically perfect English, and as a man with an analytical mind, a sense of humor, and a profound knowledge of the screen.

Stewart Edward White: 
I naturally receive many magazines—all deadbeat, by the way, except The Film Spectator!—but the latter is the only one of the lot I read, or have read, from cover to cover. And that is not because I love for it, either.

London (England) Express: 
Welford Beaton is America's most discerning motion picture critic.

New York World: 
Welford Beaton . . . a literate writer of motion picture criticism . . . his opinion has been uniformly sound.

Arthur D. Howden Smith, whose latest novel, Manifest Destiny, and his Autobiography of Commodore Vanderbilt, are attracting great interest, is one of the most distin-

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**MADISON'S BUDGET**

is the source book for many a screen gag and comedy situation.

No. 20 just out, $1.

**JAMES MADISON**

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**FREE LANCE**

SCENARIOS — GAGS — TITLES
guished of the younger American novelists. He is now in Hollywood in connection with the screening of several of his stories.

* * *

Can't Escape Fact That Sound Is Here

A TWO-hour session in a Fox projection-room, viewing and hearing Movietone, is rather staggering to the imagination. Almost every conceivable kind of sound was reproduced, and as many different varieties of scenes presented. We see a naked boy dive into the ol' swimmin' hole and hear him exclaim, "O, gee!" We see the papal choir in the Vatican grounds, and hear it sing. We hear a rooster crow, and the band playing when the guard at Buckingham palace is changed, two scenes with a greater difference in pictorial quality than in spirit. I saw quite enough during the two hours to convince me that the talking picture, or whatever it is destined to be called, is here. I am no authority on mechanical contrivances, but as much about them as I can understand has convinced me that Movietone is the most practical device that yet has been developed. It photographs the sound on the same film upon which the action is photographed, consequently it can be cut at will without interfering with the synchronization. The weakness of the Vitaphone is that the sound is reproduced by means of a phonograph record, which makes it impossible to alter it after it has been completed. As I understand the General Electric patents from which Paramount is developing the system that it will use, the action and sound are photographed on separate films, which would appear to be more cumbersome than the Movietone device. But by whatever system it has been achieved, sound photography is an accomplished fact. Fox was two years ahead of the others in its development, and it is to Movietone that we can look to take the lead in presenting talking pictures. They will revolutionize screen art. I do not agree with those who argue that we always will have silent pictures. If it were possible to put a quality into silent pictures that could not be put in those into which sound is reproduced, I would agree that we probably would not sacrifice that quality to obtain sound. But such is not the case. Sound is a complement of pictures as they are to-day—something that does not alter what we have already, but which gives it greater entertainment value. Nothing is sacrificed when we add sound, but something will be missing when we omit it. The public may be relied upon to patronize what entertains it most, and it will not patronize a silent picture in one house when it is offered a talking film in another. The manner in which sound adds to entertainment value was emphasized in one of the Movietone sequences I viewed on the Fox lot. In a recent Spectator I complained of the flatness of scenes of a football game. I said they meant nothing as they did not convey an impression of the progress of the contest. Movietone reproduced scenes of the Army and Navy game. They were stirring. I heard the bands play and the rooters sing, and watched the cheer leaders dance in front of their blocks of hilarious supporters. The screen brought to me the enthusiasm that prevailed on the field, and made me a partner in it. When the game started I felt like adding my cheers to those I heard. Silent scenes of football games always have bored me, but I would have been willing to sit that one through. Sound should have the same effect on scenes of every sort. Intelligent directors will lose no time in studying the effects sound devices must have on methods of motion picture production, and actresses and actors should give heed to their voices. They should not listen to those who argue that silent pictures never will be supplanted. Screen art is going to advance until it fully embraces sound. That is inevitable. It will not be checked by the fact that an actress lisps.

* * *

Practice Not Quite as Respectable as Pimping

ONE practice of motion picture producing organizations that is not quite as respectable as pimping is that of farming out contract players at salaries in excess of those paid them by their employers and not allowing the players to share in the excess. It is a cheap, money-grubbing practice that people of decent instincts would not indulge in. Apparently Joe Schenck regards it as I do, for any player under contract to him or to United Artists gets all the money that is paid for his services when he is leased out to another studio. And not only that, but Joe will battle for half a day to get the largest possible salary for the player who is being borrowed. Universal conducts its business on lines a little different. Last year it loaned Jean Hersholt so often, and at a salary so much in excess of what he was drawing at the studio, that it got back the full amount it had paid Jean during the year, and seven thousand dollars besides. In addition to this, Jean made four pictures for Universal during the year. To put it in another way: Jean worked in four Universal pictures at no expense to the company, and in addition earned seven thousand dollars for it. It is here that the story begins to get good. Under its contract with Hersholt, Universal can lay him off without salary for two weeks in any fifty-two. Exercising this right, Universal notified Jean that he would draw no salary between February twenty-six and March twelve. Then Universal loaned Hersholt to United Artists and stipulated that the salary was to begin three weeks before shooting began. As shooting was to begin on March twelve, Universal drew pay for Hersholt's services during the two weeks that he was drawing nothing, thus demonstrating to pimps that their business methods are loose, for pimps allow the people who earn the money to retain at least a little of it. Under its contract with Hersholt Universal may be able legally to commit this theft, but that does not relieve Carl Laemmle's organization of the odium of putting over about the lowest, measiest, dirtiest trick to get a few dollars, that I yet have heard of in connection with even the motion picture industry, whose history consists largely of a succession of bad smells. The whole system of loaning players at increased salaries is rotten. The moment that Universal accepts one dollar for Hersholt in excess of what it is paying him, that moment Universal confesses that it is not paying him what he is worth; either that, or it is forcing the borrowing company to pay more for him than he is worth. In any event it is a practice that really decent people would not indulge in. To carry it as far as Universal has carried it—to lay off an actor while it is drawing pay for his services from another producer—is simply unspeakable.
At Last One Fragment of Von's Opus Reaches Screen

When Eric von Stroheim first sees Fay Wray in The Wedding March he is in the saddle, in command of a small detachment of cavalry acting as a guard for the Austrian emperor. In keeping with military restrictions, Von sits rigidly erect. Fay, an onlooker, is standing at the curb. She is attracted by the dashing officer and looks up at him. Her pretty face—and Fay is really beautiful throughout the whole picture—attracts Von and he makes fleeting glances at her without changing his position or relieving the stiffness of his military bearing. Fay is confused; she lowers her eyes, but again they seek those of the military image towering above her. Close-up follows close-up; shy glances grow bold and become smiles; surreptitiously Fay drops a flower into the yawning top of the officer's military shoes, and with a stealthy movement he raises it to his lips. There is little action in the sequence, but Von Stroheim's superb direction puts a wealth of meaning into it. It is of a piece with a score of brilliant directorial gems which make The Wedding March sparkle. Von has a long scene with his mother (Maud George) during which each speaks titles that are necessary to plant the story. They stand still, but the scene is full of action due to its scintillating direction. George Fawcett, father of Von, and the late George Nichols, father of Zasu Pitts, arrange the marriage of the two. They are seated on the floor, and they are mauldin with drink. The scene is acted magnificently and directed with rare skill. I have seen The Wedding March twice, once at Anaheim and again at Long Beach. When I saw it first I refrained from commenting on it, for it was presented in an experimental shape, and the experiment failed. As it was so bad that any change must improve it, I did not feel that it was fair to damn it for faults that would disappear when it was recut. In the form in which it was shown at Long Beach it is an infinitely better picture. Owing to the crazy way in which it was made, by which the complete story was told in one hundred reels, it is possible to present only a portion of it in the ten reels in which it will be released. The ten reels that I saw on the second occasion tell only that portion of the story that deals with the incidents leading up to the dramatic episodes in which the acting and the direction reach their greatest heights. But the ten reels make a good picture, with tense drama, magnificent performances, inspired direction, superb production, and beautiful photography. The Anaheim version had the weakness of characterizing Von Stroheim as an all-good hero, a role that he has neither the appearance nor the personality to play convincingly. Nicki was made so spotless in that version that when the seduction scene was reached it gave the impression that Mitzi, his victim, had been the aggressor. In the final version Nicki is presented as the roué that he was drawn in the original story, and all the scenes which developed that side of him were put back into the picture, with the result that it becomes a gripping story of a man's lust and a pure girl's love. With consummate skill Von Stroheim puts the story on the screen, his acting deserving as much praise as his direction. In places the tempo is so slow that it may be resented by those who do not follow pictures closely enough to become interested in the degree of sublety that they can display, but on the whole I think it is a production that will do well at the box-office.

Take It From Any Angle, Pat Powers Is the Real Hero

The real hero of The Wedding March is P. A. Powers, whose millions Von Stroheim drew upon so unsparingly to support the wild debauch the making of the picture became. After the second preview Pat put his feet beside mine on my fender, blew smoke into the fire, and laughed at himself, which is why I confer upon him the distinction of being the hero of the production. He looks upon the whole adventure as an amusing interlude, and still maintains that Von is a genius and that The Wedding March will be a huge success. I hope so. And I think so. Perhaps if I had known nothing about its history, or if Von Stroheim had made only as many reels as I saw and spent no more money than a sane person would, I might rave about the picture as I viewed it. But as I witnessed the unfolding of the story I could not close my mind to the fact that for every reel I saw nine others were reposing in the cutting-room, and to the further fact that I was not getting the story as it was conceived in the mind of the author. All this is by way of apology for a confession that I can not with confidence express my opinion of The Wedding March. It is not a picture that Hollywood can estimate dispassionately, for picture people will be hampered as I am. We will have to await the verdict of the outside world before we can be sure of ourselves. My own ideas are fixed enough, but I can not be sure that they will be yours. I do not believe that any picture containing so many excellencies can fail to make an excellent impression. The appealing and intelligent performance of Fay Wray of itself almost would make a picture notable. Her part is the biggest one in the version I saw, not in "sides", but in importance to the story, and she reveals a dramatic power astonishing in one so young and inexperienced. Another magnificent performance is that of Matthew Betz. He plays a vulgar brute, a low hound who is in love with Mitzi, and gives a vibrant, compelling, masterful characterization that should take its place among fine things done on the screen. George Fawcett is splendid as Nicki's father, and Maud George displays marked ability in her portrayal of the role of mother. In this picture there is a reminder of the existence of Dale Fuller. What has the screen done with this talented character woman? Has she quit pictures, which might be wise, or have pictures quit her, which would be most foolish? In The Wedding March Miss Fuller gives a flawless performance, a striking characterization that should make her in demand. George Nichols and Hughie Mack left us as a legacy the art they reveal in this picture, worthy performances to keep us from forgetting what sterling actors they were. That splendid artist, Zasu Pitts, has practically nothing to do in as much of the picture as reached the screen. I understand she is giving an extraordinary performance in the cutting-room. Add to all the good acting, the extraordinary wealth of production value and I do not think we can view The Wedding March as other than a great picture. There are scenes in it that are breath-taking, so gorgeous are the sets, lighting, and photography. It is a crime that such a picture was not
shot in color, as all such elaborate pictures soon will be. It would not have cost any more, but even if it had eaten up another million or so, Pat already was so numb that probably he would not have noticed it. And perhaps it would have made him laugh still louder.

* * *

Is Eric Von Stroheim a Really Good Director?

Perhaps the feature of The Wedding March of most interest to Hollywood is the sidelight it casts on Eric von Stroheim as a director. In the previous paragraphs I have paid tribute to the brilliance of some of his work, but, even so, I do not rate him as a particularly capable director. I could name a dozen directors who with half the money and in half the time could have given us vastly superior pictures. Imagine Bill Howard with a million and a half dollars and from now on in which to make a picture And the same goes for the rest of the dozen. In The Wedding March Von does several things that a good director would not do. He provides a setting so beautiful that in it the most exquisite love scene ever brought to the screen could be enacted—and he chops the scene into scores of close-ups that reveal him as lacking the ability to realize the possibilities that a more capable director would have grasped. To do him justice, however, I cheerfully admit that a few of the close-ups are extraordinarily effective, particularly one showing the head of Mitzi as she slowly is drawn across the screen to satisfy the passion of the roué whom she loves. A sequence showing George Nichols and Zasu Pitts, father and daughter, in conversation is presented entirely in close-ups which dance on the screen until they tire the eye. I would estimate that there are between seven and eight hundred close-ups in the entire picture, proving that Von treated Griffith's discovery as wildly as he did Pat's bankroll. Betz hands Fay Wray an illustrated paper, telling her as he does so that in it she will find something of interest about the man she loves. Does she grab it excitedly, having eyes only for what is printed about the man to whom she has given herself? No. It is a moving picture, consequently she keeps her eyes on Betz's as she reaches slowly for the paper, holding the gaze for a long time after she obtains it, then lowers her eyes to study the paper. No director who would shoot such an idiotic scene can be called a master of his craft. A normal girl would not have gazed for a long time into the eyes of a man she hated as she reached for and held in her hand a paper containing news of the man she loved. They do it only in the movies, where they do a lot of other silly things except in pictures which are directed with complete intelligence. In another respect Von Stroheim shows himself to be a slave of motion picture conventions. There are many close-ups of Fay Wray showing her face smeared with glycerine. Besides being disgusting, the use of glycerine is wrong fundamentally. No really capable director would use it in scenes depicting an excess of grief. A suggestion of it in the eyes of an actress portraying only mild grief is permissible, but when the actress can work herself up to the portrayal of overwhelming agony of mind without shedding real tears an artificial agency should not be employed, for tears are not an infallible indication of grief. In Four Sons Margaret Mann does not shed tears when she receives word of the death of her sons. It was not her way of betraying a breaking heart. To have smeared her fine face with glycerine would have been an idiocy that Jack Ford had too much sense to commit. If Von Stroheim had risen above the little things that marred his picture The Wedding March would have been a masterpiece. It would have helped some also if he had shot it in something less than one hundred reels.

* * *

Extending Glad Hand to Miss Helen Lynch

Perhaps the most interesting feature of The Show Down is the fine performance given by Helen Lynch. I am interested greatly when some young person of whom I know nothing, whose name is unfamiliar and face strange to me, steps to the front and in the presence of such capable trouper as Evelyn Brent and George Bancroft delivers a brand of acting that keeps her very much in the picture. You safely may put this new Helen down as one of the exceedingly few fluffly creatures who will earn for themselves definite places in pictures. Her performance in Show Down is an intelligent one that would do credit to an actress who already had won her spurs. And the picture has many other interesting features. I understand that it is Bancroft's first starring picture. Up to the last couple of reels Evelyn Brent steals it, but before the finish George steps to the front and gathers it to himself in some brilliantly acted scenes. Paramount made no mistake when it decided to present Bancroft as a star. He has all the qualifications. Show Down is a psychological drama, although it starts off as if it were going to be something else. Direct, vigorous titles written by John Farrow create the impression that the story is going to be one of the struggle between two men for the possession of an oil well, but it sheers off and becomes an excellently depicted exposition of the debilitating effect of the tropics on a white woman. Evelyn Brent is the woman and she gives a performance which I think is the best she has contributed to the screen. Fred Kohler is an unalloyed villain. He plays excellently the characterization that was given to him, but I wish he had been allowed to relieve its harshness with a suggestion of a sense of humor. The screen should get away from the standard villain. There are none in real life, and this is the era of realism on the screen. Kohler's performance would have been more impressive if he had not thrust his jaw out quite so far or taken so much pains to avoid being mistaken for the hero. Leslie Fenton, Arnold Kent, and Neil Hamilton also have important parts. Fenton's characterization is a notable one. Producers are giving more indication all the time that they realize that the public wants to see acting. When they become fully convinced of it such a sterling artist as Fenton is going to be kept busy. Victor Schertzinger directed Show Down. His pictures that I had seen previously did not prepare me for the excellencies of this one. He performs the remarkable artistic feat of making an oily swamp look beautiful without robbing it of its status as a swamp. The menace in the story is the wretchedness of the locale, yet Schertzinger's artistic sense is responsible for a scenic treatment that makes the whole production a series of most attractive shots. In one scene Victor reveals that he really is not a motion picture director. He commits the fault of having Bancroft fill his pipe before lighting it. I am
surprised that Victor does not know that such a thing is not done on the screen. Pipes never are filled; they simply are lighted. The introduction of Bancroft is in accordance with what I have advocated from time to time. He walks into the picture with his back to the camera, and is not picked out in a close-up until there is an excuse for it. While there are more close-ups in Show Down than I think there should be, Schertzinger's direction on the whole betrays a disposition to break away from directorial conventions. Such a story is not easy to tell on the screen. But it is told well, and the scenarists and director are to be commended.

* * *

Quite Evident That Lad Has Something

O NCE upon a time I saw a little Western picture directed by a boy who is something to Carl Laemmle. William Wyler is his name, but out at Universal City they call him Willie. In my review of the picture I said that the lad showed promise and that some day he would be heard from. His first was not a great picture, but it contained a lot of little touches that indicated that its youthful director had ability. The other night I saw Willie's first feature picture, Has Anyone Seen Kelly?, a title which is a handicap for a production to carry, but it has the somewhat unusual distinction of meaning something that is consistent with the story. Willie fulfills my prediction. He has turned out a picture that is packed with clever direction. It is a human story, and Wyler handled it with a light touch and a sense of humor that makes it one of the most delightful films that I have seen in months. No exhibitor need be afraid of it. It is a clean comedy that will please any audience. I hope Universal will not treat it too modestly because it is the first ambitious attempt of a lad with no previous experience with such an undertaking. When I survey the list of current releases that are showing in the New York houses I encounter more than half a dozen that can not compare with Kelly for entertainment value. The story is a simple, little one, its direction being responsible for its quality. It bears out what I have said so often: that the story is not important, the manner in which it is told being the thing that counts. If young Wyler does not become too satisfied with himself he some day will be rated among the really worth while directors. Bessie Love is the big feature in this interrogative picture. What an excellent little troup!er she is! She is one of the cleverest girls we have. I can not understand why she does not appear steadily in the productions of one of the big studios. Girls with half her ability are thrust before us constantly, while Bessie exercises her talents chiefly in quickies, with only occasionally an excursion to one of the bigger lots. Another artist whom it was a delight to meet again in this picture is Tom Moore, who is featured with Bessie. He never was cast more happily. He plays the part of an Irish cop, and even a potato is no more Irish than Tom. His performance is flawless. He is funny in his comedy scenes and impressive in the sentimental ones. Why don't we see the Moore boys often? In certain parts Matt is one of the best actors we have, and I never have seen Owen give a poor performance. Yet we see very little of the boys, while, as in the case of Bessie Love, we see many featured men who lack their ability. Another Irishman who gives an excellent performance in the Wyler picture is Tom O'Brien. He is a heavy with a sardonic sense of humor. And of course a picture so Irish would not be complete without Kate Price. She's in it, all right, and contributes some delicious comedy. Universal has given the picture an adequate production, and the lighting and photography bring out all its values. In many places the direction strikes a deep human note, and despite the many Irish characters there is not a single caricature, nor even a suggestion of fare. Wyler handles the whole thing with the best of taste, and frequently becomes brilliant. I feel grateful to him for helping to maintain my status as a prophet.

* * *

Glad, at Least, That the Baby Isn't Mine

W HEN a big studio turns out a picture we have the right to presume that it is the highest expression of the organization's capability for making that particular kind of picture. If this be true, and if Baby Mine may be accepted as a reflection of Metro's comedy sense, my advice to Mr. Mayer and his associates would be to stick to the burningly passionate Gilbert-Garbo affairs, the Chaney nightmares, and the pale and uninteresting Shearer and Novarro productions. Only clever people should attempt such a story as Baby Mine, and the clever people on the Metro lot are not allowed to make its pictures. Without refreshing my memory by going back over Spectator files, I can not recall an M.G.M. picture that I have praised wholeheartedly since I reviewed Flesh and the Devil, which Clarence Brown made into such a good picture. Since that time I have reviewed one or more pictures from each of the other lots that I have referred to in warmest terms. None of the lots whose pictures are rating so much higher than Metro's in technical excellence and entertainment value, has a corner on picture brains. I dare say that there is as much real picture ability on the Metro lot, which is turning out so much trash, as there is on the Fox lot, which is turning out so many masterpieces. Metro does not lack writers, actors or directors. What it lacks is a Winfield Sheehan—someone who has sense enough to allow picture brains to make its pictures. The Metro system is to blame for such a hopelessly brainless conception as Baby Mine. Bob Leonard, who directed it, has shown in the past that he is capable of making good pictures, but in this one he has not one moment of inspiration. Any two-reel director in the business could have done better. Karl Dane and George K. Arthur can give good performances, but they do nothing in this picture that hundreds of extras with little experience could not do as well. The only bright spot is Charlotte Greenwood, and she is interesting only to the extent that one can imagine her in a decent story well directed. She has a happy way with her that affects the audience. When I viewed the picture I noted the reaction of the audience to avoid allowing my personal preference in screen entertainment to color my consideration of it. There was laughter, but it was scattered, and all of it had a childish ring to it. Most of the audience sat in stony silence. The titles are as bad as the rest of it. The very first one reads, "Some people are born with gold spoons in their mouth." I do not understand how "some people" can have but one mouth. Then
there is such highly original and scintillating humor as this: "You ought to be kicked by a jackass, and I would like to be the one to do it." Metro can make money out of such trash as Baby Mine, but only because it can force it on the public in its own houses. When the government regulates the industry, as it surely will, and block booking ceases, there will be no money in such pictures and Metro will be forced to turn out intelligent ones or go out of business. It is making no preparation for the change in marketing conditions that is to be forced on the industry. It is adhering to a policy by which good pictures can not be made. It is a policy of not using the brains that it is paying for.

* * *

Put Down One More to Bill Howard's Credit

HUMANITY seems at last to have come to the screen. Love, passion, jazz, cocktails, and bathrooms seem to have run their courses, and now we have the one thing that it is most obvious we should have had from the first: a deep human note. No picture which had heart appeal well done has been a failure. Nor will such a picture ever be a failure. We will have mechanically perfect pictures which will score successes—Flesh and the Devil, Camille, Sadie Thompson, Sunrise—but they will not go down in screen history as will Seventh Heaven, Four Sons, Beau Geste, Mother Machree, and such pictures whose appeal is almost solely to the heart. The new trend in screen themes is the healthiest manifestation that the art has made. It is the only phase that pictures cannot run through and come out at the other end. The public takes only a passing interest in jazz, but it never outgrows its taste in heart-throbs. The market for something that will produce tears never wavers. I think Donald already has remarked in his part of The Spectator that it is a queer thing that now that the screen is presenting us with real life we give it credit for doing something remarkable. From the first it has used human beings in its pictures, but only lately has it begun to make them human. One of the latest directors to make his bow in humanity is William K. Howard. He has given us His Country, an extraordinarily good picture. Bill is one of our most interesting directors. I don't know what he did before Gigolo and White Gold, but the latter was notable enough to establish a reputation. Then came The Main Event, a prize-fight story, quite unlike either of the other two. And now His Country, a simple heart-throb, totally differing from all three. The interesting feature of Howard's work is that each of the four pictures was as good as the script allowed. Technically White Gold was no better than The Main Event, but its theme offered greater possibilities, consequently Howard made a greater picture out of it. His Country is another perfect piece of work. It is distinguished for superb direction and magnificent performances. There is not much of a story, which is of no importance. But it has a great theme, that of this country's assimilation of those who come to its shores seeking new homes. Rudolph Schildkraut and Louise Dresser, husband and wife, come from Europe with their three children. Lucien Littlefield and Fritz Feld have a hand in their affairs here. Schildkraut becomes a citizen, his son is killed in the war, he is jailed on a false charge after he is naturalized, later the truth comes out, and he goes back to his job in the federal building. That is all the story, but under Bill Howard's direction it becomes great. It is an inspiring story in loyalty, but when we examine it as a motion picture we are apt to forget that feature of it and admire it more for the sheer artistry of its treatment. Schildkraut's performance is a wonderful example of screen acting. He plays his part with superficial lightness, but never allows us to forget the deep note underlying it. When the picture is released it will gain this veteran further recognition as a great artist. Miss Dresser, of course, is splendid. Her part is one that allows her great talent full sway, and she realizes all that there is in it. And what a superb actor Lucien Littlefield is! He contributes to this picture another of his incomparable characterizations. And we can thank His Country for showing us what a finished actor Fritz Feld is. He gives a fine portrayal of an anarchist, and in doing so gives evidence of possessing ability to handle just as capably a wide variety of parts. Robert Edeson plays a judge, and Milton Holmes and Linda Landie are the son and daughter. There is a younger daughter who is not mentioned in the credits, and in the opening sequence we see an adorable baby who should be rushed into a lot more pictures before she grows up. The titles in His Country are a big contribution to its general excellence. All in all, Bill Howard has scored again.

* * *

Our Salutations to the World's Champion Liars

THE main trouble with Beau Sabreur is its relationship to Beau Geste. Put out as just a motion picture, and judged solely on its own merits, it would have much to recommend it, but presented as a sequel to the great Beau Geste it becomes a disgrace to the family. The only thing the two pictures have in common is sand. Its exploitation is a sad commentary on how the New York offices of the producing companies disregard common honesty in marketing pictures. Ben Schulberg's organization turned out a pretty fair picture, and the New York highbinders rob it of any chance it has by tying it up with another production for no other reason than that the other was one of the notable films of the past year. Beau Sabreur is in no sense a sequel to the Brenon masterpiece, and to offer it as such is a bare-faced fraud on both exhibitors and the public. The jails of the country are filled with people who are not any more downright criminal than most of the people who sell pictures made in Hollywood. Those responsible for offering Beau Sabreur to the public as in any way related to Beau Geste are just a little worse than the man who holds you up and takes your purse. The latter at least does not lie. Within the somewhat narrow limits of his profession he behaves ethically. Picture exploitation has reached a deplorable level. The only pictures that are advertised truthfully are those that live up to the wild imaginings of the people who write the advertisements. The merits of the productions play no part when the announcements are being prepared, but occasionally a picture is good enough to do justice to the praise of it that was written before the advertising department saw it, which makes the words of praise ethically as great lies as if the merits of the pictures did not measure up to the exploitation department's statements of them. The advertising men think they are lying when they write their ads, and the thought disturbs them not at all. The
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Spectator now has sufficient circulation among exhibitors to warrant producers using its pages to reach their customers, but it never will get any producer advertising because it will not allow the exploitation departments to lie about their pictures within its covers. It is willing to accept announcements which make plain statements of fact about pictures or which quote reviews of them that have appeared in other papers, but it will not accept advertisements made up of falsehoods written for the sole purpose of swindling exhibitors. The Spectator would not have allowed the Paramount selling department to announce in its pages that Beau Sabreur was in any way related to Beau Geste, and the former picture would have fared better if all other film papers had made the same stipulation. The Brenon picture was an extraordinary development of the brother love theme and contained a masterly performance by Noah Beery. Sabreur is a story of an effort to get a greasy looking Arab to sign a treaty and does not contain a masterly performance by Noah Beery or anyone else. John Waters, who directed Sabreur, did as well as anyone could with the story, with the exception of his handling of the fight scenes. They are not convincing, being too mechanical. But there is much beautiful photography in the production, and to the extent that we can forget Beau Geste we can find the story interesting. Perhaps the best performance is that of William Powell. Evelyn Brent is as satisfactory as anyone could be in her part, but I do not agree with her choice of clothes for desert wear. In The Show Down also she is dressed more elaborately than she should be. I wish they would cease casting Gary Cooper in he-man parts. They do it because he is a stalwart lad, but the impression I get of him is that he is a dreamy sort of person who should play mild and poetic roles. I must remember to ask Ben Schulberg where they get those marvelous desert shots. I want to drive out and look at the sea of sand.

* * *

Can't See a Great Deal in This One

THAT the camera must be the eye of the audience or of one or more of the characters in a motion picture, seems to me to be good screen reasoning. Every shot should show a scene as someone sees it, and it should be made on the assumption that the audience is present as a witness of what is going on. If we go beyond such restriction we would have directors outdoing themselves with absurd shots made from angles that would put human beings to great inconvenience to duplicate. I don't know what was in Roland West's mind when he conceived some of the shots in The Dove. He has two looking down from the ceiling to the floor of a gambling den. He has others looking through windows at action inside a room. As no character is hanging from the ceiling or snooping outside the window, why these particular shots? If the effort merely were to present something novel, why not get really frisky and show scenes upside down? That hasn't been done yet. Pointing the camera through a window without presenting it as the point of view of some character is bad technic. It raises a bar between the audience and the scene, which never should be done. Looking directly down on a scene is merely a trick devoid of reason. It is an unequal view which lends unreality to the picture containing it. It contributes to the unreality of The Dove, which is one of the most unreal pictures that I have seen. The plot moves cumbersomely, overwhelmed with an elaborate production and heavy photography, exterior scenes which have a vast capacity for looking unconvincing, unknown people going to undesignated places, a long parade of heavily gaunted close-ups of Norma Talmadge and some engaging ones showing Noah Beery with his mouth open. By way of compensation we have a title spoken by Noah while his back is toward the camera, a refreshing novelty worthy of emulation. There are also some meritorious shots following a title referring to Noah's hacienda. The camera makes the journey from the locale of the previous scene to the hacienda, vividly creating the impression that the audience is moving over to see what is going to happen. It is the best thing in the picture, the only note of constructive originality shown. The foggy quality of Norma's close-ups would not have been so apparent if they had not been cut in so sharply with clearly defined ones of Beery and Gilbert Roland. It made the quality of the photography distinctly uneven.

I cannot believe that our lovely Norma has reached the gauze stage, but if such be the case, her close-ups should be the only ones in any of her pictures. As always is the case with a picture containing many close-ups, no intelligence whatever was displayed in their use in The Dove. There are individual close-ups of two men laughing heartily. Laughter, when hearty, causes a physical upheaval that the camera can catch from a distance. Registering it with a close-up in a picture already having too many of them is idiotic. The main reason for The Dove's lack of entertainment value is that it has a tenuous story that would not stand such a ponderous attempt to make it impressive. It is a story of elemental emotions, robbed of all its elemental quality by the artificiality of its purely motion picture treatment. It should have been told in a bold, stark way, and presented as a border drama in which the emotion of its characters were deemed to be of more importance than the manner in which they are photographed. Beery's performance almost saves it, but I don't agree with his characterization.

* * *

Pretty Good, If You Forget That It's Silly

THERE are some motion pictures to which the ordinary rules of criticism cannot be applied. The Shepherd of the Hills, directed by Al Rogell for First National, is one of them. All it pretends to do is to put on the screen some incidents in the book by Harold Bell Wright. The incidents are not related, making the film more episodic than the well made picture is supposed to be. Such a form of screen entertainment is excusable when the incidents themselves are sufficiently entertaining to interest us enough to bridge the gaps between them. The only mission of any film offering is to entertain us, and if it can do it with unrelated incidents it accomplishes its purpose as successfully as a connected narrative could. When Rogell undertook to put the Wright book on the screen he must have realized that he had a difficult job on his hands and that it was up to him to make the scattered episodes vivid enough to make us forget their lack of cohesion. He succeeded in this. I enjoyed all of The Shepherd of the Hills, for I accepted it for what it is and excused its indifference to the conventions of screen pro-
productions. It is a succession of appealing and beautiful pastoral scenes, rich in characterizations and human sympathy. Each sequence was directed with intelligence and feeling. Alec Francis gives a compelling performance in a part for which he is suited admirably, and Maurice Murphy proves himself to be a boy actor of extraordinary ability. Some producer should take this gifted lad and feature him in a succession of stories. We seem to run to adults exclusively and to overlook the fact that parents and children throughout the world would hail with pleasure a child star who has the striking screen personality, good looks and marked intelligence that Maurice Murphy possesses. We have a few clever boy actors, but none other with the appeal of Maurice. And we might have a few more pictures like this one. It is comforting to sit back and watch the unfolding of something uplifting when the acting, direction, and photography possess enough merit to make us forget how silly the whole thing is. In real life I can not quite follow someone who thinks he can produce rain by faith, but I am willing to accept it as screen fare if we don't get too much of it—and if it be done as well as Rogell does it. And in a well regulated motion picture I like to see some reason presented for the villain's villainy, and I don't like to see him plotting his devilishness in front of the people upon whom he hopes to practice it, but the sheep and the dog and the bear and the squirrel, and the country roads that wound up hills, and barns and farm horses in Shepherd of the Hills made me complacent enough to view the villain as a delightfully normal chap, whom I knew would get his come-uppance from the hero before Al Rogell called it a day and repaired to the cutting-room. And he did—by means of a beautiful sock on the jaw which landed him in a muddy brook, which served him damn well right. In dramatizing the drought I do not believe that Rogell used his lighting to the best effect. He used the sun for a back-light. This had the effect of filling his scenes with shady places that suggested coolness. If he had kept the sun behind the camera there would have been no shadows—just a white, burning light that would have suggested heat and drought. When the rain came it was a regular movie rain, which always is unlike any other rain in the world. It comes down with a volume that would wash the country away if it were not turned off every time the director says "cut!" Some day I hope to see a normal rain on the screen. But there are so many things I hope to see some day!

* * *

Clara Bow's Red Hair Goes Into Motion Pictures

WEN we compare the entertainment value that Paramount put into its screen version of the famous Anita Loos story with that which it puts into its screen treatment of Elinor Glyn's most recent contribution to film literature, I think we will agree that the release of the latter may affect the tastes of gentle- men, and that, after all, they really will prefer red-heads. Red Hair, directed by Clarence Badger, is a joyous little picture, by long odds the best thing that Clara Bow has done since It. It is a story of a gold digger, a much better

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6509 Hollywood Blvd.
one than Gentlemen Prefer Blondes. To start with, it has a story that almost has a plot. It is a connected narrative that will hold the interest of the audience, and it gives Clara an opportunity to display her most ingratiating side. And the red-headed youngster can act! Through the froth and frivolity that make her characterization in this picture so delightful there shines a quality that suggests that Clara Bow some day is going to be a dramatic actress whom the world will acclaim. I do not know the young woman, consequently I can not speak with authority regarding her mental attainments, but the only limit to her force and power as an actress is the extent to which she develops her mind. When you are engaged in an occupation it helps some if you know what it is all about, consequently I hope that Clara is taking her profession seriously enough to study it. From the moment we see her in Red Hair she is a vibrantly cheerful, provoking, little gold-digger who quite delights us. The first shot is in Technicolor and shows Clara trying to vamp a dignified old pelican of philosophical mien and reposeful manner. She does not rely on the red hair or the lure of her expressive eyes to ensnare the pelican. Very sensibly she intrigues the old bird with fish, proving that when all else fails the way to a man's heart is through his stomach, a theme, by the way, which Red Hair does not develop. For half a dozen reels Clara goes joyously on, and does nothing that a perfect lady with red hair would not do, until the tail end of the sixth reel she takes off all her clothes at a party and jumps into a lily pond. This makes three. I've seen discourse in the presence of a crowd of men, Corinne Griffith, Billie Dove, and now Clara Bow. Each scene was ridiculous, vulgar and stupid. Screen art has descended rather low when it has to lean on scenes showing pretty young girls taking off their clothes under circumstances that conceivably could not prompt any decent girl to do such a thing. Such scenes are inserted solely to cater to degenerate minds and can not be defended on the ground of being either good drama or good taste, nor have they the saving grace of humor. When we get by it in Red Hair, however, the picture slips along in an amusing way until the final fadeout. Lawrence Grant, William J. Irving and William Austin have equal parts in support of Clara and each does excellently. Lane Chandler is leading man. I don't think I ever saw him before, but as much as one can judge by one performance it would seem that the young fellow is a pleasing addition to our masculine lovers. Red Hair is fortunate in having titles that fit it perfectly. At times they display rare wit that adds greatly to the chuckles that the whole film provokes. The punctuation of the titles is correct, which proves that it can be done without wrecking a picture. Exhibitors need not be afraid of Red Hair.

Sound Devices and a Female Menjou

WHEN it perfects its sound device Paramount should do The Serenade over again. The story gets its motivation from the success of a composer, one of whose compositions is featured throughout. I saw the picture at a neighborhood house and was impressed by the

ONE OF THE MYSTERIES OF ALEXANDER MARKY'S Expedition to the far South Seas, where he is now directing and supervising an original screen story he wrote for Universal IS: Why has it not been done before? Another mystery is: Why did he choose LEW COLLINS WILFRID M. CLINE HAROLD I. SMITH ZOE VARNEY to accompany him?

Edward Everett Horton

EDWARD EVERETT HORTON takes great pleasure in announcing the opening of his own company in "A Single Man" by Hubert Henry Davics on March 15, 1928 at The Vine Street Theatre Between Hollywood and Sunset Boulevards

Production directed by Maudie Fulton Ben Kutcher

Produced by Winter Davis Horton
lack of appropriate music. Ordinarily I do not notice the music, but a picture based on a musical theme carries its own suggestion that it should not be treated by the organ-ist with his usual lack of originality. With the general use of sound devices such a picture could be made in no other way. Serenade is a capital little picture, however, even though we have to take Adolphe Menjou's musical genius for granted. I do not think he ever gave a more finished performance. His part did not carry with it the devilishness we have grown to expect from him, and his eyebrows and shoulders are not called upon for their usual contributions to his acting, but even without them he is as impressive as ever. This picture again shows us what an excellent actor Lawrence Grant is. Some producer should profit by the lesson that Margaret Mann teaches us and secure a story with a starring part in it for Grant. He is capable of giving a magnificent performance, and the public has been educated up to the point of appreciating real acting without regard for the age of the actor. Katharyn Carver is wholly satisfying as leading woman, her sweet and refined screen personality admirably suiting the part she plays. The Serenade gives us another glimpse of Lina Basquette. I have great faith in her future on the screen. She impresses me as an intelligent young woman who takes her work seriously, two qualities that go a long way toward a successful career. Every time I see Menjou on the screen I wonder again why some producer does not realize the opening for a female of the species. A fascinating young woman cynic with a sense of humor is something which the screen lacks. If I were in the producing business I would have a story written with such a characterization in it, and I would cast Carmel Myers in the part. She has proven amply her ability to portray vamp roles, but I can not recall having seen her when her vamping was done for a worthy motive, or in a part that gained for her the sympathy of the audien-cue. She is a victim of her own success. She has done so well in unworthy roles that no one will cast her in any other kind. Hollywood is full of talented artists who are in the same plight. Because Earle Foxe is a good actor he gives in Four Sons a notable performance of a Prussian officer. If he were not on a lot run as intelligently as the Fox lot is, or if he were free lancing, he probably would get work only in pictures that have Prussian officers in them. The fact that he is an excellent actor would not be taken into account. Such is the way of producers. Fortu-nately for Foxe, John Ford knows he can act, and he plays an Irishman in the last Ford picture. Carmel Myers, and scores like her, have not had the same good fortune. Give Harry D'Arrast, who directed Serenade so cleverly, a story of a sophisticated girl with a cynical outlook on life, a sense of humor, and a suggestion of a past, cast Carmel Myers in the part and I am confident that we would get a picture that would behave quite delightfully at the box-office and become the forerunner of a series of the same part. We need a female Menjou.

ONE of the most misunderstood things that contribute to drama in a motion picture is suspense. The treatment accorded it in many films serves to emphasize the fact that the screen would be the gainer if directors applied a little thought to the study of each scene before it was shot. Judged by what we see in the majority of pictures suspense is supposed to be created by the simple expedient of delaying the happening of something that inevitably

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will happen. When an audience knows that something is going to happen, suspense can not be built by delaying it. The thing to do is to have it happen. Delay in that case merely is irritation. If a girl is descending to the library in which the audience knows she will find the body of her father who has been murdered, better drama is obtained by taking her directly to the room than by having her turn from the door for some trivial reason introduced solely to delay her on the assumption that delay builds suspense. If the audience be not aware of the murder, such delay is permissible for then the audience gets the shock of the discovery at the same time as the daughter does, consequently it can not be irritated by the delayed happening of something that it does not know is going to happen. This argument does not apply to, say, a bomb timed to go off at a certain hour. As much suspense as possible may be built up prior to the time, as the audience does not expect the explosion to occur until the hour arrives. But don't irritate your audience.

* * *

DIRECTORS would do me a personal favor if they would ask their girls to apply less lip-stick before going into close-ups. The totally meaningless close-ups of Clara Bow in Wings were made hideous by the blackness of her lips. You find the same thing in practically all pictures. On or off the screen, I hate lip-stick. It is disgusting. Also it is vulgar and it nauseates me. That is as far as I can go without putting into print the profanity that lip-stick inspires in me. When I say it nauseates me I would have you know that I am not referring to the taste of the beastly stuff. Even if my white hair and lack of opportunity did not limit my kissing to chaste salutes within my family circle and an occasional osculation of greeting committed with the cooperation of the wife of a friend who is a witness of, and a dampering influence on, the ceremony, I am sure I could not kiss gooded-up lips without becoming very, very ill, a conviction that makes it highly improbable that I ever will know what the damn stuff tastes like. It is as a decoration, not as a confection, that I object to it.

* * *

THE other day I sat in a projection-room and viewed a picture that took three weeks to shoot and cost the stupendous sum of ninety-seven dollars. It is a one-reeler that was directed, photographed, and edited by Robert Florey, assistant to Henry King, and S. Vorkapich, the Serbian painter, both of whom had a hand in writing the story. Most of the photography was done with a De Vry camera, and the only light used was a three hundred-watt globe. A large number of sets were used, the most elaborate taking almost three hours to build. The materials used were cardboard, cigar boxes, and tin cans. Jules Raucourt and Voya Georges compose the cast and both give satisfactory performances. The picture gives a glimpse of the life of a motion picture extra in Hollywood and is exceedingly clever both in conception and execution.

TAY GARNETT
Writer
DE MILLE STUDIO

Demmy Lamson, Manager
Ruth Collier and W. O. Christensen, Associates

GEORGE SIDNEY
SAYS:
I'm not using this space for advertising purposes—just to show I'm not afraid to walk into the lions' den—
"Yeh, but the lions den, and the lions now—dots somting else again."

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It took such a long time to shoot as it was made in the apartments of Florey and Vorkapich and was such a noisy proceeding that the respective landladies raised objections and work had to cease until good humor had been restored.

ONE would think that Charley Chaplin, who has caused so many million laughs, would know in advance what incidents in a picture would cause laughter. But he doesn't. In the William Tell sequence in The Circus he waggles his finger to denote that he found a worm in the apple he is eating. It is a little piece of business that always gets a laugh. When the scene was being shot Charley gave no thought to the movement of his finger. He did it instinctively. No one watching the rushes noticed it. When the picture was previewed for the first time Charley was startled by the laughter that the action caused. He told me about it during a conversation in which we were discussing the value of previews. If Charley Chaplin can't tell what an audience is going to like there is little chance of the rest of us being able to.

TO James Madison belongs the distinction of issuing the highest-priced printed matter in the world. It is called Madison's Budget, and vaudeville and burlesque performers by the hundred depend upon it for their supply of jokes, wisecracks and pieces of comedy business. The latest issue, No. 20, is just off the press and contains a large assortment of Madisonian comicities, and is written for the needs of present-day comedy entertainers.

ACCORDING to “Variety” no more “sucker money” is going into the show business. When no more “sucker money” goes into special number advertising “Variety” will go out of business and the Los Angeles Times will get out no more hold-up numbers.

WHEN we have perfect scripts, which will mean that pictures will be cut before they are shot, such flaws as are apparent in Show Down no longer will mar films. Fred Kohler walks rapidly out of a close-up and comes strolling into a medium shot. In the same sequence Evelyn Brent goes through a complete transition in the length of time it takes her to step from a close-up into a long shot. It is obvious that some film was cut out. It is but rarely that we see a picture that does not remind us that a lot of it was left on the cutting-room floor. If pictures were prepared properly before shooting begins there would be nothing left over when they were cut finally.

THEY were “gag men” until their salaries became so big that a more dignified title was sought. Then they became “comedy constructors”. United Artists has made another advance. Among the credits distributed so generously in The Dove someone whose name I did not catch is dignified as “humorist”. There are some amusing scenes in the picture, but none half as funny as that credit. The authors of the story and the man who directed it are named. Apparently they lack all sense of humor. That is the only construction I can put on the screen’s announcement that a humorist was employed to help them out.

TO MAKE his heavy a really vulgar oaf Von Stroheim in The Wedding March has Matthew Betz devour food in a revolting manner, but not quite as revolting as the manner in which Raoul Walsh has his hero eat in Loves of Carmen. Such scenes are all right when presented to characterize a heavy, but become merely disgusting when they gratuitously are made part of the characterization of a person who is supposed to retain the sympathy of the audience.

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By Donald Beaton — The Spectator’s 17-Year-Old Critic

WE are certainly living in an age when big things are happening. Lindbergh flies to Paris; Ford brings out a new car; and The Wedding March finally emerges, clothed and in its right mind. I doubted for awhile that I would live long enough to see it. However, it is about the worst picture, considering the time and money expended on it, that I ever have seen. It was to have been one of the big pictures of whatever year it was released, and as a rule, big pictures are something to recommend them. The Wedding March is totally devoid of merit. It gets better toward the end, but there has been so much poor stuff before that, that whatever good stuff there may be has been completely overshadowed. There are about three reels of story stretched out to about twelve reels of film, and to make the flimsy story sufficient, the picture is shot nearly entirely in close-ups. There is very little action, and the only scene which comes anywhere near being cleverly done is where Von Stroheim, sitting on his horse, fists with Fay Wray, who is standing in the street beside him. That scene is dragged out so far that it gets to be monotonous. There were other scenes which might have been good had they not been shot in close-ups. The close-ups in this were terrible. There were close-ups made of everything, including a pig. The pig's close-up was very good, as he didn't appear as conscious of the camera as some other members of the cast. Had The Wedding March been shot in colors, it would have been notable for some beautiful scenes, at least. But there was no color in it, and although the scenes in the orchard and at the church during Corpus Christi were beautiful, they would have been wonderful in color. An example of one of the scenes which was ruined by close-ups was one where Von Stroheim and Fay Wray get into the old buggy which she calls her “fairy carriage”. Had that scene been made in a medium shot, so that the background of the apple blossoms and the old buggy were shown, it would have been very beautiful. However, it was shot in a series of close-ups so terribly blurred one could hardly tell the characters apart. To go on telling all the scenes ruined by close-ups would take far too long.

The Wedding March had some good performances. Von Stroheim carries his “wooden-face” stuff too far. He expresses no emotion at any time during the picture, although he has a very good smile which he hardly ever uses. Fay Wray was splendid. Her performance proves that she has a lot of ability. Zasu Pitts gives a perfect performance, as usual. Matthew Betz, as the heavy, takes the acting honors of the picture. His characterization was excellent. George Fawcett was good, and so was the woman who played his wife. I didn't get her name. There were several lesser characters who did good work.

ELINOR Glyn and Clara Bow seem to be a happy combination. They made It, which was one of the biggest hits Clara ever has made, and then they made Red Hair, which is as
THE FILM SPECTATOR

March 17, 1928

good as It. Red Hair is about the same story as the other Clara Bow opuses, but Clarence Badger’s direction and George Marion’s titles have made it much better than usual. Marion is to be congratulated on his titles, as they are the best he ever has written. There is no attempt to make them the main features of the picture, as they are funny only in legitimate places. Therefore, they are very good. Of course, Clara had to gallop around clothed only in a worried look or it wouldn’t have been a true Clara Bow picture. I don’t suppose it is her fault that all her pictures have a lot of undressed stuff in them, but she ought to do something about them, because a lot of epidermis gets very tiresome after awhile. There was one sequence in Red Hair which was shot in color and it certainly was beautiful. It wouldn’t have hurt to have kept on with the color, as there were several places where it would have fitted in very well. Lane Chandler, who played opposite Miss Bow, is new to me; but he looks as though he had possibilities. He is good looking and possesses a good screen personality. William Austin is the only other member of the cast whose name I can remember, but the rest were all good.

My Best Girl is rather amusing in places, and on the whole is a pretty good picture. Mary Pickford is always good in anything she does and this was no exception. The story is as old as motion pictures, but Samuel Taylor, the director, has put in so many adroit touches that it is amusing. One particularly good scene is where the two of them, Mary and Charles Rogers, walk across the street so wrapped up in each other that the people they passed by don’t know what they were doing. Another good place is where they go on the back of a truck. However there were poor scenes. One in particular was the scene where she pretends she is a gold-digger to keep from ruining Rogers’ career. A little of it would have been all right, but it was dragged out until it became so tiresome that it lost all its power. The picture was too small and unimportant to be worthy of Mary Pickford. Charles Rogers, who played opposite her, is a distinct find. He may not be such a wonderful actor, but he has one of the most likeable personalities I have seen in a long time. Lucien Littlefield, as Mary’s father, was splendid as usual. Hobart Bosworth, as Rogers’ father, was fine, too. Vera Gordon and Carmelita Geraghy were very satisfactory.

WHEN His Country is released, it will be hailed as the finest picture ever turned out by De Mille. It is the best picture I have seen in the last six months. Splendid performances by Louise Dresser and Rudolph Schildkraut combined to make it a classic. If it had been the first of these human interest stories with the war as a background, it would have gained a place among the greatest pictures ever made. As it is, it probably will be among the ten best of the year. How William K. Howard, who is still very young, can put so much feeling into his direction is a mystery. To look at His Country, one would arrive at the conclusion that the director was an elderly man who had been of a philosophic turn of mind all his life. With the possible exception of Joseph von Sternberg, Howard is the only director we have, Frank Borzage can make a Seventh Heaven, but if we were handed a prize-fight story like The Main Event, which Howard made into such a good picture, he would be terribly at sea. De Mille, Clarence Brown, Murnau, Nablo, Rowland Lee, King Vidor, Lubitsch, Herbert Brenon, and Raoul Walsh, who are the best directors we have, never could make successes of both a human interest story and a prize-fighting one. John Ford might

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be able to do it. I contend that the director who should be hailed as the greatest in the business should be versatile. Von Sternberg and Howard both are that way. Von Sternberg can make both kinds of pictures, as Underworld and The Salvation Hunters prove. Howard is a bit better than Von Sternberg, because he puts a more human quality into his work. Von Sternberg is mechanically perfect in his direction, but his work hasn't nearly as much of a soul as Howard's.

However, to get back to His Country. There were three or four scenes in it, any one of which would have made a picture a masterpiece. The story deals with a Checho-Slovak family which comes to America to live. The father gets a job as janitor in a government building. The war comes; the father is accused of being a traitor, and is sent to prison; the son goes to war and is killed; and when the father gets out of prison he finds

it out. That is all the story there is. It is the marvelous human quality of the picture which makes it so good. The father doesn't become president of a bank or anything; he stays janitor. The son isn't a Greek god for looks; he looks just like hundreds of other American boys, and, as a result, his death is felt far more by the audience. Milton Holmes played the part and was splendid. John Krafft helped out the atmosphere of the picture by keeping the titles in the language of the people they dealt with. Sonya Levien and Julien Josephson wrote the story. Josephson wrote the original story and Miss Levien did the adaptation. They both deserve a lot of credit for having an unusually good appreciation of screen values. Robert Edeson and Lucien Littlefield gave splendid performances, but the greatest praise for acting goes to Louise Dresser and Rudolph Schildkraut. Neither of them ever has given such a good performance before. Miss Dresser has a scene when her son goes to war and one when her husband is being tried for treason that are marvelous. Schildkraut has the same scenes with one or two added on. A clever member of the cast was Fritz Feld, who was the heavy, and gave a very good performance.

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PATHE - DE MILLE
From the story by
DUDLEY MURPHY
Adaptation by
ELLIOTT CLAWSON
Screen Play by
TAY GARNETT
Directed by
HOWARD HIGGINS
“Ralph Block hasn't been out at the De Mille Studio very long, but he is beginning to put his impress on production.”
(From Film Spectator, March 3, 1928.)

As Editor-in-Chief for Paramount Famous-Lasky:
Quarterback
Stark Love
So's Your Old Man
Ace of Cads
Popular Sin
Love's Greatest Mistake
Paradise for Two
Shanghai Bound

As Associate Producer for Pathe - De Mille:
Skyscraper
Man-Made Women (In Production)
Stand and Deliver
Knockout Riley
God Gave Me Twenty Cents
Running Wild
The Show-Off
The Potters
Cabaret
Gentleman of Paris
Serenade (Selection and preparation of material)
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LATEST FROM PARIS

HOT HEELS
ALEX THE GREAT
BANTAM COWBOY
ABIE'S IRISH ROSE
CREAM OF THE EARTH
SOMETHING ALWAYS HAPPENS

And a Number of Others by the Junior Critic
Special Contributor Discusses Directorial Trend in Films

By JIMMY STARR

(Note: Mr. Starr is the oft-quoted "Cinematters" of the Los Angeles Record.)

Directorial Vitality
In Picture Making

With the inception of a new service issued Saturdays to an average clientele of 6500 exhibitors, Cinematters devoted its first page to "The Shepherd of the Hills" primarily because the picture represents already proven exhibitor profits, and, secondly, because it marks the entry into the small group of directorial leaders of young Albert Rogell. I have reviewed probably in excess of 2500 motion picture productions in my capacity of motion picture editor, commentator and reviewer for various media and one fact stands out as the sine qua non of cinematic success. It is that all the "wow's" are directorial bullseyes. They reflect a certain directorial vitality without which there can be no great entertainment content. George Loane Tucker's "The Miracle Man" was THE vital expression of that director's career. Underwood proved that while Josef von Sternberg had been labeled "esthetic"—and that word too often is associated with "anemic"—he is a tremendously vital individual who gives ample evidence of his dramatic vitality in "Underworld" and "The Last Command." White Gold was a punk story. Nobody could "see" it and they gave it to William K. Howard to keep him and Jetta Goudal busy. The vitality of his direction and the magnificence of Goudal's performance created a picture of enduring value. So with many other pictures representative of that quality which, in a director, is his "everything". In "The Shepherd of the Hills" Albert Rogell came through with a directorial performance that had—to use that expressive four-letter-word—"guts." This expression may be somewhat gross for Mr. Beaton's literary publication, but I note by his own review that he seems to agree with me. * * *

Director "Touches"
Overdone Affection

There is a devil of a lot of mush being written about "directorial touches." Said "touches" usually represent stippling where the true artist would have given us vigorous, broad strokes of the brush. The truth about all this silly written anent "the new technic" is that while the Germans know how to combine vigor with delicacy, the American director oftentimes becomes almost offensively picayunish, even effeminate, in his over-reaching for effects, the import of which he rarely knows and less often achieves. True, our newer generation of megaphone mentors, to which Rogell belongs, is working steadily and surely toward a more thorough appreciation of the craft. So swiftly indeed, that to-day we can present our Borzage, our Cummings, our von Sternberg and Von Sternberg (exclusively products of the American cinema) in open competition with the cream of Europe's creative artists. Rogell has joined that very meagre group which knows, as well as feels, drama, and fully realizes how to apply such knowledge and feeling to the pictures it produces. Just as we find to-day the leadership of motion pictures entrusted to the hands of youth, so too do we discover our most discerning motion picture critics to be comparatively young men with a keen vision of the motion picture's future, and with a keen appreciation of its robust qualities. You will find, for instance, that seventeen-year-old Donald Beaton's reactions to pictures are forthright, and clearly responsive to the vital cinematic exposition of which I am an ardent booster. Marquis Busby, of the Los Angeles Times, probably one of the cleverest movie reviewers in the country, lauded "The Shepherd of the Hills", for example, principally on the score of the director's faithfulness to the author's intent, and a sincerity of directorial expression that resulted in extraordinary entertainment effectiveness. * * *

Producers Must
Evaluate Enthusiasm

Producers to-day do not regard with sufficient importance the enthusiasm of youth in relation to the pictures with which it is creatively associated. Enthusiasm is a quality which only the emotional possess, and motion pictures are fundamentally an emotional expression. I commend highly the experiments of the F. B. O. company and Fox, which have elevated assistant directors to directorial opportunities, balancing lack of experience with tremendous enthusiasm. It is true that the judgment of officials responsible for selections has not always been of the best, but the principle is undeniably sound. When Jesse Lasky turned Bill Howard loose on "The Thundering Herd", he anticipated simply a program western. Bill's enthusiasm made of this picture one of the outstanding works of its type in film history. Watterson Rothacker, Al Rockett and Charles R. Rogers have a similar experience to their credit in the assignment of Al Rogell to make "The Shepherd of the Hills..." Nothing can stop the enthusiasm of these youths, whose background and talents fit them so admirably for the battle of the motion picture toward its place in the sun of art.
Looking Down Upon Their Biggest Asset

HE other day I asked the head of one of the biggest producing organizations if he had any pictures that he could show me. "Only a couple of program pictures," he replied. "You wouldn't want to waste your time on them. Before the end of the month I'll be able to show you two specials." This man's organization turns out five program pictures for every special it attempts, and ten for every special it really gets. The program pictures are the backbone of the business. Without them the company could not continue in operation. Yet the head of the organization tells me that it would be a waste of my time to go into a projection room to view one of these pictures. "Only a program picture" is doing for the whole screen industry what "only a Western" did for what to-day should be the most profitable line of pictures that Hollywood could turn out. The average picture is damned in every studio before the director gets the script. He starts off with the knowledge that everyone on the lot expects him to make a rotten picture; he is tied down as to shooting schedule and must keep within an unstretchable cost budget. These restrictions are placed on him despite the fact that he is handed a half-baked script, which makes it necessary for him to build up the story as he goes along and which must make both cost and shooting schedule unknown quantities. There is only one course open to him and he adopts it: he shoots the necessary footage, over which people in the cutting-room pray and gnash teeth and suffer horrible anguish until they give to the screens of their country a cinema that bears upon its face evidence of the pain that attended its birth. The special pictures, the big fellows that my producer friend thought would not be a waste of my time to view, have all the money and all the time that are necessary. Their directors have a chance. And they are not the pictures that The Spectator is interested in chiefly. In my personal capacity I prefer to view the big films, but as editor of The Spectator I follow the progress of the program picture with more interest, for I realize that it is of much greater importance to the industry. One of the greatest of the many great follies that the producers commit is to determine in advance what pictures are going to be great and what are going to be "only program pictures." The only way to go about the business is to make every picture as good as it could be made, and those that rise to the top automatically will become the specials. This will give all the directors and producing units an even break. A given picture would require just so much in the way of time and money, and it should have just that much of both—no more and no less. And neither time nor cost should be guessed at until the script had been completed down to the last detail. Under the present system it is decided to shoot The Passionate Pink Garter at a cost of eighty thousand dollars, and the only thing to go on when the estimate is made is a title, not a story or a cast or anything else that could convey to anyone the slightest idea what the completed picture would cost. Perhaps when the story is written it could be made into a good picture at a cost of one hundred thousand dollars, but it already is cursed with the limit of eighty thousand and being "only a program picture" it must carry the curse through life. No manufacturing business on earth can prosper permanently if it holds in small respect anything it offers for sale to the public. How far would a tailor get if he said, "Oh, it's only a buttonhole"? The world judges the screen not by the specials, but by the program pictures which are the chief support of the industry. Yet it is almost beneath

HELP! HELP!!

By GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN

"What are pictures made of?" the little boy asked; And I sat down to tell him, little reckoning of the task It were to classify the elements that appear upon the screen—

The jumbled, multifarious,
Movie-mannered, theme-extraneous,
Conglomerate, heterogeneous,

Witches' brew of elements—(If you gather what I mean.)

There's a lot of female pulchritude;
There's virile he-man stuff,
The dregs of human vintage,
Old Nature in the rough,
Sophisticated action,
And passion, love and sex
To cater to the whimsies
Of the public, multiplex.

There's the thought that half the people are a bunch of poor morons,
And the other half are dunces—the simplest species known—

Acquiescent to suggestion—that is to say—I mean
Who'll fall for the insidious,
Salacious and libidinous,
The vulgar, trite and hideous

Conceptions of the barons who control the silver screen.

So they mix a lot of ego
With their miles of costly film;
And extraneous conceptions,
To display a shapely limb;
And comedy relief!—
It's dragged in by the neck,
For the simple-minded public
Must have its fun—by heck!

"Yes—but what are pictures made of?" the little boy asked.
   —(That's why I'm in the bug-house—Avast there, mate!—you tell him.)
the dignity of our big production barons to reveal that they know there is such a thing as a program picture.

* * *

There Never Is an Excuse for Total Lack of Cleverness

ALTHOUGH any of the trifling and non-entertaining program pictures that the big studios turn out could be made into first-class screen fare if they received an application of care and intelligence prior to and during the course of their making. You practically never see a picture that has no story value whatever, and just as rarely do you see one that looks as if it had been made by people who had developed picture minds. I suppose that on the Metro lot a Dane-Arthur film is "only a program picture"—and as such must get along as well as it can under the restrictions that are placed upon the members of its class. As a result of this system we are given Baby Mine, a puerile and childish attempt at comedy that is a disgrace to the organization that produces it. From the same lot we get other program pictures—such as the Bill Haines series—which prove how badly Irving Thalberg needed a holiday. If he had taken the rest of the production staff with him to Europe and left the making of pictures to the brilliant picture people on the pay-roll, the M.-G.-M. bankers would not have made so much to complain about. The Metro output has settled down to a succession of offerings that are just more movies and which lack that touch of cleverness that motion pictures should have. There is not much basic difference between a limousine and a truck. The former gets its beautiful lines, its vibrant look and its luxurious qualities; and the latter its stolid and stupid appearance, while they are being finished, and after they have passed the point that is common to them. Up to a certain stage in its manufacture a truck could just as easily be a limousine, and vice versa. All motion pictures start off to be limousines and most of them become trucks—used trucks, at that, which rattle and cough, and emit odors. They are "only program pictures" which must carry the bulk of the load of mismanagement from which the industry suffers. The fact that only a diet of brains will make them strong enough to carry the load is something that producers do not seem able to get into their heads. We have an art that should be sparkling, bright, vivacious, entertaining, and it nearly always is dull, stupid, repetitious, and uninteresting. And it is not because we lack the brains that could give it the qualities it should have; it is because those brains are controlled by people whose mentalities can not reach beyond the qualities it gets. Ever since Paramount began to put out the Beery-Hatton fearful farces I contended that it was poor business to make them so totally lacking in cleverness. In reply to this, the pictures' grosses were pulled on me. They made money, and the screen can commit no crime that a dollar in the box-office will not wipe out. It is poor reasoning. There may be an immediate market for shoddy goods, but no permanent business can be built on them. The Beery-Hatton pictures were atrocious things and by no possibility could they continue indefinitely to make money. This thought, however, would not worry Paramount. Great harm is done the screen by the failure of those who control it to realize that it has a future. The only permanent thing about it is itself, for all its assets are material things, and although it is an art it has no intangible assets of an artistic nature. If ordinary picture intelligence had been behind the Beery-Hatton pictures Paramount would have in these two artists to-day an asset as fixed as a stage, or any other tangible property. Every time I reviewed one of this team's pictures I argued that it would take no more time and no more money to make the films clever enough to appeal to intelligent people without making them so highbrow that they would be over the heads of those who were making the existing ones profitable. There is no question about the abilities of Beery and Hatton and I contended that they could give us some sparkling comedies if they had decent stories and intelligent direction. Along comes Frank Strayer with Partners in Crime and proves that there was some sense in what I said.

* * *

Here's a Beery-Hatton Picture That's Going to Knock 'Em Dead

THE greatest handicap under which the latest Beery-Hatton picture will suffer is that it is a Beery-Hatton picture. I started out to see a preview of a picture called Partners in Crime and when I discovered who were in it I wanted to turn back. But I felt that I must even suffer for the readers of The Spectator, and I resolved to see the thing through. The opening sequence intrigued me. I found drama in it. The first hundred feet of the first reel commanded my interest, and it never wavered until the final fadeout merged into "The End". I laughed so heartily that it hurt, and time after time had to stop laughing long enough to wipe away the tears that were blinding my view of the screen. I would characterize Partners in Crime as practically a perfect comedy. There are ridiculous things in that which are made plausible by their treatment, and which stir the possibilities of the viewer so much that he doesn't care a hang whether or not they're logical. It is an ideal comedy because it has a story that is coherent and interesting, and because the comedy comes naturally into it while the story is being told. For the first time since I've seen them together, I find a Beery and a Hatton who could be at large in society without attracting the attention of aesthetes. Beery plays a boof, but he is the kind of boob that one knows, and it is not at all overdrawn. Hatton is a fresh and nobby reporter, and every newspaper man knows one or a dozen just like him. There is not a scene in the entire seven reels that could not happen, and at no point is there any evidence of strain to register a point; there are no gags and no interpolated comedy, yet if it does not create a roar of laughter that will encircle the globe I will acknowledge that I have no sense of comedy and will advise producers to pay no attention to what I write about them. It is a picture that Hollywood should study when it reaches the community houses. It conforms to my opinion of what a comedy should be. Apparently its sole mission is to tell a story of the underworld. For almost an entire reel there is not a suggestion that there is going to be a laugh in it. As the story unwinds Beery comes into it, naturally and unobtrusively, and without being labeled as something that you should watch if you want to laugh. After a while the story picks up Hatton in the same way, and then it proceeds to carry the two of them through to the end without once forgetting that it is a story. Because the amusing scenes are part of the story
they do not allow us to lose our interest in the narrative while we laugh; and they derive their comedy value from the fact that they are parts of the story. I always have maintained that this kind of comedy was the easiest kind to write, yet the studios go ahead burating blood vessels in their frantic efforts to think up new gags. Given a story funny in itself and the gags will take care of themselves, as Partners in Crime proves so conclusively. Frank Strayer directs it with rare intelligence. The greatest feature of his direction is the casual manner in which he brings in the extremely funny scenes. Instead of losing most of their humor by being dragged in by the scruff of the neck, as they are in most comedies, they have the appearance of being inserted because they could not be avoided, which adds immensely to their humor. You get the impression that Strayer was attempting to tell a serious story, and along came a couple of roughnecks, who mess it up without retarding it. That is real comedy. Because both Beery and Hatton have something to do, they give excellent performances, quite the best they have given since they have been associated. William Powell again proves what an excellent actor he is, and Arthur Houseman also contributes a meritorious performance. The love interest is carried by Mary Brian, whom I always find pleasing, and Jack Ludens, an upstanding hero who is entirely satisfying. No picture ever had a set of better titles. They are not wisecracking, but are full of rich humor that will provoke roars of laughter. Partners in Crime is a great comedy.

Casting Our Vote for the Brookhart Bill

C. PETTIJOHN, chief counsel for the Hays organization, has been my only source of information regarding the merits of the Brookhart bill to put a stop to block-booking. I have read all his arguments in opposition to it, and those of no one else in support of it, and have satisfied myself that the bill should pass. Block-booking is economically unsound, and as practiced by the motion picture industry is ethically unsound. I am assuming that Pettijohn, the paid protestor, has assembled all the protests that can be made, but his arguments could not impress an open mind. He touches only the surface of the question, and contradicts himself freely even when dealing with it. He invites the public to devise a better selling system and present it to his organization. The argument of a burglar that he can think of no easier way to make money may be sound enough as an argument, but scarcely will be accepted as an excuse for burglary. If the motion picture business had been run intelligently, block-booking would have ceased long ago. Joseph Schenck sends a telegram to Washington protesting against the Brookhart bill, yet he is head of an organization that will have nothing to do with the evil which the bill aims to correct. United Artists sells its pictures under the plan which Brookhart wishes to force on the entire industry, and it sells them in that way because Schenck, its president, knows that block-booking is not good business. He does not want it prohibited by law, for the more unhealthy practices his competitors indulge in, the sooner they will go broke and allow Joe to pick up their pieces and make of them things that will fit into the structure he is raising. Block-booking is economically unsound because it forces people to buy things that they do not want. Upon such a policy no business can be built in a way that will make it permanent. It is not the duty of the public to devise a better plan and present it to the industry, but unless the industry itself can evolve a system free of the fundamental faults of the present one, it is the duty of Congress to step in and force it to. On one page of a booklet which he prepared, Pettijohn says that selling pictures is unlike selling anything else, and that ordinary rules can not be applied to it; and on the very next page he says that there is no fundamental difference between the picture business and any other. His second-page assertion is the correct one. No business ever prospered on a policy of charging customers more for an article than it was worth. At some time in its career every other industry tried to take unfair advantage of its customers and none of them found it to be good business. It was found that prosperity came only from contented customers. Ethics did not bring honesty into business. Plain, ordinary, common sense made business respectable. The motion picture industry is the only large one which does not recognize the elemental fact that honesty is the best policy. If it could realize that fact it would become respectable, and the first step of its reformation would be the abolition of block-booking and the substitution of an honest selling system. It would be a system whereby the customer would pay for an article only what it was worth. Surely it would not be difficult to devise such a system. If the industry itself can not think of it, the nearest corner grocer could enlighten it. But like all things that are dishonest at heart, the motion picture business will not reform itself, unless it be forced to. Take from it the instrument which itields unethically, and it will be compelled to find another that it can use ethically. If the Brookhart bill passes, the Podunk exhibitor will not go out of business, as Pettijohn so somberly predicts. Nothing that Congress or the motion picture industry can do will make it impossible for the people of Podunk to enjoy screen entertainment. The passage of the bill would disturb the industry, of course, but all great reforms started with disturbances.

“Abie’s Irish Rose” Blooms Gloriously on the Screen

ABIE’S Irish Rose in its screen form is a cinematic symphony that will be played on the heart strings of the world. From one of the worst plays ever written has come one of the best motion pictures ever made. It is noted for the humanness of its appeal, for its superb direction, and for Jean Hersholt’s magnificent performance. It serves also to introduce to us a splendid little actress in the person of Nancy Carroll. It is full of both laughs and sobs, in many places the one riding so hard on the heels of the other that the tears become confused. When the picture reaches New York the film critics are going to speak harshly of it, and they will try, by making light of the sentimental scenes, to prove that they are big, strong men, who eat nails. But the New York people will like it, and it will run for a long time on Broadway. And throughout the rest of the world people will flock to see it, for it is a clean picture that decent people will like. If you wish to argue that the story is so ridiculous that it should not hold the interest of an
intelligent person, I will agree with you, and then confess that almost always during the running of the eleven reels I was either crying or laughing, and a picture that can make me do that is good even if it is bad. But not even the most hairy-chested, he-man slayer of screen reputations that a New York paper employs can say that Abe's Irish Rose is not a good motion picture. More than any other picture I have seen it emphasizes what an extraordinary art that of the screen is. Anne Nichols' play is a silly thing, and the screen story written from it contains all the silliness of the original, but by great direction and superb acting the silliness becomes plausible and the picture emerges as a human document that will stir the emotions of the world. As you watch the picture your reason tells you that fathers would not treat their children as the fathers on the screen do, but your emotions respond to the treatment, and when the emotions go on shift, it is a matter of small importance what reason has to say about it. From a purely motion picture standpoint Abe's Irish Rose will appeal to the most intelligent. The first impression of Victor Fleming's direction that one gets is that it is conventional and unimaginative, but as the reels unwind the consciousness grows that a weak story is being told so well that it is interesting, points are being scored without apparent effort, and there is not a dull moment. While Fleming had one of the most competent casts ever assembled for a picture, no great performances could have been given if great direction had been absent. The dominant note in the director's handling of his people is dignity. While the picture deals solely with types, there is not a caricature in it, and to Fleming goes the credit for suspending any threatened outbreak of over-acting. He uses too many close-ups, weakening the effect of some scenes that would have been better without them. But he has not sinned greatly in this regard, utilizing both medium and long shots to good advantage in many places. The lighting is the worst feature of the production. In no scene is the source of origin of the light planted, and in none can I remember having seen a shadow. A richer quality would have been obtained by a more thoughtful use of lights.

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Superb Performances Feature of Production

THERE are many fine touches in Abe's Irish Rose despite the matter-of-factness of the direction. However one might limit himself in making a list of great moments on the screen, he could not exclude one sequence that this picture contains. Nancy Carroll refuses to marry Buddy Rogers because she is Irish and he is a Jew. A little later they stand in front of a church door and see emerging from it a blind officer and his bride, who pass beneath a bridge of crossed swords as they descend the steps. Nancy's eyes fill with tears, and extracting the engagement ring from the pocket where Rogers placed it when she returned it to him, she places it on her finger, and smiles through her tears at the handsome boy. It is a beautiful sequence, tender in conception and extraordinarily effective in its presentation. While the spell of it still holds the audience there is injected the only jarring note the picture strikes. Nancy and Rogers embrace on the street in full view of hundreds of people who pay no attention to them, an amazingly crass bit of direction in a picture so well done in all other respects. Jean Hersholt has dignified screen art by his many great contributions to it, but nothing that he has done previously strikes a higher artistic note than his characterization of Solomon Levy. He is magnificent. There is nothing extravagant in his conception of a Jew, and he resorts to none of the hand-wavings that have grown to be the hallmark of such characterizations. It is a part of mixed emotions, and in every phase of it Hersholt is superb, further strengthening his position as our greatest screen actor. Nancy Carroll is here to stay. In this picture she gives the screen one of the finest performances ever contributed to it by a beautiful girl. She has mastered her mechanics until they are not apparent, and she reveals both depth and understanding. Charles Rogers is again the delightful boy. Superficially his work is perfect, but in some scenes, such as that in which the girl returns the ring, he does not realize all the emotional possibilities. He should endeavor to cultivate an ability to get farther under the surface of his characterizations. Camillus Pretal, as the rabbi, and Nick Cogley, as the priest, are perfect in their parts. Each combines spirituality with human understanding. Bernard Gorey is a comedian whom the screen should capture and hold fast. His Jewish characterization is a treat. Farrel McDonald gives in this picture the finest performance to his credit and is responsible for many laughs. Ida Kramer and Rosa Rosanova make big contributions to the wealth of good acting, and Leon Ramon, who plays Abe as a boy, proves himself an excellent little trouper. It is seldom that we see in one picture so many flawless performances as this one contains. Jules Furthman has to his credit as writer of the screen story the feat of taking poor material and making from it a most intelligent piece of screen literature. There is hokum in Abe's Irish Rose, and it is great and glorious hokum, which is, and always will be, the best kind of screen material. Ben Schulberg has reason to be proud of his belated contribution to the Irish-Jew epoch in screen history. Also he is to be congratulated upon heading a staff that could produce it.

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Hanging Crepe on an Already Gloomy Story

WHEN I saw The Man Who Laughs it was in twelve reels, which, I believe, was the length in which Universal intended to release it. However, I cannot believe that such a folly will be committed. As I saw it, it was the most tiresome film I ever gazed upon—a dull monotone, a long parade of scenes which meant nothing, a gruesome story that failed to interest me. I do not blame Paul Leni, the director, for this as much as I do the people responsible for the editing and titling. You can judge all the cutting from the manner in which two sequences were handled. A letter is inserted to establish the fact that Conrad Veidt has been identified as Lord Clancharlie and that his father's estates will be restored to him. A sequence or two later the scene of his identification is shown. In another sequence the picture goes to boresome lengths to work up enthusiasm for Veidt's appearance before an audience. After these scenes have paraded before you until you are furious at them, you are
taken into Veidt's dressing-room and you see him beginning leisurely to put on his make-up. Both these sequences should have been reversed, as they surely will be before the picture is released. Ordinarily when I see in preview a picture that obviously will have to be recut I do not review it, as it would be unfair to comment on it except in its completed form. I do not present these remarks, therefore, as a review of The Man Who Laughs unless it be released as I saw it; I present them for what interest they may have as applying to pictures in general. That, by the way, is the idea behind any review you read in The Spectator; I take the picture I am reviewing as a text upon which to hang a discourse that I hope will have general application. The Man Who Laughs is not good screen material, however presented. It is wrong fundamentally, for it asks us to become interested in the love between a deformed man and a blind girl, something for which it is easy to arouse our pity, but in which it is difficult to make us take the same interest as we do in the love affairs of normal people. As a picture entertains us only to the extent that we take an interest in the leading characters, we can not derive much entertainment from one whose characters make an impression on us only because they are not like other people. We can become interested in Lon Chaney whether he plays the part of a crocodile or a dough-nut, but even he could not interest us in a love affair between a crocodile and a dough-nut. But accepting the story, even though it should not have been produced, we find that it is treated in a manner that accentuates its own drawbacks as screen material instead of glossing them over. It is a sombre tale to begin with, and it is treated in a sombre manner—dull, heavy, Germanic. Its tempo is funereal. There is enough in what I saw to make a fairly interesting picture about eight reels in length. The additional four reels were inserted seemingly to make it as long as possible between happenings in the other eight. Totally wasted efforts were made to make us feel bad about things that contained nothing to make us feel bad. Mary Philbin and Veidt are brought up together. On one occasion Mary fails to find him in his bed at midnight. Leni or the scenario writer makes a tragedy of it. Mary wanders all over the circus lot, and the sequence ends with a perfectly ridiculous and exceeding long close-up of Mary doing her very best to portray an emotion which she could not have felt and which she could not make the audience feel. Acting and photography do not make scenes. The only convincing thing on a screen is a thought, and the only convincing scene is one which contains a thought that the audience is going to believe in. The best scene then becomes the one in which the plausible thought is handled best.

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Conrad Veidt Has Little Chance to Do Good Work

One thing that The Man Who Laughs emphasizes is the important part the camera plays in establishing the mood of a scene. The picture is tiresome largely because the camera reveals but one mood. I can remember only two or three bright daylight scenes in the whole twelve reels. All the others were dull, drab, draping the film under a gloomy pall. There may have been beauty in them, but I was impressed only with their monotony. I suppose Leni made some long shots which could have given us a comprehensive idea of his sets, but whoever edited the picture ignored these shots and gave us an unending procession of deep medium shots that simply were messes. Leni has a habit of shooting anywhere into a crowd, and filling the screen with an intimate view of a section of it, which, precisely as is the case with every other scene in a picture, is all right if we are interested in the crowd and what it is doing, and if we are not given so many such shots that we grow tired of them. Getting back to what I said in the previous paragraph—we are interested only in the thought that actuates a crowd and not at all in what the camera gets when it bites it, if the thought has not been planted, or if the thought be one that does not appeal to our sense of plausibility. Leni's direction conveys the impression that he thought the audience would follow the camera blindly and believe everything it picked up; that it would accept the labels he hung on scenes and weep when he told it to weep. When he made The Cat and Canary Leni gave us a picture that would be entertaining anywhere; in The Man Who Laughs he gives us one that may do well abroad, but which, by no amount of re-editing, can be made one that will score any marked success in this country. It merely is the kind of foreign picture that American audiences have refused to accept. The fact that it was not made in Europe does not in itself make it any more interesting. If we are going to show such pictures here, we should be on the square about it and buy them from their German makers. But we are not going to show them because they are not the kind of pictures that we want. There is not a smile in the twelve reels of this Leni picture, yet the characters laugh uproariously pretty much all the way through it. Veidt is supposed to be a clown who provokes his audiences to exhibitions of great mirth, and we see him in the act of making them laugh. To make such scenes convincing we would have to see in them the same humor that his audiences see, but we do not. He is an object to provoke our sympathy, but not our laughter, which makes the laughter in the picture unreal and in poor taste. This is particularly true of a scene showing the members of the House of Lords laughing derisively at the poor, deformed creature. We have seen enough of Veidt's work to know that he is a great actor, but in this picture he does nothing that an inexperienced extra could not do as well. His features are fixed in a horrible grin, and it is the flexibility of a screen actor's facial expression that gives him freedom to display his art. Olga Baclanova, a capable Russian actress, who comes from nowhere into the story, plays a particularly vulgar part. Leni undresses her solely to show us an undressed woman, something inexcusable in any picture, and particularly inexcusable in one that started out to be a dignified drama. Her appearance in The Man Who Laughs will add nothing to Mary Philbin's reputation. In such an unreal picture both her happiness and her sadness are unconvincing. I am sorry, for as I write her picture looks down upon me from my library
wall, and it bears the inscription, "To my dear Uncle Beaton." The best performance is that of Cesare Gravina, who is intelligently human throughout. There are many bits well done by the members of a very long cast.

**Picture That Eats Up Carl Laemmle's Money**

The Man Who Laughs is an eloquent argument in favor of the perfect script. I do not know how much the picture cost, but I am satisfied that for every additional dollar that Carl Laemmle might have spent in making his script perfect he would have saved one hundred in production cost. All I know about the picture is what I saw on the screen, and I gathered from it the impression that the twelve reels were cut unwise from a great many more. When Veldt repudiates his inheritance and seeks his former associates we see him walking or running through elaborate sets that we did not see before and do not see again. As is the case with all other sequences, showing us the stages of his journey greatly retards the action, which makes it poor art; and building such elaborate sets for so little footage is poor business. If any picture sense had been exercised in this sequence there would have been a quick cut from the beginning of the journey to its end, for already the audience was bored to extinction; and if any business sense had been exercised the director would not have been allowed to spend so much money for such trivial results. The story of the film is buried beneath a massive and gloomy production, made more gloomy by the deadly monotony of background, lighting and the scarcity of scenes that are sharp and well defined. Paul Leni is first of all a master of investiture, and then a story-teller, thus reversing the qualities that a director should possess. The screen is a story-telling art, and everything in a picture should be subjugated to the story. The only value of any scene is its story-telling value. If all the time that was necessary had been spent on the script of The Man Who Laughs to make the plain thread of the story the most vivid feature of the production, the impossibility of most of its labored embellishment would have become apparent before a dollar was spent on sets. In an opening sequence we see King James in bed in a sombre room heavy with statuary and other furnishings that cost money to assemble on a set. All the screen gets for all the money is a view of the king rising and leaving the room. There is no story value in it, or anything else to excuse it. The scene that succeeds it is not affected by the fact that the king is fresh from bed. If the minds of the people who made the picture had been kept on the story and away from scenic effects, the money spent on the bedroom set and shooting it would have been saved, for the script would have revealed that the scene was superfluous. The same thing applies to dozens of other scenes in this picture. No matter how much a scene costs it has a place in a picture when it contributes to the atmosphere and assists in advancing the story. But it is a truism that a picture is harmed when it includes anything that does not help it. I can think of no neutral quality that a picture possesses. Here we have one already at least four reels too long and it is filled with scenes which resemble one another with exasperating monotony, which contribute nothing to the story and which cost a lot of money—and all undoubtedly because the studio believes that there is no such thing as a perfect script. If Universal can not understand that it is a wanton waste of money to erect a set to show a man getting out of bed, and that such a scene being unnecessary, helps to make the picture a poorer one, it should employ people who do understand such elemental things or cease trying to make pictures. Such cessation will come about automatically if it makes many more like The Man Who Laughs, which can not bring back all the money wasted on it, no matter how it is recut and otherwise juggled. Even the wealthiest of the producing organizations can not continue forever to make pictures that lose money. Carl Laemmle can charge up the present loss to his mistaken notion that a perfect script is not possible.

**Assuming That It Is the Best That Metro Can Do**

The resources of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer organization are sufficient to command the best picture brains in the country. There is no excuse for it turning out even an unimportant picture that lacks the qualities of brilliance and cleverness. Louis B. Mayer has been left alone to surround himself with the best production staff that money could buy; he has been in the saddle some years, at least quite long enough to be turning out pictures that we have a right to consider as samples of the best that we can expect from him. Let us take one of his recent pictures apart and see what it is made of. We will select The Latest From Paris, starring Norma Shearer, and directed by Sam Wood. Norma is as well equipped to carry her part in a picture as are any of the other beautiful stars who can't act. She has a pleasing screen personality, looks like a thoroughbred, which most of the others don't; has ability of a sort, and knows how to wear clothes. Sam Wood is one of the best of our purely conventional directors, those in whose hands screen traditions are sacred and safe. He never will give us a great picture, but he never will give us a poor one if he has a script with anything in it. Metro assembled a capable cast for the picture. George Sidney is one of the few really great screen comedians, and Tenen Holtz is a character actor whom Metro consistently has neglected since it put him on its pay-roll. Ralph Forbes makes a satisfactory leading man. There is a good idea in the story, one that must have been worked out consistently in the original. With all the brains in the world at its command, we have a right to regard this picture as a sample of the best work that the Metro studio can turn out. On that lot the supervisor curse has reached its most virulent form. On every point raised in a story conference writers with brains have to yield to supervisors without any. The Latest From Paris is a product of the supervisor system. If that system had developed on the Metro lot to the point of efficiency that would justify its existence, this picture would be a bright and sparkling comedy that would have enjoyed long runs all over the country. But it is a stupid picture that gets by solely because Metro can put it into houses which it controls and because by the block-booking system it forces exhibitors who want the Gilberts and Chaney's to buy also the Shearers and other pictures which they do not want. It is no less intelligent than the other pictures that come from the same lot, and may be taken as a true reflection of the picture mentality of the
Decidedly Absurd Scenes in "The Latest From Paris"

Let us go a little farther into The Latest From Paris, not because the picture is worth more space as a work of cinematic art, but because it is interesting now and then to take one apart and see what it is made of. In leading up to the absurd love scene dealt with in the previous paragraph, Ralph Forbes is shown to be a rude, vulgar, wisecracking lowbrow, whom such a person as Norma Shearer by no possibility could love. He is the kind of lover that Bill Haines always is directed to be, one who lacks everything that we have a right to look for in a hero. Forbes is playing poker on a train, obviously bound for somewhere. His money is in front of him, and his hand is satisfactory, being an ace-full. He sees Norma in a train on another track. He leaves money, cards, hat, baggage and train; rushes across the tracks, into Norma's car, insults her until Sam Wood tells her to smile as an evidence of her love for him, and travels with her apparently all day. It is something that only an idiot would do and something that only another idiot would accept as an evidence of intelligent affection, yet it is presented to us in this picture as a sample of the very best work that Metro can turn out. The train sequence precedes the love scene. The love story has proceeded too smoothly, and for the sake of the story there must be an interruption in it, consequently Norma and Ralph stand in the snow and indulge in a quarrel just as crazy as the rest of the sequence. There is no reason for it whatever, the script calling on Forbes to take a stand that no one in his right mind would have thought of. It is just one of the purely manufactured situations of which the whole picture is made. Metro apparently thought it desirable to have suspense at the end of the film, suspense being worn by all the best pictures this season. If you have not seen the picture you will have a hard time believing me when I tell you how the brilliant picture people on the Metro lot achieved their suspense. There is another girl in the picture who loves Forbes. She says to him, "Don't be shy. If you asked me to marry you, I'd say yes." "That's very sweet of you," replies Forbes. The girl accepts that as a proposal, announces herself as engaged to Forbes, and arranges an immediate wedding. Our noble hero, in love with Norma, finds himself trapped and at slow tempo prepares for his wedding to the girl he does not love. If only he could remember the words that he could use to convey to her the fact that he did not propose! But the poor devil can't think of the English words, and knowing no foreign language, he must go through with it! In all my picture viewing I don't recall having seen a situation so absolutely idiotic as this one. If it were thought fit to gain suspense by making it appear as if Forbes were about to marry the wrong girl, it could have been done in any one of a dozen clever ways that any person with ordinary brains could have suggested. An attempt is made in the final reel to develop heart-interest drama, and to make the audience feel sorry for the suffering hero and heroine, but it becomes ludicrous because it is based on a ludicrous premise. With average brains applied to it, the closing sequences could have been bright and clever comedy. As an example of the scores of little crimes the picture commits we may take Norma's action in invading the home of an important customer, taking her sample trunk into his dining-room and displaying her samples before he has had his breakfast. The Latest From Paris is offered to the public as the best that Metro could do with the story. It is a disgraceful exhibition of the depths to which screen art can descend when its course is directed by people who are incompetent themselves and who have the power to overrule the suggestions of the competent people at their command. This Shearer picture could have been a good one, but, as it is, it is enlightening as giving us a true glimpse of the mental capacity of the Metro lot.

Something Always Happens When People Really Think

Over on the Paramount lot they seem to have taken a hitch in their mental breeches and to have declared to goodness that they are going to put more downright cleverness into their pictures. I think the Menjou pictures must have demonstrated that there is a market for sublety, and that there is money in mental explorations that are made intelligently. If I were in the producing business I would assemble all the things that you really can not do on the screen and make a picture out of them. Paramount seems to have had about the same idea when it made Something Always Happens. Esther Ralston is the star. I believe her name is planted in a title, but from the beginning to the end of the picture that is all we learn about her history before the story opens. We are not told whether she has any relatives, or a home; where she came from or where she's headed for. We first see her in an English home, a title telling us that she is engaged to marry the son of the house, Neil Hamilton, thereby saving the picture from having to tell a love story by presenting it with a ready-made one to start with. And the picture ends precisely where it begins, with Esther
still engaged to Neil, and without having revealed anything that interfered for one moment with the smooth course of the love affair. When the end comes we think that Esther probably is an American, but that is as close as we get to knowing anything about her. And Something Always Happens is one of the most entertaining little pictures that I have seen in a long time. All the things that it does not do are the unimportant things that other pictures do to get length—things responsible for that bored feeling that comes over you so often in picture houses. The conventional film would have shown the development of the love story, and would have used up at least two reels getting Esther and Neil into the English home where the action begins. Any supervisor could show you that you simply can’t make a picture without telling your audience all about the characters. If you show an American girl in an English home you must show how she got there—and there are a lot of other things that any supervisor can demonstrate to you must be in any successful picture. Far be it from me, of course, to even suggest that a supervisor ever could be wrong, but, strangely enough, as I watched Something Always Happens I never once noticed that it was short-changing me. I liked Esther Ralston and I was interested so much in what was happening to her, and what she was making happen to other people, that it never occurred to me to wonder if she were the daughter of an Oklahoma oil baron or a New York preacher, and whether Hamilton proposed to her on a private yacht or in a bunker. These are items of information that all other pictures provide us with, and which we accept stolidly, as we accept so many other things that we see on the screen. There is no reason for them, but they always are done. There is an extraordinary opening in pictures for people who will do things differently. I do not believe that in the history of the development of any art there was there such an opening for new people to walk in boldly and take front seats as there is to-day in screen art. To capitalize on the mistakes that the present producers have made, and to put most of the present ones out of business, would be ridiculously easy. Not more than half a dozen people who supervise pictures have even the slightest qualifications for their positions. The screen has become monotonous because most of the pictures are made by people who are too weak mentally to recognize a new idea. When we see one, as presented by Something Always Happens, we are both grateful and surprised.

** Story Built on Sound Principles**

**SOMETHING Always Happens** is sound dramatically because it tells us everything about the principal characters that we are interested in at the moment. We do not know whether the girl and boy ultimately marry or terminate their engagement, and we are not aware of there being anything lacking, for we are not interested in the love affair. The picture shows us merely a couple of hours of the lives of the boy and girl, just a brief incident that has no connection with anything that preceded it and which is wound up too completely to have an effect on anything that comes after it, consequently it does not leave our curiosity unsatisfied. Esther Ralston finds the English home deadly dull and longs for something to happen. She and Neil Hamilton leave for London to take a famous family jewel to the bank. On the way they enter logically a deserted house—and Esther gets her wish that something would happen. It is hokum, using the word in the sense that it is used to express anything really entertaining, but, like all well presented hokum, it is corking good screen stuff and is going to make this picture one of the most popular Esther Ralston films that Paramount has given us. Much footage is used to show Esther wandering around the cob-webby rooms, having experiences with mysterious hands that come from behind curtains, and strange feet on creaking stairways, until the audience gets all worked up, just as it did when it saw Cat and Canary on the screen. After a period of tremendous excitement of a harrowing sort, Esther learns that the whole thing is a plant of Hamilton's to satisfy her restlessness, and she provides some excellent comedy by continuing the mystifying things in a manner that alarms Hamilton and Charles Selkon and Roscoe Karns, his accomplices. When this phase comes to a satisfactory conclusion, Sojin arrives with a gang of cutthroats to steal the gem that is being carried to the bank, and what happens then is real melodrama. These quick transitions in the story are what makes it interesting and clever, although that phase showing Esther fooling the others, the middle phase of the story, is not presented with any degree of cleverness. It is impossible farce inserted in a place that cried for really clever comedy. In the final phase there is the best fight I ever saw on the screen. Neil Hamilton and a gentleman with a most unattractive and vicious face have a set-to that is soul-stirring, and which reaches its peak when both of them nearly slide head-first into the fire in a grate. There are only five reels of Something Always Happens, but they are full to the brim with action that thrills, amuses and entertains. Frank Tuttle has given the picture excellent direction on the whole, and if he had worked out some cleverer way for Esther to put over her comedy in the second stage of the story, his score would have been one hundred per cent. But as it stands the picture will be a popular one, and I recommend it without reservation to my exhibitor readers. To Hollywood it should come as something to view and study. I have seen many five-reel pictures of late, but this is the only one I have seen in five reels. The others were padded to comply with someone's crazy notion that unless it be seven reels it is not a feature. But the chief thing that we will learn from it is the fact that we can become interested in people without having to follow them from the cradle to the grave. Something Always Happens is an intelligently polished screen gem. I do not mean that it is going to break any records or cause any commotion; but it is going to please audiences, and perhaps it is going to show Hollywood supervisors something about making pictures that they should know. But there is so much that they should know!

**Motion Pictures Should Realize All Possibilities**

**VIEWED either as an art or as an industry the screen should keep a step ahead of its public. To-day it is lagging behind. Our best pictures are those that do best now what has been done for the past ten years, and they stand out, not solely on account of the qualifications**
they possess themselves, but because these qualities are emphasized by the fact that the great majority of films, striving for the same results, do not attain them. Our good pictures are good only by comparison with those that are not. You might argue that anything becomes good only by the same method, that everything in life is comparative, but this argument has strength only to the degree in which the creator has used all the means at his command to make his creation attain perfection, so that his product will stand comparison with all others which also have exhausted their possibilities. The screen is not taking advantage of its opportunities, and it is failing to give its public complete satisfaction because the public is aware of it. Take a picture like The Ladies From Hell. Personally I liked it very much. It was produced on a lavish and artistic scale, was directed capably by John S. Robertson, contains an excellent performance by Norman Kerry, a delightful one by Lillian Gish, and adequate ones by others of the strong cast. It presents Scotland to us in a romantic and stirring manner, although its titles do their best to detract from its atmosphere. It pleased me, I repeat, but I did not read one favorable criticism of it, nor has it apparently made a distinctively favorable impression on the public. Viewed solely from the standpoint of what it is, there is nothing in it that I could criticize unfavorably, consequently I can attribute its failure to make an impression to the fact that the public subconsciously knows what it should have been. Its sins are not those of commission, but of omission. It is a picture that Metro should have made this year, not last year. The public has known for some time that color photography has been perfected by Technicolor to a degree that makes possible gloriously beautiful reproductions on the screen, and it now knows that sound can be reproduced in a manner equally satisfactory. As it viewed The Ladies From Hell it probably did not notice the lack of color and sound, but that did not prevent it from being subconsciously disappointed with the picture because it should have contained both. At this stage of the development of screen art it is ridiculous to show us a scene of marching pipers and deny us the feature that makes the scene stirring: the skirling of the pipes. Last year it might have been all right; this year it is not. Nor is there any excuse for showing us in black and white the tartans of the Scottish Highlanders, if Metro had used all the means at its command to make this picture as perfect as possible it could have given the world a film that would have been a sensational success. It stirs the imagination merely to contemplate what might have been done. Let us suppose that there had been a reproduction of a musical score played by a symphony orchestra and embracing all those famous and beautiful Scottish airs, with the sweet strains of Annie Laurie being predominant; that when the pipers marched onto a scene we heard the soul-stirring wails of their romantic instruments; and let us suppose further that the exquisite coloring of the tartans, the green of the trees, the grey of the castles, and the blue of the sky had been added to the engrossing story and the excellent acting—then we would have had a picture that would have enthused the world. The public knows that it could have been done, and it was disappointed with the flat monotony of black and white, and mute scenes that should have been given a voice. The Ladies From Hell is a good picture—so good that Metro should do it over again in a year or so and add to it those features that all pictures soon must embrace if screen art is not to continue to lag behind the demands of those who support it.

"Hot Heels" and Two Young Fellows

GLENN Tryon, young Universal star, and William Haines, young Metro star, play the same kind of roles. Both of them generally are characterized as smart aces, much given to wise cracks and other deficiencies which make pests out of plain people. Tryon is rising rapidly, every picture in which he appears improving his position. Haines is slipping. Perhaps this fact has not become apparent at the box-office yet, but if not, it soon will be. I do not base my statement on the records the Haines pictures are making. It is based on common sense. Every time Bill appears in a picture he plays an objectionable ass, a characterization that makes his films unpleasant. You can not derive the full measure of enjoyment from a picture in which you are hoping that someone will sock the hero on the jaw. People simply will not go on buying such pictures, consequently the end of Bill Haines is in sight unless Metro has sense enough to give him pleasant characterizations before he loses all his friends. In the case of Tryon we have a young man whose popularity is increasing because he has a personality that makes you like him even when he is doing the things that annoy you when Haines does them. And Tryon does not carry his antics to the point of downright rudeness, as Haines always is made to do. In his latest picture, not yet released—Hot Heels, it is called—Tryon uses exactly the same tactics to impress Patsy Ruth Miller as Haines uses in West Point to impress Joan Crawford, and while we can understand how Glenn can win the favor of Pat, we can not believe for a moment that a nice girl like Joan could be attracted to such a low down cad as Bill is made to play. Hot Heels is a delightful little comedy in spite of the fact that it contains perhaps the worst set of titles that I ever read. "When the sun comes up in Squeedunk it is morning," is a sample of the exquisite humor the writer of the titles displays. But as I saw the picture in preview the titles it contained undoubtedly will be replaced by more fitting ones before the film is released. William Craft directed the picture capably and it contains excellent performances by Lloyd Whitlock and others, but its greatest charm is the excellent acting of Patsy Ruth and Tryon. The more I see of Pat the more impressed am I with the fact that she is an excellent little trouper. Glenn is a natural clown. In two scenes he holds the screen for a long time. I can't remember now what he did when he was by himself in these scenes, but I remember that he kept me laughing, which, after all, is as much as we ask of a comedian. But we haven't many comedians who can do nothing for several hundred feet of film and get away with it. Patsy Ruth and Tryon stage a dance that is done very cleverly. They do it themselves, no doubles being used in the long shots. The dance is supposed to enthrall the hotel guests who witness it, and the scene is convincing because the person viewing the picture can understand readily that the dance would enthuse all those who saw it. Nearly all such scenes fall down in pictures because the star's action,
which is supposed to impress someone in the picture, does not impress those viewing the picture. Anything that does not impress a person viewing a picture could not very well impress a person in a picture, elemental facts that picture people seem to overlook. Any exhibitor who gets Hot Heels has nothing to worry about.

* * *

Quite a Delightful Little College Story

J ust when we had a right to believe that college pictures had run their course and that we would have to look to other themes to amuse us, along comes Universal with the best one of the lot. The Plastic Age, a title that means something, was done over for the screen as The Cream of the Earth, a title which means nothing, and a mighty fine little picture is the result. Melville Brown made the adaptation and did the directing. He is a good box-office director, and when he outgrows a reverence for screen traditions—which means only the application of some thought to each scene as it comes up—he may give us something worth while. The only things in Cream of the Earth to complain about are little things which in no way lessen the entertainment value of the picture, but they are quite big enough to draw attention to some loose spots in the direction. A popular girl at a dance has four young fellows dancing attendance on her. While she converses with them they stand in a line behind her and she tosses her words over her shoulder. Brown apparently is unaware that the old idea of having characters face the camera, even if such grouping raises the question of the director's sanity, is not being adhered to this season by our best people. When a group of men exchange gay remarks with a girl in a ballroom she does not stand with her back to it. Camera-consciousness in a director is responsible for many ruined scenes. In one place in this picture Buddy Rogers discovers that his girl has turned him down. He registers his great grief by staggering across a hotel lobby to the street, his head down, shoulders slumped, and with his overcoat dragging on the floor. Utterly absurd. The kind of young American he was presented as being would have taken the blow standing up in as far as any physical reaction would reveal his feelings, but his face might betray how hard he was hit. I can't imagine any well dressed young man getting into such a jam that he would drag his overcoat across a sidewalk. Instinct keeps one from doing a thing like that. When I record that the lighting of the interiors in Cream of the Earth also showed a total lack of applied imagination, I have enumerated all the faults of the picture, and I repeat that it is mighty good entertainment. Every scene is laid in the college, and Brown has preserved admirably the college atmosphere. One of the things I like about the picture is the lack of a villain who generally is present even in college pictures, thereby disturbing the spirit of them by introducing something unpleasant. Everyone loves everyone else in this little picture, the theme of which appears to be the use and abuse of necking, Marian Nixon being the principal neckee, while Charles Rogers comes from nowhere and gradually reveals himself as the most successful necker in the college, the evidence of his success being the fact that he captures such an altogether delightful girl as Marian. I am not an authority on either the technic or the ethics of necking, but I get the impression that this picture treats the question with authority. This Marian Nixon person is a young woman worth watching. She has the kind of screen personality that will keep her popularity constantly on the upgrade. In Cream of the Earth she gives a delightful performance. Buddy Rogers is quite acceptable as a college boy, and Hayden Stevenson, Hugh Trevor and Robert Seiter carry their parts well. Tom Reed wrote some clever titles and they earned many of the laughs with which the large audience greeted the preview of the picture. The only thing about it that did not preserve the college atmosphere was the punctuation of the titles. The system adhered to was the extremely lowbrow one that Universal not yet has grown beyond. I can not understand why Carl Laemmle persists so painstakingly in creating the impression that he does not himself understand the use of English, and has not sense enough to employ someone who does.

* * *

Better With Tin Pans Than He Is With People

W hen Dudley Murphy gathered some tin pans, wheels, tools, and drums and made them play parts in his two-reel Ballet Mechanique, he did quite enough to make himself interesting. There is no place in the screen entertainment world for pictures as odd as Murphy's two-reeler, but can the mind that conceived it become practical and turn out something close enough to the earth to be a commercial success? That is the most
interesting thing in connection with the queer geniuses who bob up every now and then. F. B. O. gave Murphy a feature picture to direct, Alex the Great. Murphy also adapted the story, in his dual capacity, therefore, being entitled to all the praise that can be bestowed on any feature of the production. Unfortunately there is no feature of it that I can praise. Murphy handles his people as he did his tin pans, and makes them act as if they had the same mentalities as the wheels and tools. His initial difficulty was that he had no story, whether the fault of the original selection or of his adaptation I do not know. As it reaches the screen it contains the fundamental error of having a sweet, refined and cultured city girl fall in love with a most objectionable, wisecracking boob from the country. Metro commits the same mistake with Bill Haines. We have love interest in all our pictures, and one would think that screen authors would be able by this time to write their love sequences convincingly. If Metro intends to continue to present Haines as the most obnoxious ass on the screen it should cast opposite him a wisecracking, gum-chewing dumbbell. This not only would provide Bill with the only kind of girl who could fall in love with him, but it would provide an opening in his pictures for another comedy characterization. In Alex the Great Murphy presumed to make the girl love the boy because it is so written in the script, and not because that kind of girl would love that kind of boy. Another fault that the young director commits is in his use of close-ups. It is worth commenting on because we see the same thing in so many pictures. Murphy has four people at a table in a restaurant. Albert Conti, one of them, behaves in a manner that would startle the others if they saw him, and they could not avoid seeing him. As for story reasons they must not be aware of Conti’s behavior, Murphy shows him in a succession of close-ups, apparently on the theory that as we can see no other character in the scenes with Conti, no other characters can see what he is doing. It is a brand of infantile direction, by no means rare. Directors should remember that when one character in a group is picked out for a close-up he must do nothing in the individual shot that he would not do if he were shown always as one of the group. A common use of this ostrich-like close-up is to show one character making a violent grimace at another, and when we return to the whole group there is no evidence to the effect that the grimace registered with anyone but the one it was aimed at, although all the others in the group must have seen it. When one character is shown in a close-up it does not remove from the mind of the audience the consciousness of the proximity of the other characters who have been registered in a medium or long shot. Another fault which Alex the Great commits, and which you find in many pictures, is an aggravation of this close-up one—the fault of having a character make an ass of himself without attracting the attention of a person two feet away from him. Murphy’s adaptation and direction seem to be based on the theory that if it’s in the script, it’s all right. A good thing to remember is that authors and directors can not at will make people deaf, dumb and blind. The screen should present only real people, and real people can see things that are not more than two feet away.

* * *

A SCREEN story told entirely by hands is an interesting novelty which I saw in a projection-room recently. It was produced in Germany by Stella F. Simon, an American woman residing over there, but who was in

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WELFORD BEATON remarked to
ALEXANDER MARKY
before his departure for the far South Seas, where he is now directing and supervising one of his original screen stories for Universal:
“It should be easy to make a good motion picture.”
Marky’s answer was:
“It should be easier to make a good picture than a bad one”—
and his enterprise, somewhere in the Pacific, is an effort to prove his contention.
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EDWARD EVERETT HORTON
Now Playing in
“A Single Man” with
MAUDE FULTON
at VINE STREET THEATRE
Hollywood at the time I saw the picture. Originally there were four reels of it, but Alfred Hustwick has compressed them into one which opens with this foreword from which you may glean an idea of the nature of the picture: "Nothing is more eloquent than the human hand. In its rhythmic movements may be read the whole story of mankind, grooping from chaos towards perfection." While my chief interest in the screen lies in its development as an art, I refuse to follow it when it becomes too artistic to be commercially profitable. Mrs. Simon's conception is an extraordinary one, and she has expressed it with thoroughness, but she has given us a picture that few of us can understand and which can not interest audiences. If Mrs. Simon made it merely to satisfy her own yearning and to entertain those who can appreciate such artistic expression, it was a splendid thing for her to do, but if she made it in the hope that it could be sold throughout the world it was a foolish thing to do. But I would not discourage such pictures. They have a definite mission. This one, for instance, will serve to show the value of paying attention to hands on the screen. When we see them, and nothing more, we notice for the first time how exceedingly expressive and eloquent hands are. The short film is called Life and Love. If the opportunity presents itself, by all means see it.

F. O. is doing right by the boys of the world, and, incidentally, is making a wad of money out of it, which all producers must do when they do right. I discovered this evidence of the F. O. Ovian wisdom only the other day. It has a boy cowboy. It has had him for some time, but I did not know it. Buzz Barton is the young gentleman's name, and he has begun to grow old, already having attained his fourteenth birthday. He is a freckled-face kid whose grin makes you think that you would like him. And he is a superb little rider. His grin and his riding equip him to be a Western star and put him on an equal footing with the fully grown members of that select band. I have seen only one of Buzz's pictures, and was astonished to find in it nothing that a boy would not do. He neither carries nor fires a gun, which is more F. O. Ovian wisdom, for it would not do to glorify shooting in the minds of the youngsters all over the world who will look upon Buzz as their own hero. The Bantam Cowboy was directed by Louis King. It sticks closely to the Western formula. It has its sheriff and its outlaws, and perfectly ridiculous characters doing perfectly ridiculous things, but it is none the less a clean little picture that will please those whom it is designed to please, and will do no one any harm. As a Saturday afternoon feature it, and no doubt also the others of the series, should be valuable to any exhibitor.

RECENTLY I saw one of the most remarkable films that ever came my way. It is called The Tree of Life, and in the five reels that constitute it J. H. Tollhurst tells the whole story of creation. He starts with the original swamp and ends with man. If you wish to know how life started on our globe, how it developed, how it started with something lower than an insect and followed one triumphant step with another until finally it produced a motion picture supervisor, don't undertake a course of reading. See the Tollhurst picture and you can gain a

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EDWARD SLOMAN
WISHES TO THANK EVERYONE FOR THE
NICE THINGS SAID ABOUT
FOREIGN LEGION
AND
WE AMERICANS
better idea of evolution in one hour than you could in one year's reading. The Tree of Life is the first film that I have seen that was made purely for conveying a scientific message of educational value. It opened my eyes to the immense influence the screen some day must have on teaching methods. Here is a subject that would be as dry as dust to read about, yet Tollihurst makes it a fascinating recital on the screen, and—it is important—he tells it in a way that makes you remember it, for you have the eye to help the brain to the remembering. The picture does not preach, but it tells the story of evolution in a way that will confound those old-fashioned, slow-thinking people who claim that man is of divine origin. From a purely pictorial sense it is entertaining, and I have no hesitation in recommending it to the exhibitors who read The Spectator.

THE dominant note of screen art is vulgarity, the natural consequence of the fact that pictures are dominated by vulgar people. Good taste is almost an unknown quality, as we have not more than a half dozen directors who have the slightest idea what it is. The fact that audiences are made up largely of people who have no idea what it is either does not lessen its desirability as screen material, for good taste is something that one can feel instinctively, even if he can not identify it. Showing kisses in close-ups is one of the most vulgar things that the screen does. It is not good technic. It emphasizes the manner of an embrace when the scene gets all its value from the fact of the embrace. The close-ups of clinging lips have become so common that they can present no longer an impression of passion. A really good director, one who had good taste and a thorough comprehension of the spirit and significance of a kiss, never would show one in a close-up. It should be shown only in a deep medium or a long shot, to preserve that suggestion of privacy that gives point to it. Even in the longest shot we can see the sweethearts embracing one another, and that is all we need see. A close-up robs a kiss of all its tenderness. The next time a director starts to shoot one he should pause to reflect that he is doing something vulgar.

THE other day I sat beside a director while he shot a scene showing a woman making her exit through a door, and a moment after, a man entering the room through the same door. When "camera" was called the man misjudged the time and arrived at the doorway too soon. He all but bumped into the woman. They smiled at each other, he bowed, she made her exit, and he entered the room. "Cut!" said the director. "N. G. Be more careful, Mr. Blank. You spoiled that shot." As a matter of fact, nothing that my director friend rehearsed could compare for naturalness and effectiveness with the accidental encounter in the doorway, but his mind was so set on the conventional method of presenting the scene that he could see no virtue in any variation of it. One weakness of pictures is that they are too precise. No one in them ever makes a mistake. A director would think you were crazy if you suggested that he show a well trained butler dropping a fork. Yet last night at a dinner party a most efficient butler dropped two forks almost down my neck. I would not suggest that directors should stage

JULES FURTHMAN
SCENARIST

"Abie's Irish Rose"
"The Way of All Flesh"

"THE DRAGNET"
(in production, directed by Josef von Sternberg.)

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THE FILM SPECTATOR

March 31, 1928.

THE third dimension seems to be here. I recently saw a five-reel picture that contained some of the most extraordinary shots that it ever has been my good fortune to witness. They were scenes of Grand Canyon, and from the foreground to the background seemed to be many miles. It was as if the rear of the theatre had fallen out and through it we were looking at the canyon without the help of the camera. It almost was too good to be regarded without suspicion. I don't know much about the purely technical end of screen art, so can not pass judgment on the third dimension feature of the film, but if what I saw is what it seemed to be, the whole industry should be excited about it. Apparently I am the only one whom it excited, and I am hesitant about setting down fully my enthusiasm before I am quite sure whether I should be excited and enthusiastic.

ONE of the papers reports that studios are going to break up their teams, as they are finding that they do not pay. Months ago I argued that the only advantage a fixed team was to a studio was the opportunity it gave the studio to express its insanity. It is impossible to give any one thing the distinction of being the most insane that ever figured in pictures, but the conviction that the public wished to see comedy teams would come as near as any other to winning the prize. The public wants well written comedies. If two comedians fit into each of them naturally, well and good, but it does not alter the fact that comedies are what the public wants, not comedians.

PERHAPS if we could run it down we would find that the people in studios who are responsible for the punctuation of the titles are the kind of people who leave their spoons in their coffee cups.

such mistakes, but I recommend to them that they be on the lookout for them when they occur naturally. We want human beings on the screen, and human beings have been known to drop forks.

BEFORE shooting a scene that is put in a picture only to give someone a chance to act, the director should satisfy himself that the someone can act. The story of a picture I saw recently for a boy becoming an orphan through the death of his mother. The death scene was shown and the boy acted his part of it unconvincingly. He was not equal to it, and the scene harmed the picture. The full value of the sequence from a story standpoint could have been gained by omitting the death scene. The fact that the mother died could have been shown indirectly, or could have been covered in a title, either of which would have strengthened the picture by relieving the boy of a scene that was beyond his ability to enact with conviction. The same argument will not apply to all death scenes. Some are necessary because they have their places in the stories. But when the reason for a death is solely to make someone an orphan it is not necessary to show the death itself. If the cast is equal to it, it is all right, but the picture in question would have been better if the scene had been eliminated.

EVERY little while you see some poor color work on the screen. It is not the kind I have in mind when I champion the use of color. The only process that I have seen which brings out all the hues is that of Technicolor. The series of Great Moments in History that is being produced by Technicolor itself is creating the greatest enthusiasm throughout the country. These two-reelers are demonstrating to the public that color photography has been perfected to a degree that makes it inexcusable for the industry to overlook it any longer. In an early Spectator I predicted that in three years most of our important features would be shot in color. The prediction still has eighteen months to run, and I don't think that I'll be so far off. The public will demand color, as it will demand sound, and producers must take their orders from the public.

ABIE'S Irish Rose is a splendid picture. It is gripping and goes straight to the heart of anyone seeing it. After a stream of rotten Irish-Jewish pictures, it is a masterpiece. The Irish papers, which protested The Callahans and the Murphys so strongly as being an insult to their race, will hail this with joy, and it may make them even forget Hollywood and the motion pictures for giving them the other atrocity. That's asking a lot, however. Jean Hersholt, in Abie, gives the finest performance he ever has given on the screen, and anyone knows how great his work must be. His performance in this was a true work of art. His part was so cleverly and subtly done that it was a masterpiece. Next to Hersholt, the credit for the success of Abie's Irish Rose, is the director's, Victor Fleming. He is very good, and his direction of the sentimental scenes discloses a remarkable depth of feeling. However, his work sticks to hide-bound moving picture conventions a good deal. There were far too many close-ups in the picture, and in one scene the boy and girl stop and kiss each other in the middle of a busy street and nobody pays the slightest attention. In another place, Hersholt, who has dismembered his son and mourns him for dead, has the "& Son" painted off the front of his store. While the painter is working, there is a shot of Hersholt. He is standing expressing anger, not the sorrow he would have felt had he mourned his son as dead. Those are the only things I object to in Abie.

The humor is put in very adroitly, one instance being where Nancy Carroll, who gives an amazingly good performance, takes some sort of liquor during the Jewish solemnization of the wedding. It is apparently strong, and the way she puts it over is one of the cleverest bits of comedy I ever have seen. The picture was full of such touches, just as it was full, also, of beautiful, sentimental scenes. There is one place where the wedding of a blind French officer is shown. That, like the comedy scene, is one of the best bits I ever have seen. To recount all the beautiful scenes which Hersholt contributes to the picture would take far too much space.

Hersholt and Miss Carroll did not have a monopoly of the good perform-

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By Donald Beaton — The Spectator's 17-Year-Old Critic

A
THE FILM SPECTATOR

March 31, 1928

Page Nineteen

aces in Abe. Charles Rogers was very clever as usual. He has the best screen personality of any of the younger men of the screen. Bernard Gorcey and Ida Kramer as the lawyer Cohen and his wife were very good. J. Farrell McDonald did good work, as did the two men who played the rabbi and the priest.

T

HE Ladies From Hell is a fairly satisfactory picture. There is not much in it, to be sure; but there are some beautiful scenes and some good acting in it. Apparently, the audience was not very good, played by Lillian Gish, but when they got through shooting it they found that there wasn't enough of Annie to justify its name. Norman Kerry had a part fully as big as hers. There was a good deal of good old-time slam-bang fighting in the Ladies From Hell, which always is good on the screen no matter how high-brow the audience is. Everybody gets a kick out of a good fight. John Robertson did a good job of his direction. He handled his characters as well as his camera work was good, too. There is something funny about the title of the picture. I have understood always that the expression "Ladies From Hell" originated from some surprised German soldier as he was being gently but firmly disbowed by a high-ranking officer in the War. The story of this picture took place some two-hundred years before the war, and yet it gave the impression, in the opening titles, that they were called that then. However, be that as it may, this is the first time I have seen Gish and Miss Gish. As it is the first I have seen her in when she has not been directed by D. W. Griffith, I suppose that is to be expected. In this she didn't claw at her teeth whenever she wanted to express great emotion. She put it in dismally by a high

W

e came in late to The Latest From Paris, but after I had seen a little of the picture it turned out that that was a blessing. I don't know how I could have stood it all, if the rest was as bad as the part we saw. When we got in, Norma Shearer and Ralph Forbes were wandering around in a good, healthy snowstorm, wearing neither clothing nor coats. To expect anyone to take anything they did seriously from then on was impossible. Heroes and heroines can't be made out of a couple of hopeless nit-wits. After wandering around for awhile, they had a quarrel about something so silly I can't remember what it was; and she dashed into the hotel and upstairs to her room. The minute she did that, all the guests in the lobby got up and stood in a row to watch what was going to happen next. When Forbes came in, they were all standing there staring at him. That is a thing that is so likely to happen in a hotel. To tell all the silly things about The Latest From Paris, however, would be simply a synopsis of the story, so there is no use going on with them.

Robert Leonard is charged with the direction of this picture. I used to think he was a good director, but after The Demi Bride and The Latest From Paris, I certainly don't think so any more.

E

XCEPT for a set of terrible titles and the general appearance of having been put together as it went along, Hot Heels, a Universal picture directed by William Craft and starring Glenn Tryon and Patsy Ruth Miller, is pretty good. The picture would follow the story for a while, and then all hands would knock off and be funny for a while. These humorous interludes, which usually had little or nothing to do with the story, were the funniest parts of the picture.

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S

ALLIE In Our Alley has a story that is so old that it is decrepit, and as the same story has been done before and more cleverly, the picture hasn't got a tremendous amount of merit. It is the same old story of a member of some rich family offending the traditions and going to live with a poor but honest mate. Eventu-

Tryon and Patsy are natural comedians, and as a result, their antics were very funny. With a clever set of titles the picture would have been very amusing; but the titles were so poor that they detracted rather than added anything to the picture. Hot Heels opened up very amusing burlesque of a regular old-time melodrama, replete with Little Nells, Jack Dalton (The Villain), sturdy sheriffs, and old parents and homesteads.

Universal is gradually getting saner in its Tryon stories, and though they are entertaining to give us eventually some crackerjack comedies. Tryon and Patsy Ruth Miller are a very good team.

A

FTER all the epidemics of college pictures, it remains to Mol Brown and Universal to give us the best of the lot. Brown adapted his story from The Plastic Age, a book. Some time ago there was a picture made called The Plastic Age. The only resemblance it bore to the book was the title and the nature of the characters. Brown who did the adaptation in addition to the direction, has followed the book more closely. He couldn't follow it too closely, as there were parts in it which never would get past the censors, but he did a very good job. There was nothing objectionable in the picture, however. Brown calls his picture Dream of the Earth, and it is well worth seeking. Although I don't know much about college, this picture gives the impression of being more true to real life than anything produced yet. There is nothing overdrawn in it at all. There is no sneering villain who blows up the college and blames it on the hero. The final race which decides the track meet is won by the hero, but one isn't sure all the time that he is going to win it. There is more of an element of uncertainty in it than is usual. Buddy Rogers and Marian Nixon do a love scene in an automobile that is beautifully and naturally done. It is one of the best love scenes I have seen for some time. However, they drive on until they are directly in front of the big hotel where Marian is staying, and continue it. That is silly, because even nowadays a couple won't sit in a crowded street and neck.

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As I saw Cream of the Earth at a preview, I suppose that there is still some to be cut out of it. There were spots where it dragged a little, but this was being given larger parts. When it is tightened up it will be an even better picture.

Buddy Rogers and Marian Nixon, in the leading roles, gave very good performances. Stanley Taylor, as Buddy's friend, gave a performance which was rather too big for his manner of speaking. When it is tightened up it will be an even better picture.

However, when the theme about the conquest of the tropics was complete, the picture made one of its surprising jumps and completed the story of the novel. As a result, the interest was lost. There were places where it dragged and became too heavy. John Farrow's titles were good, but I'd like to take exception to the first two. They are long and flowery, and all they convey is that the story is laid in a tropical oil field. That could have been said in one short one. George Bancroft is starred in The Showdown and gives a very excellent performance. However, Evelyn Brent gives him a battle for his laurels. Her work, as usual, is splendid. Leslie Fenton, Fred Kohler, and Helene Lynch also were very good.

PICTORIALLY speaking, The Shepherd of the Hills was a fine picture. There was little else in it, and as a motion picture it was not so good. There were spots which dragged a lot, and there were also things in it that had little or nothing to do with the story. The villain in the piece was so obvious that he never could have got away with a thing. He did practically all his plotting directly in front of all the villagers. The villagers were ready enough to turn against the shepherd, whom they loved and respected, when he did anything against them, yet they never thought that the villain might have been their oppressor. However, there are scenes in The Shepherd of the Hills which are perfect masterpieces of beauty. The sheep offer wonderful opportunities for beautiful shots, and Al Rogell makes the most of them. His direction was good throughout the picture, although he did have some artificial groupings of his characters. He kept them all in character very well, and that is where The Shepherd of the Hills had most of its merit as a motion picture. It was a character study all through, and was good as such.

There were some good performances in The Shepherd. Alec Francis, in the title role, is very good and makes a somewhat difficult character human. Maurice Marsac is one of our cleverest child-actors. John Boles was good, and so was the rest of the cast.

MAKING sequels to famous pictures is a poor business at best, and when the sequel is a mediocore picture like Beau Sabreur, it is a very bad idea. Making a poor sequel is just a cheap attempt at cashing in on the reputation of the good picture. There were many vague and unexplained things in Beau Sabreur which left one in some slight doubt as to what it was all about. Apparently it was made to be a long picture, and then they discovered that there wasn't enough in it to warrant its length, so they cut it down. As it is, it is a jumble of a lot of different scenes which detract from the general idea of the story, and that was certainly slight enough. Gary Cooper, who looks about as French as One-Eyed Connolly, stays out after hours with a girl. His uncle immediately tells him he has disgraced the family. The two of them go through a scene which wouldn't have been good even if it had had a sensible reason. From that scene, one got the impression that 'staying out after hours was a heinous crime. At the time of this interview, Cooper was a private, yet later he blossomed forth as an officer with a lot of decorations, So did his three friends. How he got his sudden promotion and all his decorations was never explained. There were the usual three comrades, but their friendship was so amiable that it wasn't in the least convincing. Incidentally, this friendship was the cause of one of the world's worst titles. Cooper and his two friends and they all line up in front of the camera, and Cooper says: "Well, old comrades, we have gone..."
through many adventures together, and now we will go through another one.

That was the substance of it, although it was probably not punctuated as well as that. After that title, I expected a large sign to be lowered behind them, bearing the words, "The Foreign Legion Boys in the Sahara", or "Two Three Through the Great Oasis". The whole picture was just one fault after another. John Waters, the director, handled his comedy scenes well, but the rest was just blab. Splendid performances by Noah Beery, William Powell, and Evelyn Brent helped considerably.

NEXT to the invention of movies themselves, I think that of talking pictures is the greatest. Colored pictures were not quite such a radical departure, as they had been done before on still pictures. The talking motion picture, represented best now by the Movietone, is a distinct step forward in the progress of screen art. It seems inevitable now that actors will have to acquire good speaking voices in order to survive on the screen. The Movietone picks up flaps in voices with remarkable accuracy, just as the moving picture camera picks up flaps in make-up. Which reminds me, by the way, that the actors and actresses that think they can get by without any make-up are mistaken. I have seen several lately, and they look terrible. However, that has little or nothing to do with what I was saying. Movietone opens up tremendous new fields in news photography in addition to the change it will make in regular motion pictures. To not only see and hear famous men make speeches, and also to see and hear great ceremonies, will be a wonderful treat. Perhaps the pictures of Oriental religious ceremonies which news photographers seem to delight in showing on the screen will become a bit more interesting. As a rule, they bore me nearly to death.

In my review of D. W. Griffith's Drums of Love, I forgot to mention the work of little Joyce Coad as Mary Philbin's younger sister. That was a very serious oversight, as she gave a splendid performance. She is destined to go far on the screen.

AN ORIGINAL IDEA

Dear Mr. Beaton:

Allow me to point out what, in my opinion, is a weak spot in your otherwise shining armor. Being a crusader for the mass of actors, technicians, etc., you are at the same time undermining their earning capacity by waging war against Waste. Waste represents a lot of work for us all, and after all a successful picture can stand a lot of it. "The picture's the thing" and when the producers will learn, with your help, to make good pictures the value of them is not of vital importance. They will make profits anyway, meanwhile keeping a large amount of people employed.

A. SCHOLTZ.
THE FILM SPECTATOR

March 31, 1928

Murphy; directed by Dudley Murphy; photography by Virgil Miller; titles, Randolph Bartlett. The cast: Richard Skeets Galli- gher, Albert Conti, Patricia Avery, Ruth Dwyer, Charles Byer.

Bantam Cowboy—
An F. B. O. picture. Original story by Robert N. Bradbury; adaptation by Frank Howard Clark; directed by Louis King; photography by Roy Eslick; titles by Randolph Bartlett.


Something Always Happens—
Paramount-Famous-Lasky picture. Associate producer, B. P. Schul- berg; director, Frank Tuttle; story, Frank Tuttle; adaptation and screen play, Florence Ryerson and Raymond Cannon; cameraman, J. Roy Hunt; Editor, Louis D. Ligh- ton; supervisor, B. P. Fineman; assistant director, Russell Mathews.

The cast: Esther Ralston; Neil Hamilton, Lawrence Grant, Vera Lewis, Soojin, Roscoe Karnes, Charles Sellon, Noble Johnson, Mischa Aver, James Pierce.

Serenade—

The cast: Adolph Menjou, Kath- aryn Carver, Lawrence Grant, Margaret Franklin, Lina Bas- quette.

Partners in Crime—
A Paramount-Famous-Lasky Picture. Director, Frank Strayer; as- sistant director, Ivan Phonias; screen play, Grover Jones and Gilbert Pratt; cameraman, William Marshall; editor-in-chief, B. F. Zeidman.


Sally in Our Alley—
A Columbia picture. Directed by Walter Lang; produced by Harry Cohn; photographed by Joseph Walker, A. S. C.


Shepherd of the Hills—
A First National picture. Pro- duced by Chas. R. Rogers; directed by Al Rogell; adaptation and continuity by Marion Jackson; story by Harold Bell Wright; photog- raphy by Sol Polito; film editor, Hugh Bennett; art director, Ed-

Kohler, Helene Lynch, Arnold Kent, Leslie Fenton, George Kuwa.

Beau Sabreur—
Paramount. A John Waters production. Associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; director, John Waters; author, Christopher Perceval Wren; adapted by Tom J. Geraghty; photographer, J. Roy Hunt; supervi- sion of Milton E. Hoffman; assistant director, Richard Johnston; editor-in-chief, E. Lloyd Sheldon.

The cast: Gary Cooper, Evelyn Brent, Noah Beery, William Powell, Roscoe Karns, Mitchell Lewis, Arnold Kent, Raoul Paoli, Joan Standing, Frank Reicher, Oscar Smith.

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We discuss briefly the final fadeout

THE CROWD
THE BIG CITY
TRAGEDY OF YOUTH

ROSE MARIE
LAST WALTZ
DRESSED TO KILL
Special Contributor Writes on "New Faces" for The Spectator

By Jimmy Starr
("Cinematters" of the L. A. Record)

'Sexless' Personalities Fail to Click

"NEW FACES." That's been the cry in the movie studios for the last two years. How many have been chosen, how few have "clicked." Yet we all know that a complete revolution must be accomplished, a new era of the industry must be launched before the permanent basis of the motion picture will have been laid.

"New Faces." We've got to have 'em. And that means the passing of every star who scintillated more than five years ago. How difficult it is for even the Gloria Swansons, the Mary Pickfords (forgive the plural), the Milton Sills-es, the Pola Negris to retain their respective holds on the public. About them is the murky atmosphere of the passé. One slip, in the form of a none-too-good vehicle and the die is cast. But producers must be warned to analyse more closely the popular requirements in "new faces." That clever operator in casting, George Frank, of the Edward Small office, gave me an interesting slant 'tother day. "The demand is for the sophisticated," he says. "The girls and boys who have failed to hit are those who lack real appeal. They have the mask of beauty, of youth, of innocence—but nothing behind it. There has never been a personality lacking sex-appeal who ever reached the heights with the exceptions of "America's Sweetheart," who, after all, is in a sense a legendary figure, the world's beautiful cinematic myth, and Lillian Gish." Consider, indeed, the cleverness of Winfield R. Sheehan of Fox in teaming up Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell; undoubtedly an appreciation of Miss Gaynor's limitations despite her great talent. Lupe Velez is the outstanding example of the type of starlet who is bound to outstrip the crowd of aspirants. Why? She has fire. An ardent, pulsating, propulsive force that combines the qualities of youth, feminine understanding, an element of sophistication, beauty-none-too-conscious-of-itself and an instinctive histrionic flare. Lupe is the ideal brunette for our new movie generation.

Hale Predicted Comedy Sensation

SOME months ago I pointed out Alan Hale as the coming comedy sensation. I based my prediction on no more evidence than a bit in a picture called Vanity, with Leatrice Joy. Not much of a meal for a comic. But Hale, I realized, had the almost-Rabelaisian expressiveness of universal joy which is Wallace Beery's, plus a sensitiveness and finesse that is to be found in Chaplin and Ray Griffith and the ability to "dumb-pan" a la Keaton. He can wear clothes, too, so he knows no limitations in his field. When Sky scraper is projected here you will appreciate what Welford Beaton wrote of Hale in connection with this William-Boyd-Alan Hale vehicle. Just as I hailed Hale I have exclaimed over the possibilities of Marian Douglas, that young miss who won Harry Carr's editorial and professional interest as the girl who, through numerology found a new name and a new interest in her work. She was Eva Gregory, a talented, lovely blonde who, unlike most brightly-tressed actresses, has a great deal of expressiveness, both in appearance and in the histrionic sense. It is the function of the critics to study the trends in film production and popular taste. Too often they do not follow the same lines—and the producer is the sole loser.

** Marianne Douglas Has Emotional Power

SINCE little Miss Douglas became the "girl-with-the-thirteen-letter-name" she has played leads or feature roles in five productions—and this within a space of four months. I "caught" her in The Shepherd of the Hills. She was exquisite. Then she did a couple of Ken Maynard leads. Unfortunately these pictures, while eminently successful financially and popularly, do not enjoy first runs in Los Angeles and many a future has been predicated upon a local success. Leo Meehan used her in his The Devil's Trade Mark, not yet released. I understand Meehan made this picture without a single scene rehearsal, yet Leon D'Usseau, the brilliant chap who is supervisory head and assistant to Bill LeBaron at BFO, sees a great future for the youngster (she is not yet 20). Now she is at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Maybe they will see potential stardom for Marian. But what have they done with Marceline Day? True, too, MGM took three years to develop Joan Crawford to stellar eminence and attempts with other bets have been none too auspiciously received. **

Combination Needed To Insure Stardom

A COMBINATION of the girl, the role, the production, the director, the release and the place-of-showing must be brought about under most happy auspices to give the real opportunity to the aspirant for high honors. Few producers have exercised such care and intelligence in their handling of precious personalities as has B. P. Schulberg with Clara Bow. And you must bear in mind that Schulberg brought Bow to the fore at a time when he was scarcely in a position to give her the "breaks" that the big organizations can afford their youngsters. I refer to Clara's career with Schulberg when the latter was an "independent." Watch this Douglas girl, however. She has emotional power as an actress, almost flawless features and complexion—and SEX! I compliment Larry Weingarten and Chet Withey at MGM for "seeing" Miss Douglas and trust the girl will triumphantly bear out my high predictions for her future.

[Advt.
Our Czar Seems to Have Got Himself Into a Mess

LAST summer The Spectator stated that the only difference between Will Hays and a cheap politician is that Hays is not cheap. He is a small-town man with a city income, a man who thinks in cents and sells his thoughts for dollars. His flair for performing tricks has taken him out of his small town, and he has gained a national reputation, but never has developed an ability to apply other than small-town methods to problems that have arisen in the larger field in which he so strangely has found himself. Long before I started The Spectator I viewed the appointment of Hays as the virtual head of pictures as an act of folly on the part of the producers, and frequently in The Spectator I have made references to him consistent with that view. In the first place, pictures should not be run in a manner that makes necessary the employment of an apologist for them; but given the fact that they are, and that an apologist becomes necessary, why pick on one whose only claim to distinction was that he was a cabinet officer during the most corrupt administration that Washington has known in the last century? One other office Will Hays held, that of chairman of the National Republican Committee. Recently he has been called upon to explain to a Senate committee some things he did as chairman. I will give you a pen picture of the manner in which he proved equal to the occasion. I quote from Outlook of March fourteen: "Prominent and important personage that he is, Hays became a pitiful figure before the grilling was over. He gripped the chair arm till his knuckles turned white. He bit his lips till the blood ran, till his hankercchief was all but saturated." There you have an ennobling picture of the "czar of the movies"! Hays' perturbation was caused by the fact that when he was under oath four years ago he did not tell all the truth that two months ago he was forced to tell. On the first occasion he committed moral perjury, which is ethically as great a crime as committing legal perjury. Today he stands before the country as a thoroughly discredited man, but he still is "czar of the movies"! I have formed my estimate of Will Hays solely from listening to him talk and from reading his speeches, methods that at all times were open to those who employ him. I have listened to and read scores of Hays' speeches, but not one of them revealed any mental depth. He brings trickery even into public speaking, using words to deceive people into the belief that he can think. But this shallow, petty Presbyterian is presented to the world as the model from which pictures pattern their respectability. He it is who says that Rain is not chaste enough for an independent to make into a picture, but is chaste enough for Joe Schenck to make into one. He it is who struts about Hollywood as the industry makes obeisance to him, but who jumps sideways every time one of his bosses pulls a string. What are the producers going to do with him now that he brings discredit to a job that had influence only to the extent of his claim to unimpeachable respectability? The situation is a serious one and must be met promptly. Hays has his points. I do not wish to discredit him entirely. He has some notable achievements to his credit, the most notable being that of selling his fifteen-hundred-dollar-a-year mind to the motion picture industry for one hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year.

Pictures Should Get Rid of Their Presbyterian Elder

HARRY Sinclair, the goldusher, is not in jail, nor is A. B. Fall, Secretary of the Interior in the same cabinet in which Will Hays was Postmaster-General, and until they are sent there by the law we can not classify them as criminals. But while facts are not proof until they are proven, it is upon its understanding of them that the public bases its first opinion, and this opinion condemns the Teapot Dome incident of the Harding administration and characterizes it as one of the most unsavory chapters of our political history. After Will Hays knew what a mess it was, he concealed the fact that as chairman of the National Republican Committee he handled some of the dirty money that was involved in it. He knew
that the laws of the country demanded that publicity be given to campaign contributions, and by trickery he evaded the law. When before a committee four years ago he swore to tell all the truth, and this year he confessed that he did not tell all the truth on that occasion. When he received the bonds from Sinclair he lied to his own committee by crediting the contribution of one man, whose name was too unclean to use, as several contributions from men whose names conveyed more in the way of respectability. If it had not been a moral crime to accept the contribution Hays would not have concealed the fact that he had received it. If he had been a member of the Coolidge cabinet when the facts of his connection with the scandal came to light there would have been an instant demand for his resignation. But Hays holds only one official position, that of sponsor for the respectability of the motion picture industry. He is paid an enormous salary for posing as a citizen so virtuous that he makes virtuous all that he touches. His connection with the Presbyterian church and his ability as a lobbyist were all that the industry thought it was buying from him. Now it learns that it purchased also a large and unsavory mess. And what does the industry do to meet the emergency, to show that it itself is respectable, although the man whom it paid to make a picture and the man whom it did not wish to have considered its author was? Does it ask him to resign, or at least to suspend his picture activities until the oil investigation be completed? No. It sends Hays to Europe to appear before the government of France as the accredited representative of the motion picture industry of the United States. It sends to a clean country a man who cannot leave his own except by permission of a senate committee investigating a crime with which his name is connected. The poor, dumb creatures who constitute the Hays organization can not realize that his presence in France will be regarded as an affront to those whom he went over to placate. Anyone with any knowledge of European psychology would know that no greater blunder could be committed; and anyone with any sense of the amenities of international intercourse would know that a man under a cloud in his own country could not make an efficient ambassador to another. Possibly nothing that this particularly stupid industry has done heretofore can match in stupidity the sublime folly of allowing Hays to go abroad to tell Frenchmen what a nice industry it is. Hays' usefulness to pictures has ceased. His further connection with them is impossible. And no doubt if you made that statement at a meeting of his organization its members would look at you in amazement and swell into a chorus the one word, "Why?"

Must Foreigners Always Play the Foreign Parts?

To GIVE pictures with foreign locales the proper foreign atmosphere the casts are made up largely of foreign actors. When we want a Russian army we recruit it among the Russians living in Hollywood. United Artists carried this so far that signs in the Russian language had to be posted all over the lot to keep the soldiers from wandering into private offices. The foreigners were employed to support John Barrymore in a picture with a Russian locale, and in which he plays a Russian officer. Norma Talmadge is playing a European in her present picture and the cast is made up almost entirely of Europeans. If the employment of foreigners in these two pictures be defended on the score of their foreign locales, how can the argument be squared with the fact that the stars are not foreigners? If Jack Barrymore can play a Russian officer, what is to prevent an American extra playing a Russian private? If a New York woman can play a European character, why can't a New York man do the same thing? I have no quarrel with the employment of foreigners in pictures, but I do quarrel with the reason given by American producers for their employment. There is no logic in it. Hollywood is over-populated with talent. The unemployment problem is a serious one, and its seriousness is being accentuated by the warm reception that we still continue to give to foreigners. When a foreign director is given a picture he makes places in it for as many of his countrymen as he can employ, but there are no striking examples of American directors displaying as much loyalty to their countrymen. One prominent foreign director withdrew his support from The Spectator because I advocated the exclusion of more foreign players. He maintained that I was narrow, that art knew no nationality, and that Hollywood should welcome the artists of the world. In theory I agree with him, but until all the artists here now are eating regularly I do not think we should import any more from any place. I would bar people from Ohio as cheerfully as I would people from Russia, but unfortunately we have no machinery by which we can exclude Ohioans. We have, however, in the immigration laws, a bar that can be erected against the admission of any more foreigners, and the bar should be erected. Even at the risk of losing a few more foreign readers I must confess that if I had but one job and had two applicants for it, an American and a foreigner of equal attainments, I would give it to the American. The American is here by reason of his birth, and no one asked the foreigner to come. But the presence of the foreigner in Hollywood is a fact, and when I advocate the exclusion of his countrymen not here already, I am serving his interests as much as I am the interests of the native American. We have hundreds of splendid artists who secure work but seldom, and every time a new one arrives work becomes more scarce. While it is at all scarce I believe producers should agree with the foreign director who quarreled with me, and proceed on the theory that art has no nationality, thereby dismissing from their minds the conviction that when a Russian picture is being cast there is a reason why only Russians should be employed.

Unwise to Bargain the Enthusiasm Out of Players

There can be no doubt of the need of greater economy in the production of motion pictures, but the industry can not benefit from its exercise unless it be applied intelligently. I doubt if we will have economy applied intelligently as long as those responsible for the present grotesque waste of money remain in charge of production. Extravagance has held high carnival for the past decade, and we have raised a race of executives who have grown to believe that the only production method is that of making two dollars do the work of one. Lacking the ability to see the faults of the present system, it is highly improbable that they ever will develop to the point that will enable them to see virtues in any other.
Wall Street cracked its whip last summer the first economy that suggested itself to the minds of the producers was the last that should have been resorted to: the reduction of salaries. One independent producer whom I know had the same idea. He brought to pictures a keen business mind. An adaptation of his first story was worth at least five thousand dollars to him, but there were many writers out of employment and he secured one to do the adaptation for two thousand dollars, making a saving of three thousand dollars on that one item, but getting a listless screen story, the only kind that could be written by a woman who knew her employer had based her value on her need of money. When he cast his picture he took advantage of the fact that there was little production going on and he bargained with his players until they agreed to such reductions that they were paid a little more than half their established salaries, which represents another saving. The extra work in the picture was the sort that pays seven dollars and a half and ten dollars a day. There were thousands of extras out of employment, and this producer got all he wanted for five dollars a day by the simple expedient of announcing that he would not pay more. Of course he paid without hesitation the full price for all the materials that entered into the building of his sets. Concrete and plaster and lumber are products that are handled by business men who set a price and maintain it, a method approved by my business-man producer, who knows that to succeed business must be stabilized. During production he complained to me that shooting was costing him more than it should, and when I looked at some of his rushes I agreed that he was getting listless performances. He had to use his biggest mob twice as long as the schedule called for, and even then it had no life in it when it appeared on the screen. But the sets looked fine. In all departments of the production my friend was getting exactly what he paid for. He got full bags of cement because he paid the full price, and half-performances because he paid half salaries. I do not say that any of his players "laid down". It simply was a case of all the enthusiasm having been bargained out of them before they went on the set. They started work with the conviction that the producer was cheap, and they delivered cheap goods. Yet this producer exercised the only kind of economy that yet has suggested itself to the captains of the industry. Their own wildly extravagant salaries still prevail and they have made no move in the direction of demanding scripts that in themselves would effect economies by removing one cause of extravagance: the building of sets that never are used and the shooting of scenes that do not reach the screen. To the extent that it is the worst managed business on earth can the remedy be applied with ease. Only the most elemental brains are necessary. Unfortunately, however, our producers seem to lack any sort of brains.

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They Talk Economy, But They Don’t Apply It

Possibly Robert Kane is equipped as well as any other producer to speak with authority on production economy. I do not know him, but have been familiar with his name for several years. He is one of our big producers. During the past year while economy has been discussed Kane must have given heed to what was said, and probably he contributed some of his own thoughts to the discussion. We may assume, at any rate, that he profited as much from the discussion as any other producer, and that he would apply what he learned to his future activities. Recently Kane, our average producer, made Harold Teen. In its finished form it would show on the screen not more than three hundred and twenty-five scenes. That is something that Kane would know if he knows anything whatever about pictures. With methods of reducing producing costs being a live topic of studio production, one would assume that Kane worked on the script until it contained only the number of scenes that ultimately could be shown, eliminating from it all the superfluous scenes that would eat up money that would yield no return. But Kane, our average producer, did not do this. He handed to his director a script which contained five hundred and fifty-eight scenes. This means that the executive head of the unit making Harold Teen instructed his director to shoot two hundred and thirty-five scenes that by no possibility could reach the screen. What good did all the talk of economy do Kane? None whatever. It did not teach him the elemental fact that money is wasted when spent on a set that does not reach the screen. There is the other consideration that no matter how good Harold Teen may prove to be, it could not escape being better if it were made intelligently, but I am discussing economy, not art. In all the studios Kane’s method of production still rules. Such a thing as a perfect script scarcely is known. The present executives are incapable of understanding it. And yet these executives seem to be fastened so firmly on the industry that there seems to be little prospect of a change. The ignorance and inefficiency of some of these high-salaried executives is a matter of common knowledge in Hollywood, but when one of them leaves a job in one studio he bobs up again a week later holding a similar or better job in another studio. I have been in Hollywood for six years and during that time the same bunch of executives has bounced around from one studio to another, carrying inefficiency from one job to another, and following one failure with another. While this has been going on men who would score great successes as executives have been walking the streets of Hollywood looking for jobs. The world’s belief that Hollywood does not know how to make good pictures has been created by the failure of those who make them so poorly to step aside and leave their making to those who could do it so well. Owing to the Jewish domination of the industry, it so happens that most of the wholly incompetent executives are Jews, for a Gentile must have outstanding ability before he can rise to a position of authority, while all a Jew needs is to be a relative of the boss, or to play poker with him. We are used to regarding Jews as great lovers of money, but we can not so regard those Jews who are motion picture producers. They could not squander so prodigiously anything that they love very much.

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About Spectator Medal For the Final Fade-out

A DIRECTOR who says he is interested in the medal which The Spectator is offering to the director who makes the most original or most refreshing final fade-out this year, asks me to be more explicit in suggesting the kind of fade-out that I mean. Well, let’s see. My object in offering the medal was to stimulate interest
that would get the screen away from the entirely unimaginative and vulgar final clinch. The purpose of the clinch generally is to show that the boy and girl are going to be married. Suppose we have a story in which the outcome of the love element is in doubt until the last scene. The standard method of winding up such a story is to have the boy and girl entwined in one another's arms. There are hundreds of different ways of treating it, any one of which might get the medal. I will suggest one. Open on a scenic exterior—a meadow, a shaded wood, or something else attractive. When the empty scene comes on we do not know if the girl has accepted the boy, and that is all we need know to end the story. Into the scene the two come, entering by the left foreground, their backs to the camera. Their hands are clasped and they swing their arms as they stroll along. When they are in the right position before the camera they exchange happy glances, which brings their profiles to the screen in a shot close enough to show us how happy they are. Then, with their backs always to the camera, they move diagonally across the screen and we fade-out as they are disappearing in the right background. There is nothing extraordinary in this scene, but at the same time it is not purely pictorial. Young people, or old ones, too, for that matter—are oblivious to all the rest of the world when they are exchanging their love vows. Everything else has ceased to exist and they are all that remains. Did you ever see a love scene directed in a manner that indicated that the director knew this elemental fact about love scenes? The scene I suggest has it in mind. As the young people appear on the screen with their backs to the audience the impression is created that they have forgotten the rest of the world, an impression which retains the spirit of a love scene. I do not make my boy and girl kiss in the final scene, because lovers instinctively seek secluded spots for such demonstrations of affection. They might hold hands while crossing an open field, but they would not embrace in such an exposed place. What we see of them tells us all we need know to wind up the story acceptably. They would not be holding hands and acting so joyfully if the girl had refused the boy. Directors as a class are dull and stupid. They have brought screen art to a standstill. They continue to do now what someone started doing a score of years ago. The conventional method of ending a motion picture is with a clinch, and directors would keep on using that method forever if someone did not call them names and throw stones at them for doing it. What we lack are directors with brains enough to sit down and reason out each scene for themselves. All any one of them need do to make himself a sensational success is, as each scene comes up, to discard the usual and conventional method of shooting it. He automatically would give us a most refreshing picture. And he might win both The Spectator medals, one for a love scene and one for a fade-out.

**Average Man Rather Poor Screen Material**

**E**ven if The Crowd were not as good as it is, Metro would deserve a lot of credit for having made it. It is a peculiar organization. In rapid succession it turns out pictures that give little evidence of the expenditure of any thought on them, and then it comes along with something like The Crowd that is so full of thought that it will not be a box-office success, in spite of the fact that it is one of the finest and most worthy motion pictures ever made. King Vidor's conception was an extraordinary one and he has put it on paper with a degree of faithfulness and conviction that could be attained only by a master craftsman. When he reached into the crowd his hand fell on the shoulder of one of its standard parts, and out of that part he made a motion picture. His hero is one of the men upon whom nature relieves to keep intact the integrity of its crowds, a man without either virtue or vices, and lacking the mental equipment to lift himself by his thoughts above the level of the others whose elbows always were touching his. With this thought, and with his average man, Vidor proceeds to write an essay and spread it on the screen. In so doing he presents us with two performances of extraordinary merit, those of Eleanor Boardman and James Murray. The acting of these two young people is enough in itself to make a picture notable purely as a picture, but a dozen such performances in such a picture couldn't make it notable as screen entertainment. It has the fundamental weakness of attempting to interest us in something inherently uninteresting. We are not interested in average things, whether animate or inanimate. We are interested in anything in the degree that it is above or below the average. We are interested in Lindbergh because he is a fine, brave boy who soars above the average; we are interested in Hickman because he is a beast so far below the average that he attracts our attention. We are not interested in young Johnny Sims, one of several hundred clerks in an insurance company's office. He is one of hundreds in the same office and of untold millions throughout the world, and there is nothing about him to attract our attention. Vidor presumed that we would become interested in Johnny when he was pointed out to us, but pointing at him does not make him more interesting. I am aware that great plays and great books have been written about average people, but in them the average people did things or thought thoughts that we would not expect from average people, proving, after all, that they were not true to the average. The Crowd gets all its merit from the fact that it deals with people who do not rise above or fall below the mean average. In short, it tries to interest us in the most uninteresting thing on earth: an average product. The most successful picture always will be the one which deals with the most interesting subject in the most interesting way. It can not be a picture that possesses only one of these superlatives. There are some things so uninteresting that they can not be made interesting by any kind of treatment. The average man is one of them.

**“The Crowd” a Picture That Dampens Enthusiasm**

**B**ut The Crowd was a fine thing for Metro to do. I am afraid, however, that the poor box-office record that it is going to make will have a blighting effect on the organization's output. In the future when a director wishes to get Mayer's permission to make a picture with a thought in it, The Crowd will be trotted out as proof that the public does not wish to think. The Vidor picture would not have been made if the Metro executives understood the business that they are in. If they knew anything about screen fundamentals they would have seen that the picture
could not be successful. While we go to the film houses primarily for entertainment, we go to them also for inspiration. The reason the public enjoys a picture whose logical ending is happy, more than it does one which, to be logical, must have an unhappy ending, is the inspiration it derives from the former. Johnny Sims and his friends are paying over ninety per cent. of what the world pays to see motion pictures. The screen has become practically their only source of inspiration. The discouraged stenographer is inspired by the fact that the stenographer in the picture marries the boss, and the traveling salesman is given fresh hope when he sees Dick Dix or Bill Haines, playing a salesman, cop the millionaire's daughter in the final reel. Johnny Sims sees that there is a future for him when the picture shows the clerk becoming vice-president and marrying the president's daughter. But what does anyone get from The Crowd? The comfortable citizen who drove to the theatre in a car of his own and who can sleep at night without worrying about the grocery bill, sees paraded before him on the screen every heartache he and his wife endured during the years of their upward struggle. Out of locked closets come spectres of the past that the screen breathes life into and makes real again. And what do the friends of Johnny Sims get out of it—the young people who constitute the crowd? The only thing that keeps their heads up and eyes front is the thought that some day they will rise above the multitude, as the heroes in motion pictures always do. But this picture has no such inspiration. With extraordinary vigor and conviction it plants the utter futility of endeavoring to battle one's way to success. It shows that the crowd is too powerful to be combatted, and it breathes hopelessness and despair. All these drawbacks are accentuated by the excellence of the production from a motion picture angle. I do not think a finer example of intelligent direction ever reached the screen. As an example of cinematic art The Crowd is a success, but as a medium of screen entertainment it will be a failure. It is too depressing, and carries realism just a little farther than the public will prove willing to follow. But it should not discourage further adventures into realism, which should be applied to themes that strike a more optimistic note. Metro is to be commended for discarding the superlatively happy ending that was tacked onto The Crowd at one stage of its evolution. It ends now just as it should.

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Shooting Different Endings
Confession of Studio Stupidity

At the time of one of its previews The Crowd had a wildly ridiculous ending tacked on to it, as I pointed out at the time. I suppose it cost some thousands of dollars to shoot. It destroyed in half a reel what King Vidor so powerfully built up in seven. The impossibility of it was so obvious that finally even the Metro executives saw it. They recalled the prints that had gone out, and replaced them with the version that was shown in Los Angeles. It is not an unusual thing for a studio to make two or more endings of a picture, and to give each one a chance to make good at a preview. It is a sensible practice that should be adopted by other arts. Take architecture. At present when an architect is planning a twelve-story building he builds from the basement up, and designs a roof that is in keeping with the rest of the structure. That is, he thinks it will look well. Anyway, the contractors go ahead and finish off the building with the roof that the architect deemed the most logical for it. Picture people would have used more intelligence in finishing the building. How could the architect know that Iowa tourists would like the roof he designed? Logical? My dear boy, you and I know that the architect has the right idea, the artistic idea, but we are not erecting buildings for you and me. We must think of our public, dear fellow. And to please the public several roofs would be built, one after the other, and each given a turn on the top of the building until the final choice was made. My illustration is not an extravagant one. Despite the fact that alternative endings have been shot for some of our best pictures, I maintain that such a practice is an artistic idiocy and an economic folly. There is but one ending that any story can have; that dictated by logic. There may be discussion during the story-building stages of what ending logic would dictate. Opinions would differ, but before shooting begins such differences should be composed and the picture given the ending that the majority mind decided was the logical one. To shoot two or more endings is a childish practice, a sad confession by the production staff that it does not understand the story it is putting on the screen. The practice is an off-shoot of executive indifference to waste. Dollars are the cheapest things to be found on any of the big lots. On the payrolls are men who could recognize the proper ending for a given story, but in the executive offices are men who are afraid of themselves and who squander scores of thousands of dollars each year while trying to make up their minds, with which they are furnished quite scantily. When exhibitors fail to be impressed by the cost of a picture a move may be made to reduce the cost. Metro will sell The Crowd to exhibitors on the strength of the large sum it took to make it, which puts a premium on extravagance. Exhibitors reason that if it took that much money it must be good, and buy it on that theory. They should remember that the cost figure presented to them by the salesman consists of three parts: the amount that what reaches the screen really cost; the amount wasted, and the amount that the liar who sells the picture throws in for good measure.

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"Dressed to Kill" Is Excellent Entertainment

Perhaps I should have excused the Fox organization when I charged the whole industry in the last Spectator with slighting its principal product, the program picture. If we are to accept Dressed to Kill as a sample of what it intends to do in the way of comparatively cheap pictures, we must agree that the studio's production staff realizes the importance of not applying to the big specials all the constructive brains in the organization. I have said many times in The Spectator that there is no excuse for any picture being hopelessly poor, that the one with the poorest story at least could be entertaining if directed, acted, and edited with ordinary intelligence. Dressed to Kill is just a crook drama that very easily could have been presented as a lurid, over-acted and unbelievable nightmare of the underworld. But it wasn't. By his direction Irving Cummings has raised it to the level of intelligent and gripping screen drama. It is a director's
picture, for it is not the story, but the manner of telling it, that raises it above the level of scores of pictures that cost twice as much to make. It is full of clever directorial touches. Mary Astor and Edmund Lowe sit side by side on a couch and have a long conversation that is necessary to the story. It is a sort of scene that is hard to handle, for the camera cannot be kept for a couple of hundred feet on two people talking. Cummings gets away with it by shooting the pair from different angles, but never separating them into individual close-ups, which is the standard, unimaginative method of shooting such a scene. Cummings shows equal intelligence in using lights to enhance his drama. There is nothing spooky about his lights and shadows, but he invests each scene with a rich pictorial quality that adds strength to the action depicted in it. In each scene shadows indicate the source of origin of the light. Each scene in every production would have the same thing in it if we had enough picture brains to go round. There is in Dressed to Kill another feature that I never saw before. Lowe, as the leader of a gang of crooks, plans the robbery of a fur store. We are told exactly what his plans are and then we sit in a tense attitude to see if they are carried out. Lowe tells one of his fellow crooks to be walking past the store, reading a newspaper; another to engage the doorman in conversation, and so on. When the robbery sequence opens the audience becomes interested intensely in the working out of the plans. It knows that a man is going to pass the store as he is reading the paper, and that another is going to open a conversation with the doorman, consequently these things mean something to it when they happen, and enables it to take a much more intelligent interest in the robbery. A newspaper rule is that first you must tell the readers what they know already, then you can proceed to give them the news they don't know. A variation of this idea is found in Cummings' treatment of the robbery sequence. He tells the audience what is going to happen, and it takes an extraordinary interest in watching to see if it does. There is another sequence in Dressed to Kill that reveals that someone with a real sense of humor had a voice in writing the story. We see the members of a gang murder a stool pigeon, and the sequence I refer to is one showing the victim's funeral. The members of the gang who did the killing act as pall bearers and cover the casket with floral tributes to the worth of the departed. The scene is presented with all the gravity and dignity that attend funerals, nevertheless, and notwithstanding its subject matter, it is a delicious bit of comedy.

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It Presents to Us the Latest Models in Crooks

DRESSED to Kill is going to be a successful picture because it makes the kind of people we know do things that we never see done. Most crook pictures contain extravagant types unlike any we encounter in real life. We picture them as exactly the kind of people who would rob safes, consequently when they do rob safes they are doing merely what we expected them to do and we can't get any great kick out of it. But Irving Cummings presents us with slow moving, quietly dressed fellows who have nothing in appearance or demeanor to classify them as desperate criminals, and when men of that sort get into action we do get a kick out of it. His crook is a 1928 model, and to divert suspicion from himself by acting as a palbearer for a man he murdered is exactly the kind of thing the 1928 model would do. Dressed to Kill also avoids any suggestion of underground dens in which crooks plot horrible things. Everything is in the open. Some of the settings are elaborate, and there is not one that has any suggestion of meanness. The chief crook (Lowe) lives in an elaborate apartment to which he brings a girl who has intrigued him. When he is locked out of the bedroom to which he has led her, he goes to bed with all his clothes on, on a couch in his sumptuous drawing-room. At least that is where we find him next morning. It is the one bad spot in the picture. Such an apartment would have more than one bedroom; in any event the man would not have slept even on the couch with all his clothes on, and showing that there was another bedroom would have indicated that the man, in attempting to occupy the same room with the girl, had something on his mind other than a desire merely to find some place to sleep. As that thought is all there is in the sequence it should have been accentuated by showing the man nonchalantly seeking another bed when the girl turned the key on him. In every other respect the direction of this picture is flawless, and I can assure my exhibitor readers that it is a picture good enough to be shown anywhere. Edmund Lowe gives the best performance he ever gave in any picture in which I have seen him. He is the quiet, pleasant, well dressed crook that the story calls for, and he depicts the role with finesse and understanding. Mary Astor rapidly is graduating from the class of beautiful girls into that of beautiful actresses. Always a gorgeous creature to behold, in this picture she adds to her pictorial attractiveness an exhibition of real acting that gives me a new conception of her. She and Lowe have many delightfully acted scenes, most of which she dominates. Apparently the young woman has something that other directors have not been able to discover. Ben Bard contributes a clever characterization, and several others in the cast give good account of themselves. The story is one that holds the interest of the audience right to the end, but unfortunately the picture goes on for perhaps half a reel after the story ends. Lowe's efforts to save the girl cost him his life. He is riddled by bullets fired by members of his gang and finally topples into a gutter and dies. Why the picture continues after that I can not imagine. The fact that you can't beat the law is planted when the luxury-loving, soft-living Lowe dies in a gutter, yet the picture proceeds to rub it in unnecessarily, and tries to introduce comedy that utterly ruins the effect of the logical ending. However, you needn't wait for the tail-end of Dressed to Kill. You've received far more than your money's worth down to that point.

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We Have a Close-up of Some Ham and Eggs

THE Spectator, you may remember, is offering two gold medals, one for the best love scene screened this year, and one for the most original and appropriate final fade-out shown during the same period. It is just as well that I did not offer a medal also for the most striking close-up. If I had, the contest would be over. I have said many harsh things about the abuse of close-ups,
and could see but little virtue in them. To Tod Browning, however, goes the credit of almost reconciling me to their use. His treatment of close-ups in The Big City is fascinating, and reaches a state of ecstasy when the screen displays proudly a close-up of a dish of ham and eggs. Close-ups of hams we previously have had in great abundance, but this is the first time I have seen one embellished by the golden yolks of eggs. I have tried to find out what close-ups are for, and what reason regulates their use. I have learned that sometimes they are used solely because of their beauty; frequently because only in a close-up can emotion be registered convincingly, and most often to cover someone's blunder in writing the script, directing it or in cutting the film. Just as I am about to reconcile the use of close-ups with the logic of the three excuses, along comes one of a dish of ham and eggs, and I am undone. To Tod Browning would have gone any medal that I could have offered for an effective use of the close-up. Running this one a close second in The Big City is a close-up of a dish of spaghetti with pearls and diamond rings in it. The jewels are lifted from some cafe patrons by some members of Lon Chaney's gang. Lon is present, but as he is robbed also no one suspects him of being connected with the crime. An hour or two after the robbery Lon is seated at a table, with Virginia Pearson crying opposite him, and Eddie Sturgis brings him the jewels in their setting of spaghetti. It's great picture stuff. As it would be unsafe for the thieves to walk past the unsuspecting policemen with the jewels in their pockets, and as no one must suspect Lon's connection with the affair, the swag is cooked with the spaghetti and carried to Lon in a covered dish which no one dreams of investigating, thereby making the use of spaghetti quite unnecessary. I know it is involved as I write it, but it is an involved scene, one of many in an involved and very silly picture. Browning and Chaney have reached the point of turning out pictures with hammer and saw. Every situation in The Big City is a manufactured one, with corners so poorly cut that it does not fit into the next one to it. It is the most childish attempt at picture making that I have seen recently. In looking over the notes I made when I viewed it, I find that I have twenty-eight things listed that are as ridiculous as the close-up of the ham and eggs, and the spaghetti-embellished pearls. The titles are so stiff and awkward that they creak, yet to them went the burden of telling practically all the story. One absurd scene follows another until the only feature of the picture that is entertaining is the speculation it arouses as to how long the absurdities can last. I will spare you the other twenty-six notes. But I must give Betty Compson and Matthew Betz credit for splendid performances. All the other members of the cast were directed wretchedly.

Foreigners Threatening the American Supremacy

The feature of The Last Waltz that interested me chiefly is its similarity to American-made pictures. Other Ufa productions that I have seen revealed their foreign origin in every reel. This one might have been made in Hollywood, except that it displays more sense in lighting than is characteristic of our films. The story of The Last Waltz is fully as interesting as the stories of ninety-nine per cent. of the Hollywood product, the production is both artistic and elaborate, and two male members of the cast give most excellent performances. Apparently the director got out of the story all there was in it, and it is not a great picture only because the story lacked the element of greatness. But it is quite good enough to serve as a warning to us. America's hold on the film market of the world is threatened. If a foreign studio can match so perfectly the work of a Hollywood studio, there is no reason why the world at large should continue to pay us one dollar for what it can buy elsewhere for fifty cents. Foreigners always will be able to undersell us, for the people in charge of production outside this country have business brains and take pride in applying their brains to the making of good pictures economically. Over here the heads of the great producing organizations are interested more in exploiting the industry than in advancing its welfare. They are running it to the ground at a time when foreign production is shaping itself to cater to the taste cultivated by Hollywood, as The Last Waltz demonstrates. It is not Germany, however, that we have most reason to fear. All motion picture producers elsewhere in the world should keep their eyes on Russia. In that country they are applying common sense to picture making, and in the long run applied common sense proves unbeatable. Their first concern has been to develop the physical and scientific side of production, and they have made extraordinary progress. Give them two or three more years in which to learn to tell stories as the world wants them told, and Russia will be in a position to dominate the screens of the world. They are building on a permanent foundation. They have schools to teach all branches of the business, writing, acting, directing, photography, set dressing, business management, and everything else. From among the thousands who attend these schools a few will emerge as great picture artists or executives. In this country we have not done anything to perpetuate the business. Those in whose hands the industry rests now have not made one move that would indicate that they expect it to survive them. I tried to interest some of them in a plan to establish in Hollywood a school to teach all branches of picture production, but among the executives I could find no one whose interest in pictures went beyond the amount of salary he could persuade them to pay him. Russians love screen art and are jealous of it. In this country the art is looked upon only as a gatherer of dollars for a handful of picture barons who do not care what its future is. Prove to them that foreigners will relieve us of our supremacy and it would not disturb these barons. They are getting theirs now.

* * *

Getting Even With Mr. Edward Everett Horton

Eddie Horton and I are neighbors. Our ranches on Sunset Boulevard adjoin for their full length, one hundred and eighty-four feet. One day Eddie, who is a nice boy, gave his mother a new Lincoln and Mrs. Horton used it to smash a hole in the fence that separates Eddie's flower garden from mine. The hole is still there, and Eddie uses it to pass through when he enters my garden to swipe my flowers. It seems to me that I am putting in flowers only for the snails and Eddie. I would not mind this so much if Eddie displayed as much sense as the snails do in leaving me alone personally. I sit in my
back yard when I write The Spectator, where I can get the mixed perfume of sweet peas and orange and lemon blossoms, and see the earth working out the chemistry of color and demonstrating on petals the triumphs of its process; and have with me my two dogs and two cats, who prowl about me and ask me now and then to stroke their backs. I can concentrate in such surroundings, but I cannot when Eddie stands on his side of the fence and throws acorns at me. It not only is an unneighborly act, but is a plagiarism. I was up at Burlingame recently, playing golf for a week with Stewart Edward White and Samuel Hopkins Adams. I took a couple of lessons from the professional and during their progress Sam Adams threw acorns at me. I told Eddie about it, and he has contracted the habit. As I can not throw straight enough to make reprisal in kind effective, I decided to make The Spectator my weapon of revenge and pan the daylight out of him when he took over the Vine Street Theatre and as Edward Everett Horton cast himself in a succession of fat parts. I dressed up and sat in the front row at his opening, hoping that the reflection from my stiff shirt would confuse him. I told him last night when he came over to borrow some butter, that I was going to write something about him this morning, and he’s on his side of the fence now making menacing gestures with some chunks of concrete which have replaced the acorns for the time being. I might take a chance myself, but Lord Roberts, my huge orange Persian cat, is asleep on a chair beside me and I can not subject him to a barrage of concrete, consequently I have allowed myself to be intimidated into the admission that Eddie is some pumpkins as an actor and that A Single Man is most delightful entertainment. As I forget the concrete and think only of the play and the performances, I find it easy to become enthusiastic, even if Eddie did forget to wrap a couple of passes around some of the acorns he hurled at me. When I pay to see a show it has to be good, and A Single Man is. Horton is a superb actor and I never saw him in a part that suits him better. Maude Fulton’s first adventure in legitimate comedy is a glorious success. She puts feeling and understanding into the part she plays. Harriet George is entirely adequate as the effervescent youngster. Fan Bourke makes an extraordinary success of a small part, and I hope that as the tenure of the Horton company continues at the comfortable little theatre she will be given parts that will allow her to delight us still more. It is a fine thing for Hollywood that we have such neighbors. It should show its appreciation of what Horton and his associates are endeavoring to do. Generous support will assure the permanence of the company that with its first venture displays such an ability to entertain us. After seeing A Single Man I am content to allow Eddie to steal my flowers, and it won’t disturb me if he forgets to return the butter.

* * *

About Girls Undressing
and a Nice Little Film

WHY is it, I ask you, that on the screen we can watch a young girl undress down to her what-you-call-em’s without batting an eye, while in real life or on the stage it isn’t done? As I recall all the undressing scenes that I have seen during the past few months, I do not remember one that helped the story in any way, or that contributed anything in the way of drama or comedy. Such scenes are injected into pictures solely to pander to degenerate tastes. They are cheap and vulgar, and by over-playing suggestiveness they destroy the idea that prompts them—the idea of putting in a little spice to season a picture. I have no quarrel with the idea, for I do not bring a Puritanical mind to my task of contemplating pictures. In fact, between you and me, I’m rather a gay old bird, but I can find no gaiety in a scene that leaves nothing to the imagination. These thoughts were prompted by a scene in The Tragedy of Youth, a Tiffany-Stahl production in which Patsy Ruth Miller and Willie Collier Jr., are featured. For no decent reason whatever Pat is shown undressing during the progress of a quarrel she is having with Collier, her husband. Directing a long sustained quarrel between two people is, I’ll grant you, a difficult job for a director to handle, therefore it is one that should be tackled with zest and directed in a manner that would give us the full measure of the director’s cleverness. George Archainbaud’s cleverness in this scene does not rise above a girl’s underclothes, a rather vulgar admission that he was unequal to the brilliance with which such screen material should be handled. But he has made a nice little picture out of The Tragedy of Youth nevertheless. The story is as old as time, Adam and Eve and the snake having played in the original production, but it has been fixed up into a new shape which makes it a whole lot better picture than most of those that the big studios turn out. Although it is a triangle story there is no heavy in it. Pat Miller and Buster Collier marry in the beginning. After a year of it Buster neglects his wife, and Warner Baxter steps into the affair quite accidentally and falls in love with Pat, who ultimately divorces her husband and marries him. Technically I suppose Warner rates as a villain, but he is a noble one of most agreeable personality. When a ship upon which he is traveling is about to sink he takes off a life preserver and hands it to another passenger with the title: “Take it! You have something to live for.” Apparently it was the last preserver on the huge liner. It is amazing that such a childish absurdity can get into a picture. It hurts Tragedy of Youth because it introduces silliness at a time when the story is moving along smoothly and logically. There are a couple of technical blunders for which there is no excuse. Collier takes some flowers from a vase and turns the vase upside down. No water runs out. When flowers are in a container, the container has water in it. A phonograph is set going. While it is playing considerable action takes place, necessitating perhaps half a dozen cuts to the revolving record. In each shot the phonograph needle remains on the same spot on the record, making no progress whatever towards the center of the disc. But, anyway, The Tragedy of Youth is a good little picture. Patsy Ruth Miller, Collier and Baxter give most creditable performances, and the titles are punctuated almost properly.

* * *

From This One’s Mistakes
We Can Learn a Great Deal

THE poorest picture has its place on the screen. As we study it to learn what makes it weak we discover things that help us to make other pictures strong. The successful man in any branch of industry or art suc-
needs by avoiding repeating the mistakes of others, thus these mistakes have as much to do with his success as his own acts of wisdom. The motion picture industry should feel grateful to Metro for Rose Marie. It shows to what extraordinary lengths the Mayer organization will go to serve screen art. It simplifies the making of other Northwest Mounted pictures, for in the future when a situation in such a picture comes up for discussion an immediate decision can be made: Don't do it the way it was done in Rose Marie. I see that the screen credits Lucien Hubbard with the writing and direction of this picture, but I believe the honor was wished on him, for no one man unaided could turn out such a poor production. Rose Marie is another monument to the blundering incapacity of the Mayer organization. It has been stated that it cost seven hundred thousand dollars to make. A fairly good two hundred thousand production has reached the screen. Half a million dollars was sacrificed to the incapacity of Irving Thalberg or Harry Rapf or whoever had the thing in charge. This picture should have been to Northwest pictures what The Big Parade was to war pictures. Metro had absolutely everything at hand except brains enough to realize its opportunities. Of course there was no reason why it should have paid such a fabulous price for the story for there is nothing in it to distinguish it from the other out-door stories that Metro reads and rejects every day, but, even so, there was no reason for murdering the poor thing after it was purchased. It emphasizes what a queer business the making of pictures is. Mayer, Thalberg, Rapf and others draw gigantic salaries. If one may judge genius by the pay it commands, Mayer and Thalberg must be two of the greatest geniuses the world ever has known. Mayer refused to deny to me that he drew eight hundred thousand dollars a year from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Such a salary must be predicated on the assumption that the man drawing it is a few stages beyond even a superman. Yet he gives us a picture like Rose Marie! With unlimited money at his command, unlimited talent and brains available, and all of God's out-doors for his setting, he produces a picture that any independent producer could improve upon as screen entertainment at an outlay of twenty thousand dollars. And Rose Marie cost seven hundred thousands. I wonder just how long things like that can go on in the picture business. There is an element of dishonesty in the continued maintenance and toleration of an inefficient organization. The half million dollars wasted on Rose Marie has the same effect on the returns to stockholders as the theft of that amount from the company's safe would have. The bankers of the company and its officers know what is going on. Practically all the Metro directors receive The Spectator regularly at their homes. They will read this and other comments on the company's money being wasted, and when Mayer's contract expires they will sign him up again at a larger salary and present him with a diamond-studded fire sign for his automobile. It's a queer business. I wish I knew how I could horn in on it.

Some of the Things That Harm "Rose Marie"

O\VEREVER, we derive no profit from merely saying that Rose Marie is a poor sample of screen art. We have no right to find it guilty until we have presented our case against it. Metro's first mistake was to give an out-door, virile story an in-door, musical comedy treatment. The thing is over-produced. There are scores of shots of milling masses doing nothing whatever to advance the story—shots filled with purposeless animation and so crowded with people that the picture, for all its sublime out-door setting, seems almost stuffy. The greatest weakness is the failure to make the romance stand out. There was a chance for a wonderful love story, a tender, gripping, romantic portrayal of the drawing together of the boy and the girl, but as we get it on the screen, love comes by instantaneous combustion. It is not developed and is handled with the same degree of feeling that is shown later when there is a murder or two. A confession of weakness in the story is the long list of narrative titles. A perfect script would have no narrative titles; this picture has dozens. There is an exceedingly well planned and, as far as it went, a well executed thrill when ice is shown coming down a river, but neither the human nor physical possibilities of the sequence were realized. James Murray pulls two characters out of the raging torrent, taking no more risk than he would in taking two goldfish from a bowl, and later House Peters commends his "very brave" act. Silly twaddle. In the case of Joan Crawford close-ups were justified, but the picture is full of others that are not. Not because she is beautiful and intelligent looking, but because in almost every scene she had to work out her problem alone, it was all right to pick out Joan in close shots, but there the intelligent use of close-ups ended. It might repay us to consider one sequence in detail. Gibson Gowland, a murderous heavy, pulls a gun on Joan, Peters and Murray in a trapper's cabin. The three are scattered and Gowland moves them around as he sees fit. The whole
sequence is shown in close-ups. Not once is the whole room and the relation of the characters to one another planted. Anyone with any sense of the dramatic would have presented the sequence in a sustained long shot. The physical actions which the man with the gun made the others perform made the scene, not the facial expressions of any of the characters in it. We never should have lost sight of one character. To have seen three of them moving about the room under the commands of the fourth, who sat by the fire and gave his orders, would have been dramatic. The handling of this sequence shows that Hubbard, or whoever was responsible for it, really did not know what the whole thing was about. But we can thank Rose Marie for showing us what an excellent troup Joan Crawford is becoming. She gives a most intelligent performance, one that gives me great confidence in her future on the screen. James Murray—he looks like the kind of guy that everyone would call "Jim"—is a young man about whose future there is no doubt. We'll hear from him. It was a pleasure to see again that excellent actor House Peters whose unpopularity in studios has kept him off the screen for a long time. Gibson Gowland gives a fine characterization of a heavy, and others in the cast do well. There is some gorgeous photography, but it saddens one to think, as he views the picture, just how good it might have been.

SCENARISTS and directors should give more thought to their fade-outs at the end of sequences. Too many of them now have too great an air of finality, thus serving to allow a let-down in the audience's interest in a story. The perfect picture, as I see it, is the one that keeps the interest on an absolutely straight line that tilts upward. In other words, the interest should climb a straight incline, not mount by steps. In some pictures we have the closing title in one sequence giving some indication of what is to come after it, thus preventing any let-down in interest, but it is seen too rarely. In a picture directed by Tom Terris, the name of which I have forgotten, there is an intelligent use of titles to carry the audience from sequence to sequence. Terris gets his effect by dissolving into a title the end of one sequence and the beginning of the next. It is a commendable practice that should be adopted more generally. In some other picture I remember a spoken title: "Then I'll see you at the ambassador's ball." The title was followed by a fade-in to a ball to which it was an adequate introduction. In the vast majority of pictures, however, each sequence ends with a finality that disturbs the continuity of thought, and there should be no such disturbance from the beginning to the end of a picture. If screen art is to advance more thought must be expended on its fundamentals. My life is made up largely of viewing and analyzing pictures, but I can detect few indications that they are making any real progress.

SUSPENSE is good hokum and all hokum is good screen material when it is presented properly. When an effort is made to create suspense by a purely theatrical trick it ceases to be suspense. In Hot Heels, a pleasant little Glenn Tryon picture, the hero rides a horse in a race which involves the fortunes of the heroine. Of course the picturewise audience knows that he is going to win. In an effort to make the outcome of the race appear doubtful the script calls for the hero falling off his horse, then remounting and ultimately winning. There are two things the matter with this. In the first place, if the race were even enough at the outset to make the result problematical, the theory upon which the sequence is built, the hero would be so far behind when he remounted his horse that it would have been impossible for him to overtake the leaders. In the second place, the suspense would have been more real if the hero's mount had been shown hitting up a terrific pace from the beginning of the race, outdistanced at first by the other horses, but always pressing forward bravely, never wavering, and keeping everlastingly at it until one after the other he moved down those who challenged his right to the prize. That would be true suspense. Having the rider fall off introduces an element that is foreign to the spirit of the race.

THE waltz is coming back. I read that somewhere. And as a great deal of The Spectator is written with the radio three feet from me, bringing to me Gus Arnheim's

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enticing strains, I am somewhat of an authority myself on
the revivification of the waltz, for I notice that it is played
with more frequency on dance programmes. It is a dance
with rhythm to it, a dance of grace and poise, of dreams
and romance, the only one that has inspired some im-
mortal musical compositions. And it is the only ensemble
dance which possesses photographic value. In spite of all
these advantages the waltz figures but seldom in shots
showing dancing in progress at private or public func-
tions. We are given only jazz, which has no photographic
value. We see our beautiful girls and handsome boys
bobbing ungracefully up and down, when we might be
seeing them gliding gracefully across the polished floor
while we listen to the organist's interpretation of the
strains of Strauss. By showing the waltz in what might
be termed the more polite scenes, we have jazz left to char-
acterize the gayer parties. We should not show always
the banker's daughter and the dive-keeper's mistress danc-
ing the same kind of dance. But apart from considera-
tion of characterization, it is the duty of the screen to present
each scene with as much pictorial value as it can with-
out lessening in any way its contribution to the story. As
the waltz has more pictorial value than the catch-as-catch-
can, it should be shown oftener.

* * *

When I viewed Abie's Irish Rose it had orchestral ac-
companiment, an orchestra of twelve or fourteen
pieces playing the score that will be heard in all the big
houses where the picture will be shown. The orchestra
reproduced noises suggested by the action. Jean Hersholt
beats a drum and the drummer in the orchestra reproduces
the sound. Farrel MacDonald blows a horn, and the sound
comes from the orchestra pit. As recently as one year ago
these effects would add value to the presentation of the
film; to-day they are so ridiculous that they detract from it.
Before we had sound devices it was all right to pro-
duce sound any way we could, but to go on beating a drum
in an orchestra when every child in an audience knows
that the sound could have been photographed with the
action, is to bring down on a production the damning effect
of being considered old-fashioned when it is shown first.
Paramount should delete the drum and horn from its score.
No one can blame it at this stage of the development of
sound devices for not using one of them in the production
of the picture, but this immunity can not be extended to
cover a foolish imitation of a sound device. Abie's Irish
Rose is quite good enough in itself to achieve great suc-
cess. Nothing is gained by reminding an audience that it
might have been still better.

* * *

Madeline Brandeis has undertaken to make a series of
"Children of All Lands" pictures. They are to be
one-reel subjects for non-theatrical release, as they are
supposed to be of interest only to children. If the pictures
in the rest of the series equal the first, Pathé should alter
its selling plan and go after the business of picture houses.
The Little Indian Weaver is a one-reel gem that is bright
enough to shine on any program. Mrs. Brandeis visited the
Navajo country and discovered a charming little half-

breed girl who never had seen a motion picture camera,

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but who revealed a surprising ability to act when she was placed before one. The reel gives us a glimpse of the life of Navajo children, and I don't see how it could interest children elsewhere any more than it did me. Mrs. Brandeis is going abroad shortly to bring back to us equally intimate glimpses of children of many lands, but apparently I am going to be denied the privilege of seeing them because she or the Pathe people have decided arbitrarily that they would interest children only. I would not be surprised if it turned out that they interested adults more than they did children. In any event, Mrs. Brandeis' idea is a splendid one, and she has made a splendid start at materializing it. The series will be a valuable one.

* * *

TRYING to anticipate the public taste is a bootless occupation that I have characterized several times in The Spectator as a waste of time. Pictures themselves set the styles. The Big Parade was such a good picture that it revealed to the public that the world war could be presented in a fascinating manner, consequently it looked for further entertainment in the same setting and war pictures became the vogue. No style in woman's attire is set by a gown that does not look well on the original wearer. Only by being presented with its maximum of attractiveness does it strike the fancy of the feminine mind, which it holds as long as it is worn only by those who look attractive in it. When its artistic qualities are abused by inartistic treatment it ceases to be the vogue.

JOHN PETERS
CHARACTERS
Hollywood 6229  GLadstone 5017
Personal Management
W. O. CHRISTENSEN

ALEXANDER MARKY
has shattered a few motion picture traditions in launching his South Sea Expedition for Universal
AND the manner in which he is now Directing and Supervising his story Somewhere in the Pacific is playing havoc with a few more of them.

His fellow iconoclasts
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PROVEN STAGE SUCCESS
(His characterization in "Interference", Hollywood Playhouse)

NEW SCREEN PERSONALITY

DEMMY LAMSON
RUTH COLLIER
It is the same way with pictures. A good one sets a style that prevails until poor imitations make the public turn from it. The time spent on trying to gauge public taste can be spent to better advantage in creating and holding it. The studio that ignores the trend of the public mind and thinks only of the quality of its products will receive the largest reward.

* * *

No characterizations that we see on the screen are so in need of reformation as those of heavies. Screen authors approach them from the wrong angle. When the sole reason of a heavy's presence in a story is to provide a menace to the happiness of the hero, as generally is the case, there is no sense in revealing him as a heavy to anyone except the hero. To all others in the picture he can be shown as an agreeable chap until knowledge of his villainy becomes general. As he is treated usually he sneers at everyone, thus denying him the privilege of lending any diversity to his characterization. Possibly as a class the heavies are the best actors we have, but it is seldom that they are allowed to display their abilities.

* * *

Will Hays banned Revelry, the book by Samuel Hopkins Adams revealing the inside workings of the Harding administration, on the ground that a picture made from it would give the public an unjust opinion of that chapter in American history. I agree with the czar's reasoning. Recent developments have shown that the book does not reveal half the rottenness of the administration. Will should have gone farther. He should also have banned the various investigations. If he had been able to do this, he might still be regarded as a great and glorious ornament to pictures.

THE FILM SPECTATOR

The fact that Fox, the greatest purveyor of pure sentiment on the screen, has three pictures running simultaneously on Broadway must disturb those New York critics who scoff at sentiment and pan every film containing it. The success of the Fox pictures proves what every student of human nature knows, that sentiment is, and always must be, the most sure-fire screen material. It is the one absolutely universal human attribute, common alike to poet and murderer. Any picture as well done as Four Sons or Mother Machree can not fail to please those for whom it is made. If critics were honest with themselves and with their readers they would praise such pictures instead of condemning them.

* * *

Among the many crimes that are committed in Rose Marie is that of showing French Canadians talking pigeon English to one another. When the Habitants converse with the officers of the Mounted it is proper that the titles should be shown in pigeon English, for we have one man talking to another in a language not his own; but when one Habitant talks to another the titles should be shown in straight English, for the inference is that they were spoken in French correctly enough to be translated correctly into English for the screen.

* * *

Victor Fleming departs from screen traditions in Abie's Irish Rose when he shows a soldier dying with his eyes open. A rabbi closes the eyes after the soldier dies. Despite the fact that the standard method of dying is with the eyes open it nearly always is shown on the screen differently. There are a lot of other things that our directors might improve before they set about the task of showing nature just how a man should die.

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By Donald Beaton — The Spectator's 17-Year-Old Critic

When I wrote up The Latest From Paris, I made a terrible mistake and said that the direction was the fault of Bob Leonard. It seems he was innocent, as Sam Wood was responsible for the direction. I make haste to correct my mistake, because being connected with a picture like that is an awful thing, and only the one who is really responsible should bear the blame.

At last I have seen Four Sons. The harshest impression I carry away from it is that John Ford is a brilliant artist and a splendid director. It was Ford's picture from start to finish, in spite of the many splendid performances abounding in it. Nowadays, a director, to make a truly great picture, must use his material in a new way. It is not enough that he should give it the old treatment and do it well. Four Sons had one new thing after another in it, as Ford seems to regard screen conventions in a sort of go-to-the-devil attitude. Maybe his success will embolden other directors to do the same thing.

Ford also takes frightful liberties with the lighting effects, but the majority of them is not so successful as his other innovations. At times one has a desire to rush in and dust off some of the characters, because of the weird look the light gives them. However, where there is so much good in a picture the small faults don't amount to much. Wherever there is a chance for a beautiful or striking arrangement of a scene, Ford made the most of it.

The last part of Four Sons was not as good as the first, by any manner of means. There was an attempt to inject comedy through the medium of smart-cracking titles, uttered by Mother Bernle's precocious little grandson. When he wasn't making wise remarks, he was about as natural as a wooden one. When he was making them, one felt impelled to take a fly swatter and eliminate him.

Margaret Mann, who is the most delightful newcomer to screen fame that we have, gives a splendid performance as Mother Bernle. Earle Foxe does brilliant work as the heavy.

Albert Gran adds another splendid characterization to his "Papa Boul" of Seventh Heaven fame. A good touch in connection with Gran is the lovable old dog who follows him everywhere. It is the sort of thing one sees around all the time, but scarcely ever sees on the screen. The four sons, James Hall, Frank Bushman Jr., Charles Morton, and Charles Meeker, were all good. August Tolnai, Frank Reicher, and June Collyer also deserve favorable mention.

There may be some excuse for the Lovelorn, but I doubt it. Just because it is a feature of a newspaper syndicate means nothing, because if this thing becomes general and pictures telling the dramatic story of the rise and fall of lemon pie or of the intense struggle against Pendag starts flooding the market, God help us. After reading the drivel that is written in the "Advice to the Lovelorn" column, the title would have kept me away had it not been for the fact that a preview was also showing at that theatre the same night. After
Some Personal Correspondence

My Dear Welford:

I feel that I ought to advertise the following facts, and if you’ll fix this dope into some kind of an ad I will gladly take a page in The Spectator.

Laid off for an indefinite period by Universal, the same as many others, I thought it a good opportunity to write an original underworld story—something a bit different—as different as HIS PEOPLE was from the general run of Jewish-Gentile stories, so I wrote THE DEVIL’S CAGE, a story of night clubs. This was sold immediately and made into a damn good picture with PAULINE GARON.

Thus encouraged I wrote another, one that mixed the high and the low of the underworld,—crooks and saints, and called it LIFE’S MOCKERY. This was sold almost as fast, and it made a crackerjack of a vehicle for BETTY COMPSON (all honor to Miss Compson and Robt. F. Hill, the director). So far so good.

Now comes the news that I am really proud of. Richard Talmage advertised for an underworld story of the waterfront. I submitted one and this morning I was notified that Mr. Talmage and a committee selected my story, THE MAN WITHIN, out of a collection of EIGHTEEN PUBLISHED NOVELS AND SHORT STORIES SUBMITTED TO THEM.

I forgot to mention that I wrote the continuities for the GARON and COMPSON stories and I signed a contract this morning to do the same for Mr. Talmage. NOT SO BAD.

Please fix this up into a decent ad as it’s going to cost me more than I have ever spent for advertising since I’ve been in this industry.

Sincerely yours,

Isadore Bernstein.

Dear Bernie:

Sorry I can’t oblige you. I’m in conference. —W. B.
sitting through reel after reel of dis-connected scenes scattered willy-nilly through the picture, the end of it was a welcome sight. Lovelorn is a hard picture to write up, because the ma-jority of the time I didn't know what it was all about.

INTERFERENCE, now showing at the Hollywood Playhouse, is one of the best plays I ever have seen. I am no judge of the merits or de-merits of stage plays, because I go to them solely for entertainment. Judged by that standard, Interference is splendid. It grips one right from the start, and the interest never lets down for an instant. The high light of the play was the superb perform-ance of George Barraud. Theoret-ically, he was the heavy; actually, he had all my sympathy from the start. If his performance were the only good thing about Interference, the play still would be worth seeing.

WHILE Harold Teen had many poor things in it, it was very entertaining just the same. Mervyn Le Roy, the director, demon-strates that good sense of comedy. The main fault of the picture was that he put in serious stuff, which had no place in it. One instance of that is the dynamiting of the dam. That bit should be cut out, because there is no reason for it. Also, there was too much laughter. There were many silly things like that, but there was something about the picture which conduced any silliness. The funniest thing in the whole picture was the amateur movie that was made in it. The picture was ter-ribly funny, and just what might have been expected from a bunch of high school students. Arthur Lake, who played the title role, gave a very good performance. Jack Egan, as the teetzy Horace, came next to him in acting. I think that he can handle bigger parts. Alice White, as Giggles, gives one of her usual delightful characterizations. Mary Brian makes a very sweet and appealing Liliums. Jack Duffy and Lucien Littlefield are good as Grandpa Teen and Pops, respectively. William Bakewell and Lincoln Steadman turn in good work, also.

ADIES Night in a Turkish Bath is a very poor picture. It looks as though someone had thought of that title when the picture was about half done and the Turkish bath stuff had been tacked on to make the title fit. The whole thing is based on an impossible premise, and therefore cannot be taken seriously. Nothing that happens to the characters con-flicts very much the person who sees the picture. It moves too slowly, al-though in a theatre, with an audi-ence, that defect might be remedied. Perhaps the other people's laughter might make it seem funnier. Edward Cline directed this picture. Dorothy Mackaill and Jack Mulhall, both fav-orites of mine, were featured. They did their usual good work.

ASY Come, Easy Go is not a story of motion picture executives, as may be imagined from the title. It is the latest Richard Dix picture; and while it is not the worst he ever has made, it certainly is not the best. As a rule, the Dix pictures suffer from too little story; this has too much. It is supposed to be a comedy of sit-uations, but it isn't done cleverly enough. There aren't enough funny things in it, and, as it's a comedy, that is a rather serious shortcoming. Frank Tuttle directed it, and is prob-ably responsible for its lack of pep. His direction was pretty good other-wise and showed a sanity which is rare in stag comedy by Dix. I usu-ally enjoy a Dix picture, because I like Dix himself. He can act, and is the sort of fellow that everyone likes immediately. The acting honors of Easy Come, Easy Go all belong to a man I have seen dozens of times be-fore. His name is Sellen, and I think his first name is Charles. At any rate he gives a performance in this which should get him bigger parts. Nancy Carroll plays opposite Dix in this. It is a crime to put her in small parts like this after her splendid perform-ance in Abie's Irish Rose. Frank Cur-rid did good work in a smaller part.

T paraphrase an old slogan—"When Worse Pictures Are Made, They Will Be Jewish-Irish." I thought Publicity Madness was bad, in fact I still do; but The Cohens and Kellys in Paris is worse. The only thing I liked about it was the fact that the cast was run at both the begin-nin end of the picture, so one got a chance to find out who the char-acters were. There is nothing of any merit in it, and to catalogue all the faults would take too much space. The whole thing looked like an amateur mov-ing picture made by the inmates of the Home for Mentally Deficient. J. Farrell MacDonald, George Sidney, Vera Gordon, and Kate Price made heroic efforts to make a picture out of it, but even their combined talents weren't enough. I almost can forgive everything else in the picture because it gave me a chance to see Sue Carol again. She was in only about five shots, but they almost made up for the rest of the picture. Sue has a likeable personality, and when she has had more experience she will be a good actress. Somebody should star her in a series of pictures depicting real modern youth, not these blood-and-thunder dime novels with titles such as "Gliding to the Gutter" or "Slipping to Supervisor". I think they would make money. The Cohens and Kellys gave me a chance to see another of my favorites—Charles Delaney. We should have more leading men of his type.

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RUTH COLLIER
Ladies' Night in a Turkish Bath—
A First National Picture. Directed by Eddie Oline; produced by Edward Small; story by Charlton Andrews and Avery Hopwood.
The cast: Dorothy Mackail, Jack Mulhall, James Finlayson, Sylvia Ashton, Harvey Clark, Reed Howes, "Big Boy" Guinn Williams.

Harold Teen—
A First National picture. Produced by Allan Dwan; presented by Robert Kane; adaptation by Tom Geraghty; directed by Mervyn LeRoy; photographed by Ernest Hallor, A. S. C.

Four Sons—
A William Fox picture. Story by I. A. R. Wylie; scenario by Philip Klein; directed by John Ford; photographed by George Schneidermann.

Dressed to Kill—
A William Fox picture. Story by William Conselman and Irving Cummings; scenario by Howard Estabrook; directed by Irving Cummings; assistant director, Charles Woosterhulme; cameraman, Conrad Wells.

The Crowd—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Screen play by King Vidor and John V. A. Weaver; titles by Joe Farnham; settings by Cedric Gibbons; photographed by Henry Sharp; film editor Harry Reynolds; directed by Tod Browning.

Rose-Marie—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Based on the stage production of Arthur Hammerstein; from the play by Otto A. Harbach and Oscar Hammerstein, 2nd; music composed by Rudolf Friml and Herbert Stothart; written and directed by Lucien Hubbard; settings by Cedric Gibbons and Richard Day; photographed by John Arnold; film editor, Carl L. Pierson.
The cast: Joan Crawford, James Murray, House Peters, Creighton Hale, George Cooper, Polly Moran, Gibson Gowland, Lionel Belmore, William Orlamond, Harry Gregson, Ralph Yearsley.

The Lovehorns—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Story by Beatrice Fairfax; adaptation by Bradley King; title by Frederic Hatton; directed by John P. McCarthy; a Cosmopolitan production.
The cast: Sally O'Neil, Molly O'Day, Larry Kent, James Murray, Charles Delaney, George Cooper, Allan Forrest, Dorothy Cumming.

The Little Indian Weaver—
Directed, produced and continuity by Madeleine Brandeis; released through Pathe Exchange, Inc., for the use in schools to aid in teaching geography and for the entertainment of children. Photographed by Bernard Ray; assistant, Robert Monroe; story by Mary Gibsons Whittlock and Madeline Brandeis.
The cast: Buny Basil, Byron Wells, Mrs. Big Tree.

The Last Waltz—
A Paramount picture; a U. F. A. production; from the musical comedy by Oscar Strauss, Julius Brammer and Alfred Grunenwald; directed by Arthur Robison; scenario by Alice D. G. Miller; supervision of Charles E. Whittaker. Featuring Willy Fritsch and Suzanne Vernon.

Easy Come Easy Go—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Frank Tuttle; original story by Ann Davis; scenario by Florence Ryerson; photographed by Edward Cronjager; assistant director, Russell Mathews.
The cast: Richard Dix, Nancy Carroll, Charles Selton, Frank Currier, Arnold Kent, Guy Oliver.

Cohens and Kellys in Paris—
A Universal long run special. Director, William Beaudine; original story, adaptation and continuity by Al Cohn; cameraman, Charles Stumar; titles, Albert De Mond.
The cast: George Sidney, J. Parrel MacDonald, Vera Gordon, Kate Price, Sue Carol, Charles de Laneay, Gino Corrado, Gertrude Astor.

Tragedy of Youth—
A Tiffany-Stahl picture. Story by Albert Shelby Le Vino; continuity by Olga Printzlauf; titles by Fredrick and Fanny Hatton; film editor, Bob Kern; photographed by Faxon Dean; directed by George Archainbaud.
The cast: Warner Baxter, Patsy Ruth Miller, Buster Collier, Claire McDowell, Harvey Clark, Margaret Quimby, Steppin Fetchit, Billie Bennett.

VALUES! — EASTER GIFTS AND GREETINGS — VARIETY!
VOICES FROM THE WILDERNESS

NEWSPAPER WOMAN WRITES
My dear Mr. Beaton:

Thank you very much for the copies of your journal, The Film Spectator. It is good to see someone, who is in a position to do so, attack in print such movie evils as you are fighting, and to do it so intelligently and constructively. I enjoyed greatly reading the copies you sent me—every editorial and item was of very real interest. I have been doing the movie work on the two pages of the only dailies in Des Moines—for five years, but since it consists mainly of press agent advance stories trimmed down and brief reviews in which one can say little except to mention players and outline story, there isn't much chance to do real criticism—and heaven knows the directors and producers need a few "shots"! Those close-ups!

Saw The Whip Woman a short time ago, and if ever you saw such a country, you'll find perfectly unnecessary titles anywhere. Yes, I have seen a dozen more'n I have. The picture was bad enough, but if half or two-thirds of the obvious titles were amputated, it would be a great help. I wish I could take your magazine regularly—but I can't get a "raise"—which doesn't seem at all likely.

The company is already furnishing me with several movie magazines, so I don't dare to ask them for more, now. However, I'll hope some day to become a regular subscriber. Or is there anything I could do for you out here in the corn belt to earn a subscription? I try to run a column, "Movies and Stars" on our morning paper women's page, but the advertising crowds it out pretty frequently. I used your story about the gallery recently, and would be glad to use others from time to time, whenever possible.

Sincerely your well wisher,

LEAH DURAND JONES

The Register, Des Moines, Iowa.

SOMETHING LACKING
Dear Mr. Beaton:

In your review of The Enemy, there was lacking one criticism, which I feel constrained to bring to your notice.

I am under the impression that all the belligerents paid separation allowances to wives and dependents of their adjutants and officers personally. If this was not the case in Austria, the fact should have been stated (preferably in a foreword to the picture) for the benefit of American and British audiences.

The fact that it was not so stated robbed the picture of its reality. I could not reconcile the extreme poverty of Lillian and her father with the condition of the wives of service men in London during the war, thousands of whom had more money than they had ever possessed in their lives before.

And so, even in the most harrowing scenes I remained stolid, dry-eyed; whereas every time I saw Seventh Heaven I ruined a good handkerchief.

ROBT. SHILLAKER.

AND THAT'S THAT

Gentlemen:

Some time ago we received a letter from you, advising that Mr. Victor Varconi had subscribed, for us, for one year's issue of your paper. Since that time we have been receiving the paper as published. We have read it—have just finished attempting to understand the issue dated April 4th. And now, while the spell of nausea is upon us, we ask that you—and Mr. Varconi—have mercy upon us, and strike our name from your mailing list.

As a simple Kansas hick, who is trying to make enough money out of motion pictures to feed his family, I must admit that your sickening ego, your ME and I, your superior knowledge and continued knocking—are just a bit too much for my unsophisticated taste.

Just draw a line through our name and put our cancellation down to ignorance and hick complex. We'll stand for that.

WALTER WALLACE.

Leavenworth, Kansas.

SOUND DEVICES
My dear Mr. Beaton:

I have been a persistent reader of your publication ever since it made its first unheralded appearance, some two years ago. I have always found myself in sympathy with its aims, and, being a greater or lesser degree with the opinion that it is the task of the critic to enhance and instruct the reader to improve his appreciation of the motion picture, I find it necessary to take exception to your sweeping endorsement. While perfectly willing to admit that the Vitaphone made The Jazz Singer, but, without it, it would have been a monumental flop, for it was almost everything which a moving picture should not be.

Had you gone on to say that the Vitaphone would enhance all stories especially adapted to it, there would have been no room for argument. But is there any demand for pictures that require dialogue for their interpretation? I believe not. Dialogue is entirely within the province of the stage, and stage and screen are two entirely different entities. One does not impinge on the other in any way, so that the two are both a form of dramatic entertainment.

Then why adopt the Vitaphone and make the screen a hybrid, neither flesh, fowl nor good red herring? The function of the screen is to bring to us dramatic action, for which little or no explanation in dialogue is needed. The title, except by usage, serves this purpose sufficiently well.

The stage, on the other hand, depends on dramatic situations which are invariably developed by dialogue, during long periods of which the actors are absolutely motionless. This is the reason why stage plays, except melodrama or situation comedies, are always such failures on the screen.

Now it would be obviously absurd to inject occasional dialogue, and leave the actors with a thorough, the rest of the picture. This anomaly is not noticeable when the speaking is done through titles. I see that you consider the Vitaphone a direct gain as far as the music is concerned. This is obvious. But then the movie was not designed as musical entertainment; in fact, entirely the reverse. It was intended to appeal to the mind through the eye alone, and to make the movie vocal is equivalent to acknowledging that this cannot be done. In which case there is no longer any excuse for its existence.

The motion picture is unique in one respect, in that it is our only form of entertainment that does not depend on music, vocal or instrumental, for its interest. This country contains more musical morons than any other civilized country that I know of. We have admired, with high praise, the rest of our meals, and most of it is mediocre.

And what will be the result should there be a popular demand for the Vitaphone? Our bone-headed producers will meet it, even if it is necessary to bring the soubrette down to the fleshlights in the middle of a lurid drama, to burst into song.

But so far as the producers are concerned there are several practical difficulties to be considered. It is not within the bounds of possibilities that the producers will cease to keep their eye on the foreign market when making a picture. What kind of a riot do you think The Jazz Singer would make in Rome, for example? Fancy making fifteen or twenty films, each in a different language. Again, it will result in featuring great singers in the film, and there was never a great singer who was not a damn bad actor, vide,

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Caruso, Garden, Farrar and Jolson. It was a shame to make him do his stuff opposite a finished actor like Oland. With all due respect to Jolson’s stage personality, I can truly fail to see that he brings it to the screen.

But why worry about the actors’ voices? There is no necessity for the actor to speak his lines. It will be easy to find elocutionists to do this. The spoken words fail to convey the impression that they are actually spoken by the actor. For the simple reason that there are limits to the bounds of realism.

Notwithstanding the constant asseverations that movie “Opticiens” are composed chiefly of morons, there is evidence that they always follow the shadowy characters speaking the words, any more than I, myself, believed that I was hearing the choir in The Jazz Singer. You approve of the fact that we hear the songs which we see sung. But do we go to the movies to hear songs sung? That people should be seen singing on the screen is poor technique, and any writer who knows his business avoids such scenes.

To carry the idea ad infinitum! With the Vitaphone will come flocks of trained singing birds, purling brooks, whispering trees, and all the other beautiful sounds of nature. Thus the cost of production will be trebled, and the difficulties made almost insuperable, and the movies as we know them will vanish.

I am afraid you have allowed your enthusiasm to cloud your judgment. For I don’t take it. We have the chatter and clatter to vaudeville and the musical comedies, and possess our souls in peace and quietude in the silent drama.

F. ELY FAGET.

SAD, BUT TRUE

Dear Film Spectator:

When you review The Devil Dancer, will you try awfully hard to remember for a moment that the most harsh criticism that you can give it will one day be remembered by all those who some movie fans felt the other evening at seeing this revolting picture?

The dance in the prologue! What is that about an artist expressing himself?

And India and things Indian, including Thibet, that some of us love! Then one thinks thankfully of Talbot Mundy and Kipling and the sunshine of India (including Thibet) and “Mandalay” and the world is saved.

But in all fairness, it must be painfully admitted, that the audience is as responsible for this type of picture as is the man who produced it. The Million Dollar Theatre, in that outlandish location, packed to the doors! All this is sad—but true!

You have a big job ahead, Welford Beaton, but always there is hope. And anyway, “the first hundred years are the worst!”

L. BOOTH DYMOND.

THE FILM SPECTATOR

Page Twenty-one

FROM THE UPLAND

High-up on the Hillsides, La Jolla, California

By JAMES BRANT

THERE are cities where human beings swarm like bees in a hive; there are farms and forests, deserts and mountains, where life is alone, and yet not of its own kind. There are buildings of grandeur and magnificence and there are tenements like the honeycombs of the gopher. There is the pounding noise and the hysterical activity of the city’s commerce and there is the quiet contentment and sensible life of the little town.

Here is a spot of beauty and refine ment with a climate unsurpassed. Cottages and villas taste in design with grounds in harmony, and a comfort ing when the ocean gentle breezes from the shore line in the foreground to the mountain plateau in the distant background.

It is a little gem, is La Jolla, with its palms and its blooming flowers, its coolness, its comfort brought from the mighty Pacific and the lovely Crescent Bay. A living and an environment a thousand leagues from the dives of the border, a Main Street Sonora or an old-time Barbary Coast and an earnest of a future ruled by right and reason, a sense of decency and a love of things beautiful.

Throughout the centuries humanity has been cursed with the vice of greed.

Concomitant with greed is waste, a destructive ignorance that murders forests, massacres the wild life of land and water and brands humanity with the mark of imbecility. Besides the waste of natural resources there is also the waste of labor, the fruitless and unnecessary expenditure of time due to a lack of forethought, in which lack of forethought in the production of motion pictures you have called the attention of the public on divers occasions. In motion pictures a waste of labor—time is so much money added unnecessarily to the cost of the finished picture, forcing a higher selling price than is justified and merely dangling glittering promises in the shape of possible jobs in front of struggling and ambitious people and by inventing a system known as “The Petty Cash Basis”? And yet the usual results are very bad.

As I understand it from those who have tried it, “The Petty Cash Basis” is this: You write synopses of stories submitted to the reading department, you do treatments of stories, you offer all your ideas regarding the character and plot of stories under consideration—but you are not on the Universal pay-roll. No, indeed! When
Educating the Film Salesman

By ROBERT N. LEE

FEW pictures and better ones, is the cry of the public to-day. That is the complaint of the film salesmen. The public wants inferior pictures and is to blame for a poor product, should promptly be exploded. On the contrary, the public wants new things and is aware of new things. Consequently it has progressed beyond the film salesmen, and if the history of picture-making the public never has turned down one good picture.

One can cite numerous instances of the public acclaiming a film considered "doubtful". There was the case of The Miracle Man, by that gifted man, George Loane Tucker. This picture knocked around Broadway and no one could see it. It looked as if it would never get a release. The religious theme was something new and that immediately damned it, according to the public. They had been hawked here and there, finally, through much imploring, Paramount was won over and bought it. From the minute it was flashed on the screen, it was a success and netted a fortune. This picture made history and is still spoken of in the industry. It made Chaney, Tom Meighan and Betty Bronson. So vital is the theme that it is only a question of time when it will be done again. Although there was much advance publicity, "Toleable David" was another "doubtful" film. This, too, won immediate favor and put on the film map Richard Barthelmess and Ernest Torrence. Because it was a novelty, Nanook of the North was looked upon dubiously by the salesman. To the public it was a classic and the money poured into the box-office.

More recently Stark Love made a tremendous "hit". This was sold not because of its artistic worth—not a hint of this went into the sales talk—but because of the cheap production cost. The salesman pointed out to the exhibitor that since he would have to pay so little for it the per centage of profit would be high. So despite inferior selling talk, this picture reached the public and is among the most talked of films of the day.

Poor salesmanship is the stumbling block that interferes to-day with the putting forth of those new things which the public wants. The film salesman has certain ideas about pictures that amount to obsessions. He judges entirely from the past instead of anticipating the future. If a set costs $40,000 he can't talk about it. His embarrassment was great when he couldn't sell himself the production values of Stark Love because they were nil. He has shied off from unhappy endings. He has been lukewarm over pictures of fine characterization such as The Last Laugh, and the salesmen can't see that the public would be interested in an aged man. This picture made little money because the film salesman wouldn't stand behind it. Now that Jannings is established in the conscience of the public as one of the world's great actors, together with the advance exploitation on The Way of All Flesh, that included the production costs of the film, the salesman's task was not difficult. Jannings is sold to the public!

Pictures have not been sold on their individual merit. The salesman has dealt with the obvious. He believes it takes jazz. Films can't all have cafe sets, but he can't see why things don't when it is so easy for the scenarist and director to do what they want with a picture! Picture values and the logic of a situation mean little to him. "To hit 'em in the eye" is a fetish with him. Now that the block system is going, he will have to know pictures intelligently and to sell them accordingly.

He should keep his hand on the pulse of intelligent criticism. Take the case of Chang, hailed by the critics as a clean-up, and prior to that Grass, and other pictures of novel nature, he should have been able to anticipate their success with the surefire caused by Nanook, fresh in his memory. He should be wary of the bromidic and should take his cue from the mental attitude of careful critics that new ideas are not a risk, but a boon for a jaded public weary of the same way of doing things. He should learn to boost the things the public likes and insists on having.

All over the country, in cities and small towns is the demand for the new and better things. The salesman has plenty to talk about if he will consent to leave his rut. But he must know those things in a picture that make it meritorious, just as a critic does, and in this way there will be every incentive to make films of higher artistic content. He must get a new mind and an open one, bury his conservativeness and know his public as it exists, instead of motivating from a false viewpoint as to what he thinks it wants. The public is educated. Let the film salesman go to school to the industry and then the better things it wants won't have to go begging.

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Loan to United Artists

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ad, please communicate with the
editor of The Spectator immediately.

GEORGE SIDNEY
SAYS:
“When this is printed, I'll be
East having fun, to say the
least.”

PAUL SCHOFIELD
ORIGINALS AND
ADAPTATIONS

Winifred Dunn is contributing
to the support of the Spectator
in the hope that Welford Bea-
ton, the Spectator's papa, will
eventually contribute to the
support of the writer by rec-
ognizing him-and-her in his re-
views.

JOHN FARROW
WRITER
WITH PARAMOUNT

PAUL KOHNER
Production Supervisor for Universal

“THE MAN WHO LAUGHS”
— a Paul Leni Production,
Starring Mary Philbin-Conrad Veidt.

CHARLES KENYON
Free Lancing
Recently Completed
Show Boat
Foreign Legion Symphony
In Preparation
A Girl on a Barge
For Universal
Demmy Lamson Management

ALFRED HUSTWICK
Film Editor
Titles
Since 1919 with Paramount
Albert Rogell  
Directorial "Maker of Stars"  
The Pictures That Made  
Ken Maynard a First  
National-Chas. R. Rogers  
Attraction.  

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SINS OF THE CRADLE

RAMONA
THE TEMPEST
THREE SINNERS
LITTLE BIT OF FLUFF
EASY COME, EASY GO
LAUGH, CLOWN, LAUGH
### JEAN HERSHOLT

Loaned to United Artists

The advertisement of

AL COHN

and a slight disposition to take too many strokes between the tee and the cup are my two greatest worries.

ALEXANDER MARKY

is just making his parting shots of the South Sea story he is directing and supervising for UNIVERSAL in the distant waters of the Pacific.

He is expected to arrive in Hollywood some time in May, and the next issue of the Spectator will tell of another motion picture tradition he is infringing upon on his way back.

His Fellow Violators
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GEORGE SIDNEY

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Free Lancing

Recently Completed
Show Boat
Foreign Legion Symphony
In Preparation
A Girl on a Barge
For Universal
Demmy Lamson Management

ALFRED HUSTWICK

Film Editor
Titles

Since 1919 with Paramount
A LETTER

Mr. John Barrymore,
United Artists Studio.

My dear Jack:

Here are some facts:
You are credited with being the greatest living Hamlet.
You now are making motion pictures.

Sound photography has been developed sufficiently to make the talking picture satisfactory screen entertainment.

Technicolor has made it possible to reproduce on the screen the exact shade of any colored object.

No person could be sufficiently stupid to deny that the only perfect picture must contain both sound and color. The screen is rushing swiftly towards them, and in a very short time the silent, black and white picture will be a thing of the past.

You are offered an opportunity to write your name impossibly in the history of motion pictures. You can be a pioneer in sound and color by putting both into a picture that will command the instant attention of the world as no picture containing either yet has done.

Do Hamlet in Technicolor and reproduce the lines in Movietone, or by any other sound device that would do justice to your own magnificent voice and to the voices of the excellent artists with whom you would surround yourself. There are enough trained players in Hollywood to make casting easy.

No man can become the great artist that you are without being under definite obligation to his art. No man can be hailed as great by the people of two continents without owing something to those people.

It is your duty to perpetuate your Hamlet. The choice is not yours. Before we had sound and color you had some excuse for not trying to film the great Shakespearean story, but with the advent of these aids to realization any excuse was made impossible. Your art is calling you.

THE CHARM OF MYSTERY

By GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN

Dear Mr. Beaton:

While "The Charm of Mystery" may seem to have little bearing on pictures, a moment's thought will show it to be peculiarly apposite and in accord with your own contentions. The charm of a woodland pool, a woman's eyes or a picture is in large degree owing to their power of stimulating the imagination. Divest the pool of its sylvan setting and it becomes a puddle. Present a sentimental emotion in the blatant glare of a close-up and you rob it of all the glamour which the mind may conceive: nothing is left to hang a fancy on. And fancies are woven from the intangible stuff of moon beams, not the uncompromising beam of a spotlight, revealing all too clearly the mascara and lipstick, when we would imagine the virginal freshness of dawn or the countenance of age, hallowed by memories. A great picture is analogous to the shadowy pool or eyes in whose deeps repose enigmas; for it allures the fancy to wander in the domain of Mystery—whose other name is Romance.

G. F. M.

Her eyes . . . love-kissed, tender—
Twin pools in a bosky dell.
And your parched throat! Remember?
This . . . and, too, the joy
Clear pools in sylvan shade impart,
Or eyes that hold deep mysteries—
Clear pools—a very part themselves
With witchery and sprites and elves.

O these . . .
That conjure fancies of unthought delights,
Those minor tones of love—more sensed than heard—
That weave o'er hearts a tapestry of light:
For these there's not—nor need be—any word.

And lovely eyes have subtleties all their own.
What need have they their inner thoughts to tell
If in their deeps repose the mystery
Of life and love? Ah, these . . .
The things we can not understand, but feel
Sometimes when gazing deep in pools,
Or eyes, that have the charm
Of mystery.
making now expensive pictures which under the old conditions would have three years of prosperous life, but which are destined to be out of date before they are released. Instead of producing revenue for three years, they will be put on the shelf within one year to make room on the screens of the world for pictures that reproduce dialogue and music. It took only one reel of The Lion and the Mouse to open my eyes, and in the experience of Warner Brothers with that one picture is written the whole story of the revolution in screen art. It was shot first as a standard silent picture. After it was completed someone thought it would be a good idea to vitaphone some of the speeches from the play. Lionel Barrymore, Alec B. Francis and one or two others were called back, and the opening sequence, which occupies about one reel, was reshot on the silent stage. This reel was substituted for the silent one, and the entire picture run for the studio heads. One reel of action and the fine, scholarly tones of the voices of Barrymore and Francis made the succeeding reels look ridiculous. Warner Brothers had no choice in the matter. They could not release a picture whose first reel made all the succeeding reels hopelessly out of date. They either had to throw out the vitaphoned reel or vitaphone the whole thing. But the vitaphoned reel was something so stupendous as a milestone in the progress of screen history, that it could not be sidetracked. All the other reels were vitaphoned, and when Hollywood sees The Lion and the Mouse it will realize that a new art has been born. Pictures generally will have the same experience as this one picture. Instead of reels, consider it in terms of studios. If Warner Brothers had a monopoly of sound reproduction it soon would have a monopoly of motion pictures, for after the public has had two or three vitaphoned pictures it simply is not going to accept any others. But no one has a monopoly. Fox has Movietone developed as far as it need be to provide entertainment for which the public will pay. Paramount is experimenting belatedly with the General Electric patents, Metro is searching frantically for a sound device that it can use, F. B. O. has an alliance with General Electric, and First National and Universal are trying to find out what can be done about it. The screen has been given a tongue, and has added ears to its present audience of eyes. The new development can not be ignored. Within one year those independents who can not give voice to pictures will cease making them, as there will be no market for the silent kind.

Silent Pictures Will Not Satisfy the Public

THERE are some people who argue that silent drama is not doomed to extinction, that it has been developed as an art too great to disappear. The weakness of the argument lies in the fact that screen art is not complete, and nothing can achieve its destiny until it is complete. Two great screen actors can reach artistic heights in depicting a scene in which they quarrel violently, but as an exhibition of art it is not complete because no sound comes forth from the screen to make it as real as we know it must have been when the actors were before the camera. The real scene is composed of pantomime and sound, and the screen has given us only the former. As long as we knew that there was no method by which the other could be given us we were content, for half a loaf is better than no bread. But now we know that we can get the whole loaf. Will we be content with the half? Before we could answer in the affirmative we would have to make over the entire human race. Any art becomes perfect only by realizing all its possibilities. Sound now is possible to screen art, which ceases to be perfect until it takes advantage of it. If screen art were the diversion of only the highly intelligent, and in its present form had been developed to a point that satisfied those it catered to, perhaps it might ignore the tongue that has been given it, for the higher the intelligence the less obvious need be the appeal to it. But screen art is the most universal of all arts, and only the obvious has universal appeal. The individual may prefer to think, but the mob prefers to have its thinking done for it. Screen art is the mob's art, and it will prosper to the extent that it satisfies the mob. No mob is going to be satisfied with the silent sight of a marching band when it knows that in a theatre across the street it can hear a band as well as see it. There will be, of course, those who would prefer their silent drama to remain silent, but their number will be so small that there will be no profit in catering to it. I am not of that number. A few sessions in Fox and Warner Brothers projection rooms have made me an enthusiastic convert to the inevitability of sound. My eyes have been opened to the facts that screen art as we have known it is but half an art, and that the other half has arrived. It is a subject for fascinating speculation. Directing and acting will be made over completely. For almost an entire reel I watched Lionel Barrymore and Alec Francis in perhaps the most engrossing scene I ever saw on a screen, yet neither moved from the chair in which he was seated. I was moved by the appeal in Alec's voice and chilled by the cold incandescence of Lionel's as he smilingly lured his victim to his ruin. No title writer that screen art yet has developed could have put into the sequence the quality that the voices contributed, and no actors that we yet have seen could have carried it so far with as little action. Within the space of that one reel I forget the medium and become interested in that much of the story that it told. Either the Vitaphone or the Movietone will appeal as a novelty for but a brief moment. I am confident that when the first audience sees The Lion and the Mouse it will forget Vitaphone before the first reel is over and have attention only for the drama in the story. This assertion is based on the assumption that the picture will be a good one. I have seen only the first reel, and certainly it gives the film a great start.

Actors With Voices to Come Into Their Own

THE development of the new screen art will tend to reduce the importance of the director and increase that of the actor. At present, when a director wishes a character to register without a title that he thinks that another character is a damn fool, he must exercise skill in directing the scene in order that the audience will get its import. In the speaking picture the first character can sit still, his face immobile, and put over the point simply by saying it. But he must have a voice with which to say it. And that's the kick in the whole situation. The other day at the Masquers' Club I saw David Torrence, Mitchell
Lewis, Cyril Chadwick and Edmund Breese chatting at a
time of the day when actors who can not speak English
were busy on motion picture sets. The sound era will
change all that. The big actors of the future will be the
Dave Torrances with their trained, cultured voices and
their sound knowledge of the art of acting. If I were
Jesse Lasky, Louis B. Mayer, Winfield Sheehan or Jack
Warner, I would be rounding up good actors with voices
and placing them under contract. The producer who could
get a corner on such artists would play the devil with his
competitors. There will be no doubling in this voice busi-
ness. The lines that the audience hears will be spoken by
the actor whom the audience sees. Doubling is impos-
sible. Theoretically it is possible, but it is too difficult
and too expensive to be practical. Warner's experimented
with it exhaustively and came to the conclusion that it
could not be done. This means that even our Janet Gaynors
and our Jack Gilberts will have to show themselves
possessed of pleasing voices if they are to retain their
popularity. The day when screen personality is the
only essential to screen popularity will have passed when
sound devices are used generally. And no longer will we
have title writers pawing over speeches that the actors
speak. What they say when the scenes are shot is what the
audience will hear. This means that there will be a
violent revolution also in the writing end of the busi-
ness. Real writers will come to the front. The clever
men and women who write our titles now will be in de-
mand as writers of dialogue—but the dialogue will have
to be in their own stories, for the new art will not tolerate
the manhandling of author's creations, the curse from
which the screen has suffered thus far in its history. At
first, of course, supervisors with no literary training will
write into scripts their conception of speeches, but when
the world laughs at them they'll quit making asses of
themselves and leave the writing of speeches to those who
can write them. As I see the drift toward sound, it will
bring to the fore the real brains already in pictures, and
borrow more heavily than ever from the stage. I am
aware that I am liable to the charge of letting my en-
thusiasm run away with me, but remember, please, that I
have seen developments that you probably have not seen.
I have heard Conrad Nagel make love to Dolores Cos-
tello, and have heard what she said to him, their voices
coming to me just strong enough to be heard above an
obligato of negro voices singing spirituals down in Vir-
ginia; and I watched them make love, for they sat in a
beautiful garden that the camera caught when the Vita-
phone caught their voices and the singing.

* * *

Exploding Myths About Making Colored Pictures

W
e will have the perfect motion picture only when
we have combined action, sound, and color. It
always has seemed strange to me that the industry
has been so backward in realizing the possibilities of color.
For the past two years the Technicolor process has been
brought to a point so near perfection that the industry can
not advance, as an excuse for not adopting color, the fact
that it is not practical. As I have been a consistent cham-
pion of color ever since I started The Spectator, I introduce
it freely as a topic of conversation when calling on my
producer friends, and I am amazed at the ignorance that
the industry displays in the discussions that ensue. There
are two fixed opinions: that color on the screen causes
retinal fatigue, and that the color process is too expensive
to be practical. Both these opinions are contrary to facts.
Before he made Black Pirate Douglas Fairbanks hired
scientists to make exhaustive tests that resulted in proof
of the fact that a natural-color picture was easier on the
eyes of its viewers than the black and white pictures we
get now. So much for the first count in the indictment of
color. As to cost: if any producer will look into the
matter he will find that he can effect a great saving in
production expense by shooting his pictures in color. At
the present time one of the greatest items of expense is
providing a picture with production value—big mob scenes,
spectacles and elaborate sets. Audiences have grown so
accustomed to these features that the best a producer can
hope for when he spends two hundred thousand dollars on
a picture is to get one that looks as if it cost that much.
If he shot his picture in Technicolor he could spend one
hundred thousand dollars and get a production that looked
as if it cost three hundred thousand. In a black and white
picture all the production value must be provided by dol-
ars, and the most expensive set never reveals on the
screen how much money was spent on it. When shot in
Technicolor, an inexpensive set looks like a million dollars.
It was by accident that I discovered these facts for myself.
I happened to wander on to a set at the Tec-Art studio
where Technicolor was shooting one of its "Great Moments
in History" series, the little artistic gems that are being
received so warmly by the public. The scene being shot
was laid in an oak-panelled room. The walls were con-
structed of composition board which had been stained an
oak-brown. I could not believe that any kind of photog-
raphy would cover up the artificiality of the set as I saw
it. I said as much to Dr. Kalmus, president of Techni-
color, and next day he phoned me to come over and see
the rushes. On the screen I saw a room whose walls were
of oak of rich, warm, alive brown. For a black and white
picture ten times as much money would have been spent
on a set, and nowhere near the same amount of produc-
tion value would have been obtained. I was interested,
and visited the studio again. This time ship scenes were
being shot. Again I wondered at the apparent inadequacy
of the set, and again I was enlightened when I visited the
projection room next day. I saw quite enough to make
me decide that if I were going to make a motion picture
that would make the world think my bank-roll was twice
as big as it was, I would shoot it in Technicolor. So much
for the cost of color.

* * *

Charlie Chaplin Has
An Erroneous Idea

C
HARLIE Chaplin is going to do Napoleon on the
screen, and the other day I urged him to do it in
color. "A red thing waving across the screen diverts
the attention of the audience," he argued. A short time
ago I read an interview in which Cecil de Mille was quoted
as saying that color was all right for big spectacles, but
never would be practical for intimate scenes. How far is
screen art going to get when people as prominent in it as
these two hold fixed opinions on something of which they
are so profoundly uninformed? Probably Charlie would sit
with you in a balcony looking down upon the gorgeous
coloring of a costume ball and argue that it would look more attractive if all of it were done in shades of grey; and Cecil would lead you to a corner in his garden where one red rose commanded attention, and tell you that color did not suit a single rose. Recently I saw a Technicolor two-reeler in which Napoleon appears and which was rich in the color of the period. The emperor's uniforms were shown in the exact shades of the originals. In short, I looked at the real thing. Charlie will give us a Napoleon wearing uniforms of various shades of grey. He will impose upon us the task of imagining what the colors are, because he fears that if he gave us the colors themselves, thus releasing our imaginations from the task of conjuring them, it would serve as a diversion that would take our minds off the story. The truth is that not until all pictures are shot in color will the full mind of the audience be on the story. The world is full of color, yet the only place we do not see it is on the motion picture screen, which boasts that it brings all the world to us. We are used to saying that our present pictures are in black and white, but they are not. Their shades are grey and greyer. Only in a Technicolor picture have I seen real black on the screen, a rich, beautiful black that I wanted to run my hand through. No one can deny the emotional appeal of color, yet screen art, which is successful only to the extent that it appeals to the emotions, frowns upon the instrument that will do half its work for it. Some of our feminine stars have reached the stage of having to be shot through several gauges when close-ups are taken. If shot in Technicolor they can wear street make-up and go ahead for another ten years before a gauze would be necessary for the biggest close-up. Anything that would add ten years to the life of a feminine star is worth looking into. But apart from all material considerations, we must come to color because it is logical. We can not go on forever presenting a red rose as a dark grey spot on the screen. As in the case of sound, the grey was all right when we could not do any better, but now that the public knows that the red of a rose can be reproduced, it will be satisfied no longer with the dark grey spot. But in spite of its inevitability, I can not see any indication of studio appreciation of the fact. All thought is expended on an unnatural and expensive way of making pictures, and none on a natural, economical method that has been brought to near-perfection on the very door-step of the industry, but to which the industry seems strangely reluctant to open the door. But someone will give us a big feature in which color and sound will be combined, and then all the rest will have to follow suit. Studios would be wise to develop artists who understand the photographic value of colors.

**Screen Actors Are An Exceedingly Dumb Bunch**

WITHOUT doubt screen actors, taken as a class, are the dumbest creatures that an indulgent God lets live. They are playthings in the hands of the producers, and probably will continue to be for all time, as they seem to lack the collective brains to help them to help themselves. When everyone was boosting the Academy I contended in The Spectator that Equity was the only organization that ever would serve screen actors. Many of my friends pointed out to me that I was wrong and that the formation of the Academy made Equity unnecessary. Recently the actors' branch of the Academy was called together for a meeting. One hundred and twenty-five letters of notification were sent out; the night before the meeting one hundred and twenty-five telegrams were despatched; the day of the meeting one hundred and twenty-five phone messages were sent. Nine actors attended the meeting. While a few leaders among them were trying to weld actors into an organization that could demand fair play from producers, the latter were pursuing merrily their policy of unfairness. They still pursue it. Individual actors can not object if they hope to continue at work, but Equity could help them if they had sense enough to make it strong by joining it. The greatest need of all the industry is an eight-hour day. It never will be wholly prosperous until it puts itself on such a basis. As the short-sighted producers can not be made to see this, the reform must be forced on it. Equity is the only organization that could be placed in a position to do the forcing. Producers would benefit by it. Equity has banished Jeanne Eagels from the stage for eighteen months because she did not live up to her contract with her producers, the organization thereby demonstrating that it considers the interests of the producers and its members to be identical. All that a strong motion picture Equity would do would be to force producers to conduct their business as it must be conducted if it is to reach its greatest economic efficiency. At present producers honestly think that the film industry is unlike all others and that an eight-hour day could not be applied to it without doing it harm. It is a ridiculous belief, but it prevails. At present the industry measures an artist's value to it by a standard that all other industries have discarded as an economic folly. An actor who can be persuaded to work sixteen hours a day is judged to be twice as valuable as one working eight hours. And actors, the poor fools, stand for it. Regular hours on the Tiffany-Stahl lot are from seven-forty-five in the morning until midnight. The new standard contract provides for extra pay when an artist who is engaged by the week works for seven days. Tiffany-Stahl gets around it by employing artists for fourteen days for two weeks pay, a cheap and mean subterfuge. And again artists stand for it, for they have no organization to insist upon their rights. More foreign actors continue to pour in because there is no Equity to stop them. Equity has an organization here, but it is of little value because but a fraction of the thousands of screen artists belong to it. Every one of them should be a member. Producers who can see no virtue in fair play never will extend it to screen artists except under compulsion,
and a strong organization is the only weapon of compulsion that the artists can wield. I have no hope of such an organization being formed. Actors will continue to be treated like cattle because collectively they have the brains of cattle. But perhaps my simile does cattle an injustice. They have at least brains enough to travel in herds, something that screen actors have not yet succeeded in doing. * * *

Doesn't Seem Possible That It Is As Good As I Think It Is

EVER since I viewed The Patriot I have been wondering if any picture possibly could be as good as I think it is. It seems to me that there never has been such direction as Lubitsch gave this picture, and that the screen never has shown us a performance that could match that of Jannings as the mad czar. And never has any other star been given such extraordinary support as Lewis Stone provides. Superlatives, all of them, but it is a superlative picture. It is a tremendous story, directed by a genius and acted by masters of their craft. Never before have Lubitsch or Jannings done anything, in this country or abroad, to compare with it. The Patriot is a perfect drama. There is nothing petty about it. Its theme is the welfare of a nation, and the lengths to which a man will go to serve his country. It follows the perfect formula by having its drama develop within it. Nothing from the outside intrudes; no character is struck by lightning nor is one disposed of by a train wreck. The situations pile up on one another with almost bewildering rapidity, but each is the logical result of what goes before. There were ten reels of it when I saw it, and not for one moment does the interest let down. There are dozens of intensely dramatic scenes in it, any three or four of which would make an otherwise ordinary picture outstanding. The mood of the direction matches admirably the mood of the story. It is an important story, and the picture takes itself seriously, moving along in a brisk, businesslike manner as if it would brook no interference from anyone. When a statesman wants to despatch a message he hands it to his secretary, who hands it to some other busy person, who passes it on to someone else who is in a hurry to see it gets on its way. When the leading characters are going from one place to another, they keep going, ignoring the screen habit of stopping to smirk in front of the camera. In fact, Lubitsch never seems to take the camera into account. When a character starts to leave a room, he leaves it without turning at the door to remind us who he is. The mob scenes bear further testimony to the perfection of the Lubitsch touch. The czar is mad, and when he goes for a drive his horses gallop, making the peasants hurry to get out of his way. But don't get the impression that the drama moves along at a dizzy rate. It doesn't. It moves swiftly, but smoothly, and without one superfluous foot of film being used. It is the greatest argument for the perfect script that I ever have seen on the screen.

Every little while I encounter a director who boasts to me that he can't be bothered with a script, that he reads his story once, throws the script away, and proceeds to shoot. The picture produced by this method is exactly the kind of picture that this method would produce, and its director never will amount to anything. Ernst Lubitsch does not deem himself blessed with an ability to shoot without a script. He takes months if necessary to put a perfect motion picture on paper, and when he is satisfied with it in that form he shoots it exactly as it is written. That is why his pictures are such perfect examples of screen art. It is why The Patriot is an absolutely flawless screen drama. In the whole ten reels I did not see one scene that could be criticized adversely. It's a picture that makes me nervous. It doesn't seem possible that it is as good as I think it is. * * *

Jannings’ Performance Greatest That the Screen Ever Has Seen

WHEN in days to come we foregather and discuss the dying days of the silent drama and the dawn of the sound device era, we will talk of the glorious performances that Emil Jannings gave us just before the old style went out. As the mad czar in The Patriot he provides the greatest characterization that the screen world ever has seen. He is amazing. One reason we do not have more madmen on the screen is because it is considered impossible for a crazy person to awaken the sympathy of the audience. Jannings gets our sympathy. He is a pathetic creature, harmless to those who have contact with him, but a menace because of the power he wields. At no time does he do anything that a sane person might not do, but never do we lose sight of the fact that he is insane. He relies almost entirely on his eyes to put over his mental derangement. He runs the full gamut of emotions, and his gay moments provide some delicious comedy. His performance is a whole chapter in the history of screen acting. Possibly if anyone except Jannings had played the part of the czar, Lewis Stone would have run away with the picture. Under the magic of the Lubitsch direction a new Stone has appeared. Always a good actor, his performances were marred somewhat by his mechanics. He has had certain idiiosyncrasies which he carried from one part to another, and always had a tendency to stress his points too much. In The Patriot he displays a new art. All his well worn gestures are missing and he gives a performance that entitles him to a classification in which he did not belong before, that of a really great screen actor. I am grateful to this picture for enabling me to indulge in something that pleases me so much that it amounts to a selfishness—introducing to you another unknown who has made good. Harry Cordingly was selected by Lubitsch from a score of applicants for the part of a peasant who grows in importance in the picture until he becomes an animal and chokes Jannings to death, but who proves to be a sentimental baby when he is forced to shoot Stone. It is an exacting part, but Cordingly was equal to it, and I wish him a happy and prosperous screen career. Nell Hamilton is commendable as the crown prince. And now having reversed conventions and disposed of the men first, I come to Florence Vidor, and have pleasure in setting down that even the extraordinary work of Jannings and Stone does not keep her from being very much to the front in The Patriot. She is splendid in all her scenes. Vera Vernonina has a small part and handles it well. Apparently Lubitsch belongs on the Paramount lot, which now is turning out such excellent pictures. After his experience on the Metro lot where his Student Prince was ruined while he was in Europe, it must have been a relief to him to find himself a part of the efficient organization that now surrounds Ben Schulberg. Such a picture.
THE FILM SPECTATOR

John Barrymore Gives
His Finest Performance

JOHN Barrymore’s performance in The Tempest is perhaps the finest he yet has contributed to the screen. It lacks the wide range of his Jekyll and Hyde and the robust vigor of Sea Beast, but is rich in opportunities for what one might term intensive intellectual acting. Barrymore has many scenes which he plays by himself and in which he carries the story along by the force of his mastery of the art of screen acting. There is less of the actor in his performance in this picture than we usually find in his screen characterizations. The part rings true. Particularly effective are the scenes with Barrymore alone in prison. The hopelessness of his position, his despair, his longing for freedom are depicted with rare skill and power. The Tempest is going to add to Jack Barrymore’s screen following. And it is going to introduce to American audiences a young woman who hereafter will loom large in screen circles. Camilla Horn, the German young-ster who played Marguerite in the Ufa production of Faust, starring Jannings, was brought from Europe to appear opposite Barrymore in The Tempest, and that those responsible for the importation had the right hunch is proven most emphatically by Camilla’s performance. She is a wonderful little artist, a fine looking girl whose face indicates the presence of an intellect behind it. Judging her by what I have seen of her in two pictures, I would place her among the half-dozen best screen actresses. She is equal to every phase of her part in The Tempest, and gives the impression that she would be fully as equal to any other part, no matter how exacting. In apportioning credit for the success of The Tempest Sam Taylor’s name is to be bracketed with those of the two leading players. It was a brave thing that Johnnie Considine did when he gave Sam such an important picture to direct. With several comedies and only one comedy-drama to his credit, there was nothing in Taylor’s record to indicate that he could handle a drama as powerful as The Tempest. But he has proven equal to the task. One of the strongest features of the picture is its masterly direction. Taylor has a definite and intelligent understanding of dramatic values, an eye for composition and grouping, and can handle his mobs with as much assurance and conviction as any director more experienced in pictures of this sort. Sam Taylor may be put down as one of our really big directors. Considine has given The Tempest an artistic and generous production, a feature of all United Artists pictures supervised by him. The photography is superb throughout, and the intelligent use of lights gives the picture a rich quality. You may put The Tempest down as a picture that the public will receive with approval. One feature of it that will interest Hollywood is the presence in the cast of two actors who have not been seen on the screen before and who give truly magnificent performances. Boris de Fas, who, I believe, is a Russian, plays the part of a nameless, nondescript peddler, and gives a performance that stamps him as an actor of ability. Ulrich Haupt, a German, makes his bow in American pictures in The Tempest. He plays the heavy. I don’t think I ever have seen on the screen a more perfect performance of a role of that sort. Louis Wolheim is in the cast also and adds considerably to the entertainment value of the picture. The peculiar thing about his part is that it has nothing to do with the story, but it is none the less interesting on that account.

(Operator’s Note—The above 14 lines are “overs” which means that Mr. Beaton changed his mind about what he wanted to say. This is the first time I have seen that happen since the inception of The Spectator, and I have put in type everything he has written for it.)

“Glorious Betsy” Is
Warner’s Best Picture

THE Warner brothers are going to open their Hollywood theatre with the best picture they ever made, with the exception of some of the Lubitsch productions. Glorious Betsy is a page from history. Dolores Costello plays Betsy Patterson, the Baltimore beauty who married Jerome Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon, played by Conrad Nagel. In case you are as ignorant as I was about it, it will interest you to know that the young Bonaparte married the glorious Betsy and took her with him to France, where she was turned back by the emperor, who had other marriage plans for his brother. Up to this point the picture follows history, and makes a permissible departure from it to make a more agreeable ending than the real Patterson-Bonaparte romance enjoyed. Alan Crossland directed Glorious Betsy and has made a splendid picture of it. I do not wish to suggest that Crossland has limitations, but I must give him credit for being particularly happy in his direction of costume pictures. He has an artistic eye for grouping, a sound sense of drama and a neat sense of humor. As I recall all the pictures I have seen them in, I can not place one in which either Dolores or Conrad gave a performance equal to that which contributes so largely to making Glorious Betsy such satisfactory entertainment. As the screen story is written it is a beautiful romance, and it has been produced, directed and acted beautifully. It differs from Crossland’s Don Juan in that it is a picture to which you may take the children. Dolores Costello plays Betsy delightfully and with understanding. There are gay moments and sad ones in her characterization, and she runs the whole gamut of emotions with a skill surprising in a girl so young. This picture reveals to us a new Conrad Nagel, a romantic actor, tender, dashing, skilful with the sword and possessed of a rare sense of humor. What he will mean to speaking pictures is demonstrated in those sequences which have been vitaphoned. His fine voice registers splendidly. The voice of Dolores has a quality as charming as her personality, entitling her to face with confidence the future of her art. Marc McDermott, another whose voice will be a valuable asset to him, plays a part with his usual confidence, grace and skill. I am writing this review three

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weeks before the opening of the new theatre, but already I think I can hear the storm of applause that will greet one sequence. Andre de Segurola is one of the commissioners who come from France to announce that Napoleon has become emperor. We hear him make the announcement and then sing the most glorious national hymn, La Marseillaise. It is screen entertainment that will stir the most lethargic film patron and is interesting as presaging what the future of pictures holds for us. Although Darryl Zanuck assured me that the Vitaphone score for the picture as played by Herman Heller's symphony orchestra will sound much better in the theatre than it did in the projection room, I scarecely am ready to believe him. Perhaps it is because I never before heard music while viewing a picture in a projection room, but it is a fact that the scoring of Glorious Betsy seemed to me to be the best I ever heard. If you miss this picture you are not keeping abreast of screen history.

* * *

Again Herbert Brenon
Gives Us a Masterpiece

HERBERT Brenon has made an amazingly good picture out of Laugh, Clown, Laugh. Metro borrowed him from United Artists to direct the picture, with Lon Chaney in the star part. The result is completely satisfactory. The picture pleases the eye and appeals to the senses, and throughout its entire length there is an undercurrent of feeling that always can be looked for in a Brenon picture, and which we seldom find in one with a European locale. There is a sweep to Laugh, Clown, Laugh, a suggestion of breadth and freedom that is refreshing. As you watch the picture you have a feeling of comfort, and you do not have to overwork your eyes to see everything that is going on. This effect is produced by Brenon's policy of placing the audience in a good seat, not too far away and not too close. See this picture and you will understand what I mean. You will notice that there are long shots of scenes in which there are but two people, and nothing that they do will be lost upon you by their distance from the camera. Also you will find two, and sometimes three, players in a medium shot, each speaking titles without confusing you for a moment over the identity of each speaker. I have raved about the close-up curse for a long time, and if you wish to find out my conception of its cure, see Laugh, Clown, Laugh when it is released. When Brenon has a scene in an attractive setting, he plays it out with the setting as part of it, consequently we get a succession of beautiful shots without losing anything in the way of drama. There are close-ups in the picture, but they are used intelligently. I can not recall any previous Lon Chaney characterization which reveals the artist as this one does. Lon is splendid throughout. There is a suggestion of over-acting in the first sequence, but that is as far as it gets. He is magnificent in a sequence in the great empty theatre, when he invokes an audience and an orchestra. The leading woman in this picture is Loretta Young, a miss of seventeen, who is as sweet and refreshing as one of the spring flowers that people my backyard where I sit and write. It is her first picture. What kind of an art is it in which a child can step to the front in her first adventure with it and give the impression that she never has known anything else? Loretta is as self-possessed, as easy and as natural before the camera as any seasoned player could be. I could not see the slightest evidence of the novice in one of her scenes. She undoubtedly has ability, which will assist her charming and appealing personality to carry her far. Bernard Siegel gives a splendid performance, as also doe Nils Asther. Loretta and Asther carry the romance, which Brenon has stretched through the picture with his usual tenderness, sympathy and delicacy. Even while I write I find the spell of Laugh, Clown, Laugh growing on me. It is an excellent picture, the finest that Metro has given us in many a long day. And I insist that it derives its chief strength from what I have been urging on the industry so persistently—the cessation of the ignorant use of close-ups. Brenon gives us a motion picture, while so many others give us parades of portraits. When a close-up is necessary, Brenon brings his character forward and gives us a nearer view of him. As we have had no unnecessary ones, we find this necessary one quite refreshing. Which is as it should be.

* * *

Can't Stand Comparison
With Great Predecessor

THE Street Angel is a picture that everyone should see. The combination of Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell directed by Frank Borzage is one of the most important in motion pictures, and is so efficient that it could produce nothing that it would be a waste of time to see. It was the fate of these three people to be united in their first venture together in a picture of such extraordinary merit that their future efforts must be confined to striving to reach again a peak once attained, and every succeeding effort can not escape comparison with the first. Seventh Heaven is a much greater picture than Street Angel because it has, in optimism, a great theme and, in the war, a great background. Street Angel is just a romance, and has no theme. Also Seventh Heaven came to us as a glad surprise, introducing to us two youngsters from whom we had no right to expect anything; while Street Angel brought us artists whom we regarded as seasoned and from whom perhaps we expected something that no actors are great enough to provide. In view of all this, our first reaction to Street Angel is one of disappointment. But when we think of the extraordinary performances of Charlie and Janet, and the masterly touches and deep understanding of Borzage; and recall the marvelous pictures that the cameraman put on the screen, we arrive at the conclusion that Street Angel is, after all, a pretty good picture. If we could forget Seventh Heaven, we would think it still better. But no amount of thinking could convince us that Street Angel is as good as it should be. In two or three places it drags until it is tiresome, but that is a fault that can be remedied easily. The chief faults of the picture are fundamental ones that should have been eliminated before the script reached the director. As in the case of Ramona, which is reviewed somewhere farther along in this Spectator, Street Angel tries to awaken our interest in two people who are inherently uninteresting at the outset and who remain so throughout the picture. It is not just acting that can put over a picture. The performances must be about something in itself interesting, and which becomes more so to the extent that the acting approaches perfection. We leave Janet and Charlie as we found them: a couple of waifs
from nowhere. The whole picture is too much in monotonous, a weakness that extends even to the extraordinary photography, of which there were a few too many subdued shots. When the two characters are parted on the eve of their wedding there was a chance to get drama by showing the girl going down to jail and the man going upward to success. But this chance was overlooked; the two remain always in the same station of life, thus robbing the picture of an opportunity to be strong in contrasts. The one weakness of Borzage's direction, admirable enough in most respects, was the characterization of Farrell after Janet goes to jail. Again we have no contrasts. Charlie is drooping as much after a year of it as he did when the blow first fell, which is altogether wrong. I don't know how the original story had it, but I feel that the screen version would have provided a much better picture if Farrell had become successful and famous while Janet was in jail. But the film will do no one any harm. Janet remains the greatest screen actress we have and Charlie takes a long step forward. Street Angel is his picture more than it is Janet's. His performance is really notable.

* * *

Rowland Lee Has a Few New Ideas

OWLAND Lee always can be counted on to do something different. He has no accepted method of handling a given situation, which lends a refreshing quality to the pictures he directs. He opens Three Sinners, Pola Negri's latest, with a truck shot. The camera travels around a room, pausing for a moment in front of each person in it until there is nobody left, after which it backs up and shows us the whole room. By this time we have seen all the people, but have no idea who they are. Lee makes us acquainted with them by means of spoken titles. Two spoken to a child—"Kiss your father good-night," and "Tell your grandmother you're sorry"—are illuminating. There are no narrative titles in the picture, which, in itself, is a good feature. But in this production some of the spoken titles are distorted or made cumbrousome by being written to embrace the narrative. I believe that if narrative titles can not be avoided, they should be presented frankly as such, thus ridding spoken titles of the burden of the story. I blamed Lee for too many close-ups in his two previous pictures. I do not know if I am entitled to any credit for the reformation that the new picture reveals that he has undergone, but if congratulations are not due me, they certainly are due Lee. There are comparatively few close-ups in Three Sinners, and those that are in it are placed intelligently. I believe this picture is going to be the most popular with American audiences that Pola has made in this country. While the locale is in Europe, the theme is a universal one that could be presented with a Dallas, Texas, background as effectively as with a Parisian background. The presence in it of a baby adds a human note that most of Pola's pictures have lacked. Pola gives her usual splendid performance. Even in the sequences in which she is shown as occupying a doubtful relationship with the proprietor of a crooked gambling house, she never lets us forget the fact that she is a good woman, forced into a false position through no fault of her own. She has a splendid scene with Paul Lukas when she reveals to him that she is his wife whom he has mourned as dead. This sequence derives most of its effectiveness from the fact that it is presented in long and medium shots and is devoid of those great, staring close-ups which are shot by unimaginative directors and inserted by unintelligent cutters. In this picture I get my first glimpse of Lukas. He is an acceptable leading man, which he seems to be in this picture until the end nearly is reached, when Warner Baxter steps to the front and gets Pola's hand. The best work that Lukas does is in a sequence showing him searching for the body of his wife who he thinks has been killed in a railroad wreck. He sheds no tears, but registers that he is overwhelmed with grief. It reflects intelligence in both acting and direction. Olga Baclanova, Tullio Carminati and Robert Klein are others who contribute good performances. I am not sure that the titles that were in the picture when I saw it are the ones that will be in it when it is released, but I hope they won't be. They are stiff and stilted, and punctuated terribly. But Three Sinners is a good picture, even with its present titles. Those exhibitors who have the idea that American audiences do not want Negri pictures should try this one on their patrons. I think they'll like it.

Why Don't Other Producers Follow the Harold Lloyd Plan?

ALL Harold Lloyd's pictures are successful primarily because he is an excellent actor. Speedy is full of hilarious gags that in themselves are funny, but the storms of laughter that they arouse do not reach their peak until Harold, by some little stroke of actor's genius, gives them their final punch. In all his pictures Harold has to compete for recognition with his gags, and the latter always are so clever that they draw the applause and lead us to overlook the fact that all of Harold Lloyd's success is due mainly to the fact that he is one of the best actors on the screen. In Speedy he gives what seemed to me to be the best performance of his career. He gives us a boy that we like, not a frozen-face Buster Keaton, nor a wisecracking pest like Bill Haines; but a regular youth who can't hold a job, and doesn't care, and who is ready to blow his last cent to give his sweetie a fine time. The absolute cleanliness of the Lloyd pictures, of course, has contributed greatly to their success. When I have said that Speedy is very funny and extraordinarily clever I have written my whole review of it. Ted Wilde's direction is flawless. Amusement and hearty laughs are not all that I get out of Harold's pictures. As I watch them I wonder how under the sun the amazingly clever gags are thought of. I make obeisance to their creators! I bow low to the genius who conceived the idea of using the reflex action in a total stranger's knee as a means of getting even with another stranger who trod on one's toes. The brilliance of such inspirations dazzles me. Speedy is full of them. Harold makes one picture a year. I think that's it, but, anyway, they come a long way apart. When we see one of them flit joyously across the screen it gives us the impression that Harold and his gang made it one morning when they were full of pep. There is a spontaneity, a spark to them that makes us feel that they were born of a moment's inspiration, and nothing to suggest that they were built slowly and that they progressed painstakingly from idea to idea. And despite the fact that he does not give us a great many pictures, Harold has
made a great many dollars. I don't suppose even Charlie Chaplin can match his fortune. The financial aspect of the Lloyd comedies interests me only as it supports my variously expressed opinion that there always is a market for mentality. I have said repeatedly that what most pictures lack is downright cleverness. We turn them out now so rapidly that there is no time to make them original. If one of the big producers put Harold Lloyd under contract to-day, Harold agreeing to the terms offered him, we would get three, and perhaps four, Lloyd pictures a year. They would be like the Haines, Dix and other comedies and would make some money, but not half as much as Harold makes now by his one-picture-a-year policy. As picture-making is a money-making endeavor, I am surprised that other producers do not profit by their contemplation of the Lloyd method. Hasn't it occurred to someone that if Buster Keaton were put on a one-a-year schedule, and that the whole year were consumed in making the one as clever as possible, he soon would be making five dollars to every one that he is making now? His pictures would have time to be clever. Cleanliness and cleverness constitute a screen combination that can't be beaten.

Beautiful Picture, But It Lacks Story Value

RAMONA is a beautiful picture. If I were a director or a producer I would rather have it to my credit than ninety per cent. of the pictures I have seen thus far this year. Edwin Carewe directed it intelligently, and it contains excellent performances and superb photography. Yet despite the fact that it has all the superficial essentials to picture perfection, it is not being hailed by the public as one of the great pictures of the year. It will not be an outstanding success financially, which shows that a picture must have something besides acting and scenery. In endeavoring to satisfy ourselves with the reasons why Ramona has not scored a greater success we may find out things that will profit us to remember when we make other pictures. We can find only a few faults with the direction. I think Carewe painted with too bold strokes. He made Vera Lewis too hard and unrelenting. It is pointed out in a title that Miss Lewis has a distinct grievance against Dolores Del Rio, but the individuality of the grievance is lost when everyone else in the picture except her son, is made a victim of it. A more logical characterization of the mother would have shown her subjecting only Dolores to harsh treatment. After Dolores and Warner Baxter have been married for some years they smile and smirk at one another continually, which no people do after they've been married for any length of time. Ed Carewe ought to know that. The greatest fault in characterization was that of Roland Drew. His grief over the marriage of Dolores to another man is exaggerated grotesquely. Five years after the wedding he still is in a daze. If he had suffered as greatly during that period as we see him suffering at the end of it, he would have lost his mind. That concludes my indictment of the direction, which, all told, does not consume much footage, not enough to mar an otherwise perfect picture. The reason Ramona did not appeal to me is because no reason was given why it should. A half-breed girl of a century ago is not of sufficient importance to enlist my interest, and the tragedy of her romance was not complicated enough to hold my interest. Ramona is a biography of a girl who does nothing in the picture to merit having her biography written. If a villain had crossed her path and made her the victim of a complicated plot I could have become intrigued with the manner in which the plotter was foiled. If the story had been based on a theme I would have been interested in its treatment. But there is no theme. The girl is uninterestingly virtuous from the first, and the men are the souls of honor, something that becomes good screen material only when it has to fight against odds to remain so. Dolores' baby dies. It just dies. The death has nothing to do with anything else in the story. Pillagers ride in from some unknown place and destroy Ramona's home. We don't know who they are; we have not seen them previously, and we do not see them again. Unless we can be interested somewhat in them as personalities we can not be interested greatly in anything they do. Ramona is a picture that emphasizes the value of the tie-up. It shows that a straight narrative free of complications is not good screen material. No picture has to exert itself to cause me to shed tears, yet I was unmoved when Ramona's baby died and could not share the grief of the mother. I was delighted with the long procession of beautiful scenes, but less beauty and more story value would have held my interest more closely.

Production Good, But Story Lacking in Logic

MAN-Made Women, the last Leatrice Joy picture made by De Mille, contains some of the nicest bits of direction I have seen in a long time. Paul Stein is particularly effective in putting over his time lapses. He shows dinner guests assembling in the drawing-room, then by a succession of close-up dissolves, each of one place at a table, he shows the progress of an entire meal. He carries the same idea through an evening at bridge and ends with hands reached out for wraps. He shows an entire evening in about thirty seconds of dissolves. In several other places in the picture he makes further intelligent use of the dissolve to advance his story by skipping lightly over the non-essentials. But everything in the production is not to his credit. He has four of his dinner guests lined up as rigidly as a mixed quartette while they are awaiting the butler's announcement. Guests at a social function do not stand in a straight line, elbows touching, and grinning urbanely at nothing whatever. The only director who can make a social gathering look absolutely natural is Harry D'Arrast, and the chief reason for his success is that he realizes that all the guests do not face the same way all the time. Stein gives us a group of four guests standing in an absolutely straight line, which is quite unlike what four guests would do unless they were drunk and wanted to sing "Sweet Adeline." Leatrice Joy, H. B. Warner, John Boles and Seena Owen give very good performances in Man-Made Women, and the photography brings out all the values in a thoroughly adequate production, consequently it is a picture that I can recommend to the exhibitor readers of The Spectator, which point they should keep in mind while they read what more I have to say about it. The person who falls down in this production is Ernest Pascal, the author of the story. It is a variation of the taming of the shrew theme, treated illogically. Leatrice leaves her husband (Boles) and Harry Warner, himself in
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love with her, contrives a reconciliation. The story is unconvincing because Boles is presented as an impossible, surly ass, whom a wife not only should leave, but whose throat she should cut just prior to her departure. Those who think will find that Boles’ characterization ruins the picture. To have any strength the story must create sympathy for the deserted husband. Man-Made Women creates no such sympathy. If Boles had been stripped of his gloom and had been given a sense of humor, the audience would feel sorry for him and the story would have some point. In one sequence Seena Owen tries to shoot Leatrice Joy, and again we have action based on the silliest reason. In his original story Pascal may have established the logic of his situations, something that the screen story absolutely fails to do. By paying as much attention to cause as to effect, Man-Made Women could have been made a clever and refreshing treatment of the triangle theme. As the picture presents it, we have the noble lover persuading the wife to go back to her husband, while the audience hopes she won’t, for after about one month with such a husband a wife would have to leave him, shoot him or go crazy. It is too bad that all the beautiful production, clever direction and good acting could not have had a story back of them that was constructed with more logic.

* * *

Can’t Eliminate Character Simply By Not Showing Him

There is a sequence in Easy Come, Easy Go, a new Richard Dix picture directed by Frank Tuttle, that in a striking manner demonstrates that you cannot eliminate a character from a picture simply by eliminating him from scenes. In a recent Spectator I discussed the same idea as it related to close-ups, and criticized directors who pick out one character in a group with a close-up and have that character do something to which the others in the group do not react when the shot is enlarged to embrace them. When the presence of a character in a sequence is established it must be kept in mind while the sequence is being shot. In Easy Come, Easy Go we see the conductor of the railway train that is the locale for the sequence, enter the wash-room, and take off and hang up his coat and hat. He gets a hurry-up call and leaves the wash-room in his shirtsleeves. This is the last we see of him. He is in the picture to provide Dix with a disguise when he dons the conductor’s hat and coat. I can’t remember any other picture going to such elaborate pains to be wrong. When all the rest of the sequence is being run on the screen any intelligent person in the audience must be wondering what the conductor is doing. We know there is no place in a train of Pullmans where he can hide, and we know that conductors of crack passenger trains do not roam around in their shirtsleeves. No picture should make an audience wonder about something that it does not explain eventually. It would have been an easy matter to have shown Dix finding a hat and coat in one of those little cupboards that occupy what would be corners on Pullman cars. Then we wouldn’t have worried about the conductor. Easy Come, Easy Go is the poorest Paramount picture I have seen for some time, although it by no means is a total loss. It has rather more of a connected story than most of the comedies of its kind, and it is only by comparing it with other recent pictures from the same lot that I find it indifferent. It lacks that quality that Paramount has begun to put into its pictures: cleverness. But it has story enough to hold your interest and to keep you wondering what is going to happen. It is rather a conventional role that Dix plays and he plays it with his accustomed zest and ability. He is a much better actor than most of his parts give him any opportunity to demonstrate. The outstanding feature of the film is the performance of Charles Sellon, who plays an old crook. It is a superb characterization that should bring this fine old actor other good parts. Nancy Carroll, who scores so heavily in Abie’s Irish Rose, is the girl in Easy Come, Easy Go. It is just a girl part that allows a girl many opportunities to display her beauty and none to display her ability. But Nancy is all right. We’ll hear from her. The titles are a drawback. A great deal of the humor of Sellon’s characterization was lessened by the kind of titles that were given to him. But on the whole, Easy Come, Easy Go...

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* * *

Looked Unpromising, But It Really Is Interesting

YOU can imagine how I tried to side-step it when I was told that it was a six-reel picture made by some rich Santa Monica woman not connected with the film industry, that it was shot entirely in her home and that the leading part was played by a young miss who never before had stood in front of a motion picture camera. But I could not stall indefinitely and finally found myself and the six reels together in a projection room. I saw a mighty interesting picture. I have said many times in The Spectator that it is easy to make a good motion picture, and Sins of the Cradle rather goes to prove it. Mrs. Annie L. McDonald knew nothing whatever about how pictures were made, but she had an idea for a story and a beautiful house and garden that could be used as a locale for it. She wrote the story, setting down one scene after another until she figured that she had told her story in a series of pictures that would be both beautiful and entertaining. She knew the kind of a girl she wanted for the leading part, but could not find just the right one among the many Hollywood professionals whom she interviewed. At no stage of the growth of the idea did she have the slightest notion of using her own fifteen-year-old daughter Ann in the picture, but one morning someone suggested that Ann be given a test—and Ann played the part. Mrs. McDonald was so loath to exploit her own daughter that Ann McDonald appears on the screen as Ann Preston. She gives an extraordinary performance, but that is not the feature of the production that impressed me most. Sins of the Cradle is a better motion picture than over half of those made by the big producing organizations, yet no one with real picture experience had anything to do with it until it was handed, after it was shot, to Tom Terris to edit. It is full of production value of the most approved movie kind. An example: We see an elaborate fountain in the center of a flower garden, sending a score of streams into the air to run through moonbeams before falling on a group of statuary of great artistic beauty. Suddenly the statuary comes to life—girls in bathing suits. Sins of the Cradle, however, is a deeply human picture. It tells of a foundling home which has a cradle in a bower to which unmarried mothers may come and leave the little ones whom the rest of the world apparently does not want. Ann plays the part of a foundling whom we follow through life until she finds that love has greater pulling power than the convent which had been her intention to enter as a nun. It is a picture of tenderness, sympathy and humanity, and I am sure that audiences anywhere would like it.

* * *

THE Spectator is gratified to see so much professional advertising coming to it voluntarily. We want all that we can get, but we have been devoting our attention to creating a medium that would do the advertiser good and have made no effort to get advertising by applying pressure. I flatter myself that the regular readers of The Spectator are convinced that no amount of advertising by an individual can affect the paper's opinion of the work of such individual. The Spectator advertising pages are valuable to those who buy them only to the extent that the editorial pages are honest. And the price of space is just as honest. The rate is high, but everyone who uses space pays it. The other night a prominent director told me that his manager had persuaded him not to advertise in The Spectator because the rate was too high. About four months ago this same manager told me that he would take a full page in every issue for one year if I would give him a reduction of twenty-five per cent. in price, but bill his clients for the full amount, handing the manager his

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part of it when the checks came in. I told this petty grafter that when I could afford to reduce my rates I would return the advertiser, not stealing agents, the benefit of the reduction. Since that time this chap has persuaded himself that The Spectator's a poor advertising medium, and he advises his clients accordingly. The full-page rate is eighty-one dollars, the advertiser pays that much and The Spectator gets all of it. We divide with no one, and will sell space on no other condition. The Spectator is read by everyone in the industry, I think it is well thought of, and it is the only medium which an actor, director, writer, cameraman, or anyone else wishing to reach the industry need use.

* * *

SYD Chaplin has come back to us in A Little Bit of Fluff, his first English-made picture that I have seen. It lives up to its title by being a fluffy little thing, but it is amusing throughout, and somewhat better than we achieve over here when we attempt the same kind of polite farce. If the foreigners make pictures as bad as Flying Romeos or Ladies’ Night in a Turkish Bath, they wisely keep them at home and send us something of a higher grade. This Sydney Chaplin thing is not the world’s cleverest comedy, but it has a degree of cleverness in it, and for its entire unwinding it seemed to keep the preview audience amused. At times it was greeted with roars of laughter. The English propensity for bold strokes was in evidence in the characterization of a mother-in-law in A Little Bit of Fluff. The character was overdrawn so extravagantly that the whole production was harmed. Syd himself gives a splendid performance in this picture, being just a little better than he ever was before. I always have considered him to be a clever actor, but he not always has had parts that enabled him to show it. An interesting feature of Fluff to me was the opportunity it afforded me of meeting Miss Betty Balfour. I read regularly several English film papers, and have gathered from them the impression that this Betty person is the greatest drawing card over there. I don’t know much more about her now than I did before I saw her. She is attractive to look at, and gives the impression that she is intelligent, but there was nothing in her part to give her an opportunity to demonstrate what she knows about acting.

* * *

LET us consider for a moment a sequence in which the hero, in an auto, is rushing to the rescue of the heroine in distress. There seems to be a general impression that the way to build suspense is by cutting back and forth from the hero to the heroine. There are half a dozen flashes of the auto, not one of them long enough to create the impression of sustained speed. I believe the effect would be better if there were but one cut to the auto of sufficient footage to create suspense. If the camera were mounted behind the driver and the audience carried along with him far enough to make it feel that it was flying to the rescue with him, it would make a stronger sequence than we get now by placing the camera at the side of the road to catch the car as it flashes by. The weakness of the short shots is that they do not create the impression that it is going to any particular place. Traveling with it for some distance and eliminating all other shots of it, I think would make the rescue more dramatic. At all events, it is an idea worth trying. It would have the virtue of being different. A weakness of pictures is that the same thing is done in the same way in all of them. The minds of directors seem to have become standardized. Few of them seem possessed of original ideas.

* * *

LAUGH, Clown, Laugh contains some scenes that are difficult to handle. They show stage performances to which audiences in the picture react. Ordinarily such scenes cause reactions within the picture out of propor-

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tion to the merits of the performances that are reproduced. In *The Man Who Laughs* we have audiences laughing uproariously at something that we find pathetic as we view it, consequently the laughter jars us. In *Laugh, Clown, Laugh*, Herbert Brenon handles such scenes in a manner that overcomes the difficulty. He shows us only the beginning and the end of the stage performance and we ascribe the enthusiasm of the audience to the merits of that part of the performance that we did not see. Lon Chaney gives a remarkable characterization of the clown, but Brenon does not stress it too heavily, and does not offer what we see on the screen as an excuse for the hearty applause of the audience before which Chaney performs.

**A PRODUCER** showed me recently a list of ten pictures. "Every one of them is a success," he declared, "and not one of them has a heavy in it. I am giving my writers instructions to cut out the villains." Did you ever hear of such an idiotic thing? When a given story is being considered all other stories should be forgotten. No picture ever was successful because it had no heavy in it. It was successful because it had a good story, and the fact that it had no heavy in it had no more to do with it than the fact that it had no cross-eyed goat in it. Every story should contain everything that it should contain. If a heavy comes in naturally, it should have a heavy, just as it should have a cross-eyed goat when such an animal becomes a logical part of it. Producers should profit by the study of all the pictures that he can see, but he should apply subjectively to his own pictures what he learns from others. No progress can be made by an imitator.

**THE** dear young things who delight us so much when we see them on the screen, should learn how to shake hands. Much can be expressed by a handshake, and all that most of our girls express by it is that they lack dominant personalities. Directors, of course, are to blame. Most of our screen handshakes are those squashy things that give me a cold and clammy feeling, whereas they should be vigorous and hearty as if the hand shakers meant them. These thoughts were suggested by the way Mary Astor shakes hands with Edmund Lowe in *Dressed to Kill*. Her hand goes out and she grasps Lowe's as if she meant it and were glad to greet him.

**AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH**

**By Donald Beaton — The Spectator's 17-Year-Old Critic**

TRYING to make a road-show out of a program picture has seriously damaged *The Street Angel*. The picture should have been about seven reels long, instead of nine or ten. Even at seven it would have been very slow-moving. *Seventh Heaven* was great because it had other things in it beside the love of the boy and the girl. The love theme dominated the picture, of course, but there were splendid characterizations besides those of the two principals. *The Street Angel* has no other characterizations which run all through the picture but those of Charles Farrell and Janet Gaynor. Though they gave superb performances, just two people cannot hold one's attention through ten reels. They might if there were splendid sets and lots of production in the picture, but *The Street Angel* has none of these things. The only impressive thing about its sets was the number of street women who were crowded into them. They were all over the place, and to my mind at least, they introduced a sordid note which injured the beauty of the love story. They didn't have to be quite so evident. *Street Angel* had none of the appeal of *Seventh Heaven*. It took so long to get to the sad scenes, that all through them my only reaction was to wonder if the picture were ever going to end and whether it was thirty or forty reels.

Frank Borzage, who directed *Street Angel*, is not wholly to blame for the poorness of it. Like William de Mille, who directed *Tenth Avenue*, he was given too little story to make into a picture. As it was, the picture contained many splendid bits of direction, romance which proves why he is such now, in the number of pictures taken. Janet took *Seventh Heaven*; Charlie takes *Street Angel*. He gives a superb performance, one that even surpasses his splendid work in *Seventh Heaven*. Janet also gives a marvelous performance, but when she got the breaks in *Seventh Heaven*, Charlie gets them in this. Henry Armetta, a new-comer, gives a brilliant characterization. It is a pleasure to see again Natalie Kingston in one of her clever performances. The men who photographed *Street Angel* deserve only the highest praise, as they did some of the most brilliant camera work I ever have seen on the screen.

*The Tempest* is the best thing John Barrymore has done since *The Sea Beast*. In it he gives a performance which proves why he is one of the finest actors we have. In this he is something more than the woman-crazy acrobat he has been forced to play in his last few pictures. He is a brilliant artist, and it is gratifying to see him treated as such at last. Sam Taylor does a splendid job of directing *The Tempest*. It is full of clever touches, and he leaves something to the imagination of his audience. When motion pictures regard the audience as intelligent, then will the audience regard pictures intelligently. There were spots where *The Tempest* dragged and the picture seemed a bit out of the grasp of the cutter. He didn't seem able to get some of the scenes and let them drag on and on until they got tiresome. That dragging and too many close-ups were the only weaknesses in an otherwise perfect picture.

Barrymore's brilliant performance was not the only good bit of acting in *The Tempest*. Camilla Horn, imported from Germany for this picture, gives a very clever characterization. There is something about her which indicates that she is of starring calibre. She is the only leading woman Barrymore ever has had, with the exception of Dolores Costello, who has done some acting on her own hook. Miss Horn is destined to be one of our biggest stars. Louis Wolheim's acting was very good. He was supposed to be the comedy relief, but at all times there was a suggestion of power under his fooling. Wolheim couldn't have been all fool, because Barrymore, as he was characterized in the picture, couldn't have been a close friend of a man who was nothing but a clown. He put his part over splendidly. Boris de Fas, who played the Commissar, does splendid work, and a man named Haupt, who is the heavy, proves by his superb work that he deserves bigger parts. George Fawcett, who is one of the few actors in Hollywood who isn't worrying about a contract he signed when he was under age, gives his customary splendid performance.

*OLA* Negri has always been one of my favorites, and I always enjoy one of her pictures. Therefore, I would have enjoyed *Three Sin-
nners even if it had not been a very fine picture. Rowland Lee has given us a beautifully done picture, replete with clever acting, good direction, and a very logical story. I do not say he is responsible for the logical story, but he is responsible for keeping it logical in the screen. There is nothing overdrawn in The Sinners; everything is sane, and within the bounds of reason. The heavy does not go around sneering a nasty sneer all the time, which is enough to make the picture good if there were nothing else of merit in it. The whole thing goes evenly, gradually working up to a powerful climax. The picture does not seem possessed of much power until the last scenes are reached, and then it gets more and more dramatic until the end wakes one to the realization of having seen a brilliant piece of screen craftsmanship.

If Miss Negri were not the splendid actress she is, Three Sinners would have been stolen from her by the brilliant supporting cast. It takes a real actress to have the courage to surrender her role to a supporting cast of brilliant actors. However, it was Negri who dominated the picture with ease. Paul Lukas, Tullio Carminati, and Olga Baclanova, who played the three sinners, were all splendid. Warner Baxter and Anders Randolf were also good in smaller parts.

AFTER a succession of mediocre pictures, Lon Chaney returns with a bang in Laugh, Clown, Laugh. Herbert Brenon can always be counted on for a great picture, and, with this, he has done one of the best ever turned out at M.G.M. Brenon gets all the paths into it without smearing the screen with quarts of glycerine. That doesn't mean that his characters weren't emotional; they were too emotional. They flew off the screen like a cataract of water; but by the time they got around to it, the nerves of the audience also needed easing. The various noises and explosions added a great deal to the picture and gave more proof that eventually all pictures will have to have sound. A lot of the effects in Wings would have been totally lost if it had not been for the noises accompanying them.

Whoever is responsible for all the wonderful flying stuff in Wings is a genius. To him and William Wellman, the director, goes the credit for having made such a splendid picture. Two men around whom the story was written were splendidly done by Dick Arlen and Buddy Rogers. I like both of them on the screen, and their work in this is done just as well as usual. Clara Bow was good, although she didn't have much of a part. Jobyra Ralston was also good.

WINGS should not be criticized like any other motion picture, because it is more like a great historical document than anything else. A picture like Wings, made about the first flying warriors in the world, by some of them, will be tremendously valuable in about seventy-five years, when all they will be dead and gone. If you think of something like having a news-reel of the Crusades. All the silly stuff that goes on in Paris, when Clara Bow endeavors to get the boys back in the trenches by Christmas, is poor movie stuff, but it's a good idea. Leave in Paris was supposed to be better, but by the time they got around to it, the nerves of the audience also needed easing. The various noises and explosions added a great deal to the picture and gave more proof that eventually all pictures will have to have sound. A lot of the effects in Wings would have been totally lost if it had not been for the noises accompanying them.

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WHAT Will Famous Players find out that trying to cash in on the success of one picture by making another like it is poor business? They made Beau Sabreur in an effort to cash in on the success of Beau Geste; and now they make The Legion of the Condemned in an attempt to do the same thing for Wings. Both pictures were very poor. The Legion of the Condemned deals with a bunch of young men who go hunting death with a feverish enthusiasm worthy of a better cause. They all join the French air service and scatter spies hither and yon over enemy territory. One is a gambler, another a drunkard, another a murderer, one is just bored, and another, who has a prejudice against dying in his bare feet, is a mixture of all of them. This last char-

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Reviews

"I wonder what THE FILM DAILY will say about it!"

That expression started years ago when the important people of this industry learned that our reviews were "straight from the shoulder" and constructive.

Read THE FILM DAILY regularly and profit.

1650 Broadway, N. Y. C.
tute loses its punch. William de Mille, who directed Tenth Avenue, did a very good job. I don’t think he is wholly to blame for the slowness of the picture. There did not seem to be enough story, even by the standards of the period. The whole story could have been told easily in five reels. There were a few deft comedy touches such as the scene where Ethel Wales, who is drunk, tries to take off her necklace.

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**Street Angel**


**The Tempest**


The cast: John Barrymore, Camilla Horn, Louis Wolheim, Bonnie D. Fas, George Fawcett, Ulrich Haupt, Michael Visaroff.

**Tenth Avenue**

A Pathé De Mille picture. Directed by William C. de Mille; from the play, Tenth Avenue, by John McGowan and Lloyd Grissom; screen play by Douglas Z. Doty; photographed by David Abel; assistant director, William Sheehy; production manager, R. M. De Plese; film editor, Adelaide Cannon; costumes by Adrian; art director, Stephen Goossen.

**Three Sinners**

A Paramount picture. Associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; directed by Rowland V. Lee; play by Bernauer and Osterreicher; screen play by Dorothy Anderson and Jean de Limur; photographed by Victor Milner; editor-in-chief, E. Lloyd Sheldon; assistant director, Daniel Keefe.


**Wings**

A Paramount picture. Directed by William A. Wellman; from the story by John Monk Saunders; screen play by Hope Loring and Louis D. Lighton; photographed by Harry Perry; titles by Julian Johnson; assistant director, Richard Johnston, produced by Lucien Hubbard under the supervision of B. P. Schulberg, associate producer.


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**REVIEWED IN THIS NUMBER**

**Easy Come, Easy Go**

A Paramount picture. Directed by Frank Tuttle; original story by Ann Davis; scenario by Florence Ryerson; photographed by Edward Cronjager; assistant director, Russell Mathews.

The cast: Richard Dix, Nancy Carroll, Charles Sellon, Frank Currier, Arnold Kent, Guy Oliver.

**Glorious Betsy**

A Warner Brothers picture. Directed by Alan Crossland; assistant director, Gordon Mollingshead; story by Rida Johnson Young; scenario by Anthony Coldewey; photographed by Hal Mohr.

The cast: Dolores Costello, Conrad Nagel, John Miljan, Pasquale Amato, Andre de Segurola, Michael Vavitch, Paul Panzer, Clarissa Selwynne.

**Laugh, Clown, Laugh**

A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by David Belasco and Tom Cushin; screen play by Elizabeth Meehan; titles by Joe Farnham; settings by Cedric Gibbons; wardrobe by Gilbert Clark; photographed by James Wong Howe; film editor, Marie Halvey; directed by Herbert Brenon.

The cast: Lon Chaney, Bernard Siegel, Loretta Young, Cissy Fitz-Gerald, Nils Asther, Gwen Lee.

**Legion of the Condemned**

A Paramount picture. Associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; directed by William Wellman; story by John Monk Saunders; screen play by John Monk Saunders and Jean de Limur; editor-in-chief, E. Lloyd Sheldon; photographed by Henry Gerrard; assistant director, Richard Johnston.


**Little Bit of Fluff**


The cast: Sydney Chaplin, Betty Balfour, Nancy Rigg, Edmond, Edmond Breon, Diana Wilson, Clifford McCallenger, Emid Stamp-Taylor.

**Man-Made Women**

A De Mille picture. Director, Paul L. Stein; associate producer, Ralph Block; from the story by Ernest Pascal; scenario by Alice D. G. Miller; cameraman, John Mescall; assistant director, Gordon Cooper; film editor, Doane Harrison; costumes by Adrian; unit production manager, Harry H. Poppe; released by Pathé Exchange, Inc.

**The Patriot**

A Paramount picture. Associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; directed by Ernst Lubitsch; from the play by Alfred Neumann; adaptation by Hans Kraly; photographed by Bert Glennon; assistant director, George Hibbard.


**Ramona**

A United Artists picture, presented by Inspiration Pictures, Inc., and Edwin Carewe; from the story by Helen Hunt Jackson; screen play by Edna Fox; cinematographer, Robert B. Kunde; film editor, Jeanne Spencer.


**Sins of the Cradle**

An Independent picture. Directed by Richard Drake Saunders; assisted by Edward M. Langley; under the supervision of Charles R. Seelig; story by Annie L. McDonald; titled and edited by Tom Terriss; photographed by Miles Berne and Clifton Maupin.

The cast: June Marlow, Bob Seiter, Ann Preston, Lucy Rogers, Cecelia Evans, Charles Darragh, Mary Meecher, Margaret Campbell, Geraldine Kasal.

**Speedy**

A Harold Lloyd picture. Story by John Grey; gag men, Rex Neal, Howard Rogers, Jayne Howe; titles by Al de Mond; directed by Ted Wilde; photographed by Walter Ludin.
THE PETTY CASH BASIS

By Madeline Matzen

In an article published in the September 23, 1927, issue of "The Film Mercury", Jas. P. Calhoun writes about "The Original Story Problem". After talking with Mr. Beresford, he comes to the conclusion that you have one chance in ten thousand (if you are a newcomer) of selling a story to Universal. But I notice that Mr. Beresford says nothing to him about Universal's policy of taking for petty cash all the new ideas they can get. Their policy is one way of getting around a difficulty and of staying on good terms with the Labor Commission.

And yet Universal wastes thousands of dollars a week in making super features like Uncle Tom's Cabin, etc. Isn't this being penny wise (or penny sharp) and pound foolish? I cannot see how such a condition could be permitted by the head executives—if they happen to know of it! I am told by certain people at Universal that the "Petty Cash Basis" of operation was abandoned weeks ago but I was only told that it had been discontinued after I had said that I intended writing an article for "The Film Spectator" about the system.

But doubtless the Universal scenario department will find other ways of obtaining fresh ideas. What has once occurred can occur again if the same people remain in power. The system under discussion has existed for a long, long time at Universal City. I was talking just the other day to two of their old writers, now employed at different studios, and they tell me that it has always been part of Universal's policy to hold out the glad hand and pay small salaries (not listed on the payroll) to new writers. Milk them dry of ideas, dismiss them—and keep the ideas. But the "Petty Cash Basis" is a fairly new arrangement.

And yet every day you see huge advertisements purporting to come from Carl Laemmle (for they are issued over his signature) urging new writers to offer suggestions and ideas for which he (Mr. Laemmle) will pay them well. It rather looks as though someone were putting something over on poor Mr. Laemmle!

Rupert Hughes will be the toastmaster. Is The Writers' Club a writer's trust? Or is it intended to further the art of writing? I was talking just the other day to one of the old members of the club: "I've resigned!" he told me. "So many new writers are joining, it's not the same!" And yet this club should be the first in all Hollywood to encourage and help the newcomer if he has real talent. Instead, they seem to regard the newcomes as upstarts. Such a condition is comic. It reminds me of the social climber—one in he is the first to look askance at the next newcomer. It is "good business" to protect one's job, but it is better business to write so darn well that your job does not need protecting.

** A system like the "Petty Cash Basis" (I laugh to myself every time I write it, for it sounds so important and plausible) is a disgrace to the motion picture profession and an absolutely disheartening obstacle to the new writer. There is no possible excuse for it. I should like to know very much what the clever Mr. Montaigne has to say about the matter. After all, it is his scenario department.

I understand, moreover, that Mr. Beresford's wife is opening up a new tea room—an excellent one. Perhaps Mr. Beresford might do a kind act and employ in his tea room the poor writers of the "Petty Cash" system until they are quite broke, discouraged and out of a job.

If you are young and struggling for a foothold the items of thirty-cent earfares and luncheons mount up, and long to keep on promises and petty cash.

A LITTLE SLAM

My dear Mr. Beaton:

A feature which has always annoyed me more than most in your paper, is the didactic and patronizing department in which your son, Donald, from the eminence of his seventeen years, is given free rein to criticize the work of directors and writers who were making good pictures while he was being weaned.

Since The Spectator is your paper and we don't have to read it unless we want to, I presume we will have to endure the young man's sophomoric ravings indefinitely. I feel, however, as the editor of the paper and an old newspaper man, you should at least instruct him in the rudiments of accuracy. In the current issue, after taking a whole-hearted slam at Norma Shearer's picture, The Latest From Paris—a slam, incidentally, which isn't an echo of your own blanket indictment—he goes on to say that the picture was directed by Robert Leonard, whereas it should be credited to Sam Wood. Even if the young man can not take the trouble to get the data accurate, it is surely up to you or someone in your editorial department to correct such errors.

Incidentally your punctuation, grammar and syntax are getting to be quite as bad as that to be found in the titles you constantly revile. I could quote chapter and verse but I can't be bothered.

Heaven knows why I continue to

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April 28, 1928
read The Film Spectator. It invariably spoils my afternoon and yet I always look forward anxiously to the next issue. Unconsciously, I daresay, I am nursing the faint hope that one of the moron producers you despise so heartily, will offer you a vast stipend to supervise his pictures, and that you will announce the disintegration of The Spectator.

F. HUGH HERBERT.

NOTES ON PICTURES

By WALTER KRON

IT IS with immense interest that I note how readily the great American public lets go of its hard-earned dollars to view the current bilge on our screens. True, they witness merchandised drama and cheap emotions frozen in celluloid with a gullible face—that is, the majority of them do. There must be a certain percentage of the vast audiences that realize the movies are now in the hands of vulgarians.

The censors have not dominated the producers to such an extent that they would not be able to sell anything but burlesques. Every person who sits through the average picture without a murmur of self-esteem to rigid tests. The pinnacle of the present so-called screen art is base. It is a real brain strain on most directors to manufacture opuses for “Cro Magnon” audiences.

If my enlightened reader thinks this a bold statement, behold this list below on current display:

1. The Final Extra;
2. Sting of Stings;
3. Born to Battle;
4. The Bashful Buccaneer;
5. Husband Hunters;
6. Hard-boiled Haggerty;
7. Hell’s Four Hundred;
8. Breed of Courage;
9. Devil’s Dice;
10. The Drop Kick;

and 11. Prince of the Plains.

This is a selection running in surrounding shooting galleries. I know nothing of the masterpieces; I merely quote the titles.

For students of the psychology of the neolithic movie Americanus, I can furnish a portfolio filled with evidence docketed in alphabetical order. It would also be valuable to the future historians. This “cinema” review complete will soon be open for general inspection.

Some irate reader or director, seeing a mental kick at his bread basket, may exclaim, “Well, if you don’t like it, why the hell worry about it?”

Such a reaction is expected. It is the utter bovine attempt at drama that provokes a sneer—this pandering to the most primitive of man’s instincts, not the moral but the lowest in mentality. The picture factories have been taught to assume because the best brains cannot be bought. And if the best could be enlisted, the possessor of such would be appalled by the motive that prompted it. But the first rate heads are not always in the literary field, although a great

amount of them are there. But in motion pictures they would be unsuited. This element must be fostered from its own soil. It should grow out of its own bed of manure.

These flowers are growing in the earth of America. They view the pure wonder and expression of their art through the eye of a camera. Every panorama, mountain, shaded arbor, and slum and city street is a background—every human, an actor. All is eloquent to them. They await the torch-bearer...

The motion picture as an industry is built on sand. An enlightened future will testify to this.

Being a material of self-expression and tied to the frail whim of a public makes the business precarious. In five years its value as a mint will be past history. The makers of unearned salaries will be reduced to the level of vaudeville actors.

As a place of refuge for afternoon shoppers, tired bond-salesmen, and bored husbands and wives, the movies are a hypnotic pastime. But for a place to attract a man with mind alive, they are little removed from a chute-chutes, a merry-go-round, or a room of distorted mirrors.

The colossal movie mind to-day seems to be of a light, trivial, transient material. The vented zig-zag convolutions in their brains are shallow. To ask the regime now directing the dizzy emotions on celluloid to give us something better is a hopeless request. We must await the time when their nakedness is apparent to their dull following. Drama that provokes tear-gushing is measured as powerful. Such a contention is false, and sentiment is the refuge of a director devoid of intellect. The tear-jerker reaches back into the misty era of East Lynn and Uncle Tom’s Cabin.

Stella Dallas is a good example—a picture begging for sympathy. At bottom the structure is weak. It is

that very conscious striving for sympathy that degrades it. The evoking of the tear-duct can never enter into the connotations of a work of esthetic ambitions.

Excessive heroics appeal to the primitive and child audiences mainly. A successful director needs little of discernment as a rule. He has but to feel his way as he directs a picture. The lower down in the scale of mankind are his feelings and imaginations, the larger the audience. At present, in all honesty, he needs absolutely no more head than a gas station attendant. It’s all chartered for him.

The picture of the future will flaunt boldly a challenge with a foreword reading something like this: “This picture is a new venture for a discriminating adult audience. We have attempted in our best way to deviate from the groove of the present picture productions. Perhaps we have failed to express our thought successfully. We can only say we have tried. We warn that those of the audience who expect to see a sure-fire standard picture will be mistaken, and we warn also that some may not be greatly entertained. If after the first reel is shown, there are any who do not care to remain, they may report to the box-office, and their money will be refunded.”

“But,” you say, “our blood-brother and feeder, the exhibitor, might complain!” . . . Such nonsense! We have to-day a queer species known as the motion picture critic. This man cries from the house tops the rare quality of a picture that is different. The picture might have no more artistic merit than a Maxfield Parish department store ad. But the simple fact that it is different will bring these fellows into the cheer lines. Their conceptions as decent critics might be dubious, but they do love a unique consumption. A professional reviewer of current pictures is generally a sorry jackass.

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Public charges that pictures are getting worse

Do producers understand the business they are in?

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FIFTY-FIFTY GIRL
THE YELLOW LILY
HANGMAN'S HOUSE
HIS TIGER LADY
TO THE MOTION PICTURE COLONY:

Haven't you often heard, and said yourself: "I wish that we could see more of the pictures that Europe is making"?

Then again: "I missed that one, and I'd love to get a look at it, but there is no way I can"?

Or even: "I'd like to make a really unusual picture if only there were some place to show it"?

Well, the day of such remarks is over. At last the Little Theatre movement in Motion Pictures has come to Hollywood.

The FILMARTE THEATRE, on Vine Street, just south of Sunset, has opened its doors. It is exactly what its name implies, a motion picture theatre whose screen is devoted exclusively to the showing of artistic motion pictures from any studio in America or elsewhere.

Do come and see its offerings. They always will be interesting.

Sincerely,

REGGE DORAN,
Director.
Screen Art Has Worn a Groove for Itself

PERUSAL of an accumulation of film trade papers published in this country and abroad, reveals that exhibitors are of the opinion that motion pictures are getting worse, and that the pictures they are getting this year are not up to the quality that Hollywood sent out last year. Exhibitors reflect the opinions of their patrons, consequently we can credit the public with being convinced that screen entertainment has struck a downward curve. But I don't agree with either the exhibitors or the public. Pictures are not getting worse. For the purpose of this discussion we will consider only the program pictures that must carry on their backs the financial burden of the industry. A Seventh Heaven or a Trail of '98 proves nothing, and a study of it will avail us nothing until all pictures are Seventh Heavens. And the exhibitors have no quarrel with the quality of the road shows. They insist that the program picture is getting worse, but I am convinced that it is getting better. What it is failing to do is to keep abreast of the public. Audiences are advancing faster than screen entertainment. The public's view of the situation does its modesty more credit than its discernment. Apparently everything that the screen can do has been done so often that the public refuses to be intrigued by it any longer. This seemingly would entail upon Hollywood the necessity of doing things differently if it hopes to hold its audience. But can Hollywood do things differently? I doubt it. Directors have told me that they approve heartily of my arguments against the abuse of close-ups—and the next pictures made by these same directors abuse them as much as ever. Screen art has worn a groove for itself, and it is the groove, not the art itself, that the public has tired of. Reverting to close-ups: let us assume that all arguments against them are wrong, that it is good technic to use as many of them as possible, and that even love scenes should be divided into individual shots. To-day most pictures treat close-ups in accordance with this assumption—and the public is getting tired of most pictures. All any jaded appetite needs is a change. Why not provide a change of screen diet by making a picture or two with but few close-ups? Why not use close-ups in at least one program picture only where they are justified? That might provide the public with the variety it craves. Two pictures I have seen recently use close-ups intelligently, The Patriot, directed by Ernst Lubitsch, and Laugh, Clown, Laugh, directed by Herbert Brenon. But we have only a few Lubitsches and Brenons. Most of the other directors know only one method of directing. They follow the long shot-medium shot-close-up formula. They have standardized the making of motion pictures and have imposed on them an exceedingly stupid standard that the public will accept no longer. By our method of selecting our new directors

THE WALL
By GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN

Dear Mr. Beaton:
Substitute the box-office for the wall and you have a parallel between the garden and motion pictures. Both are the expression of somebody's ideas; both make an impression upon the beholder. There can be no denying that the garden with its barbered shrubs and velvety lawn is beautiful, but it is beauty for the eye alone; comprehended at a glance we seek more intriguing vistas. It is a fashionable woman, fresh from the ministrations of the beauty doctors, to whom God has neglected to give a soul. Its conventional perfection is a sinister wall to the imagination; it is a "keep off the grass" sign that precludes all intimate association. Naiads do not disport in a concrete pool, nor do dryads peep from cubical hedges. If pictures would not strive for such absolute veracity in detail; if shadows could be substituted for spot-lights each individual mind would be free to revel in a garden of its own imaginings. Says the grave Melandryon: "Tales ought never be told out in full daylight. Once the shadows have entered somewhat, one no longer listens to fabulous voices because the fugitive spirit fixes and ravishingly speaks to itself."

G. F. M.

Over the wall my fancy sped,
Wondering what lay behind.
Shadowy paths and tangled furz,
Roses that shyly smiled,
Sunlight that trickled like laughter through branches that
moved so gently you were aware that they
moved at all.

And the intricate pattern they wove and wound with undulant grace o'er the leafy ground enhanced the glamour a thousand fold.

It were pleasant to dream in a place like this by that shadowy pool which a naiad's Kiss had endowed with age-old mystery.

To lie at length on the leafy mold behind that friendly
wall and invite your soul.

* * *

Boldly I looked o'er the garden wall,
Putting my dream behind,
Then returned with a sigh to the noisome street:
Ah, the trend of the vulgar mind!
Close-cropped hedges and barbered grass,
Plants that stood in a row,
A pool that reflected a sun of brass.
The wall was sinister. "Thou shalt not pass!"
It seemed to growl. Insensate loth!
"Far better," I thought, "to be without."
we are perpetuating the stupid standard. We are selecting our new ones from among those who best can perform the tricks of the old ones. There is nothing the matter with the kind of stories that are being written for the screen. The treatment that they receive after they are written is responsible for the discontent of the public. A change in the mode of production is needed. If producers can not be persuaded that they should strike a new note to serve their art, they surely can see the wisdom of doing it to serve their pocketbooks. There is nothing the matter with the screen art that a little variety will not cure.

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Who's to Blame for Public's Indifference?

WAT, after all, is the difference between such a picture as The Patriot and The Man Who Laughs? Emil Jannings, the star of the first, has told me himself that Conrad Veidt, the star of the second, is a great actor; they are about equal in story value, and both were given fine productions. The Patriot is the most perfect picture ever made and the other is an indifferent production solely on account of the treatment each received. Rarely, if ever, do we find a picture with weaknesses that can be traced to the author or the actors. Almost every story selected has merit in it in its original form, and the merit disappears before it reaches the screen. Relieving authors and actors of responsibility for the devitalizing process, brings us to scenario writers, directors and supervisors. We can get rid of the poor scenario writer simply by replacing him with a good one, so we may eliminate him, leaving us only directors and supervisors, who, as all Hollywood knows, are to blame for the fact that the public thinks pictures are getting worse. There are perhaps a dozen directors who understand stories sufficiently to be of assistance when a script is being prepared, but all others think they do. I can not see on the screen any evidence of the fact that we have in our midst one supervisor who is qualified thoroughly for his job as his job is conducted now. In the last analysis, of course, the supervisor is responsible for all the ills of the screen, but I will be generous with him and place a portion of the blame on the director. Between them they are entitled to all the blame. The director may be able to handle scenes and sequences with ability, and the supervisor may have talent for organization, but they fall down. Why? Because they are trying to tell a story, and they are not story-tellers. The man who could tell one—who did tell one—the author, was forgotten the moment he sold his story, and a director and a supervisor, neither of whom has had any experience in writing stories, gravely begin the task of telling this one on the screen. A Lubitsch and a Dzonage can get away with it, but we make seven hundred features a year and get less than a dozen Patriots and Seventh Heavens. The externals of the rest of the seven hundred generally are satisfactory. Casts are capable and the settings adequate, but stories fail to entertain because they are not told in an entertaining way. In any other industry a parallel condition could not have continued as long as this condition has persisted in pictures. In any other industry the weak spot would have been located and eliminated. There is no evidence of the imminence of its location and elimination from pictures.

That is possibly the queerest thing about the business. All its customers are complaining of the lack of a specific quality in its products, the reason for the lack can be determined, and year after year the industry continues to ignore the reason and to tolerate the system that perpetuates it. The producers, the men who hire the directors and supervisors, make the great mistake of believing that they themselves understand the business they are in. The most successful business man I know is John B. Miller, whose brain and personality built up the Southern California Edison Company, one of the world's greatest purveyors of electricity. Ask Miller a question about the technical side of producing electricity and he will ask you to wait while he buzzes someone to answer your question. He has built two great departments: one to make electricity and the other to sell it, but he makes no bones about the fact that he himself can neither make it nor sell it. But he never interferes with those to whom he has entrusted both jobs.

* * *

When an Executive Is Not an Executive

THE difference between John B. Miller and our production chiefs is that the latter can not be persuaded that they do not know all about pictures. It is another of the queer things about the business. If Miller and Louis B. Mayer swapped jobs, I have enough respect for Mayer's business sense to believe that he would acknowledge that he knows nothing about electricity, and that his concern would be only to preserve the fine organization that his predecessor built up; but if Miller ran true to the form of his new job and did not violate all the traditions of the picture business, he would begin at once to tell an author exactly how a longshoreman would behave when he discovered that his bride of a month had run away with the son of the waterfront banker; he would tell his costume designer how the beads should be sewn on an evening gown, and he would illustrate to the heavy exactly how a Turkish diplomat would enter a Bulgarian drawing-room. He would be so busy doing these things that there would be no efficiency in his organization and his pictures would cost him twice as much money as they should. No one can dispute successfully the fact that for every dollar spent legitimately in Hollywood on the production of a motion picture, another dollar is wasted. Perhaps half of this wasted dollar could be saved with but a slight disturbance to the business. Only a revolution would save all of it. As long as producers think, and encourage those under them to think, that the picture business is unlike all other businesses, just that long will a dollar continue to be wasted every time another dollar is spent wisely. If ever they could be brought to a realization of the fact that the conduct of the film industry should be patterned after that of every successful industry, they would find that they had made a start towards not only increased profits, but towards better pictures. If the executives would become such in fact, instead of only in name, as at present, the situation would improve amazingly. Chart the organization of one of our big producing concerns and you will have a diagram of an efficient machine. On paper the organization is perfect, but when performing it grinds and creaks and gets its bearings heated because every man on the payroll knows that the
next man under him is an ass who can't be trusted to do his job properly. I have encountered no executive who was honest enough to confess that he did not know anything about pictures. I dare say you could go into the offices of a dozen United States Steel Corporation executives before finding one who would confess that he knew something about how steel was made, but you can not get through the gate of a motion picture studio without encountering half a dozen people who know all about picture-making. This mistaken belief is a menace in proportion to the prominence of the positions of those who hold it. It is costing the film industry scores of millions of dollars a year because the big producers, as individuals, hold it. I believe that most of these big producers would reveal themselves as able executives if they would stick to their jobs as such and allow the author of a story to be the sole dictator of the length of the kiss when the druggist's wife falls into the arms of the night-watchman. Picture executives some day will do this. I hope they will be the present ones, for as a class they're a decent lot of fellows, but if they can not be made over, they will be supplanted by those who do not need making over, for they will understand from the first what kind of business they are in.

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Perhaps We Might Obtain Better Pictures This Way

A reformation of the film industry that would lead to greater profits and better pictures would be brought about automatically if the industry became conscious of what sort of a thing it is. If it realized its sole mission is to tell stories entertainingly on the screen, it first would discover what writers already connected with it could write such stories. Take Mr. Blank, producer. He would satisfy himself that Mr. Ink, author, had demonstrated his knowledge of writing for the screen. Blank would commission Ink to write the kind of story he knew Ink was qualified to write, and Blank would go back to his desk and attend to his other duties, with a couple of afternoons a week on the golf links. Some time later—how long would make no difference after sufficient writers were at work to keep abreast of production—Ink would hand in a story that would make a good picture because he, a talented and experienced screen writer, knew it would.

Blank would accept it as readily as he would swallow a dose of medicine handed him by his doctor, and for the same reason: not because he knew anything about it, but because he had confidence in the man from whom he got it. Ink's perfect script would be accepted by the supervisor as a perfect piece of work, and he would select a director to shoot it as written. Here is where I get my first laugh from the industry. The idea of curbing the inspiration of a director! But that is exactly what I would do if I were Blank. I would hire Ink to provide the ideas and the director to shoot them, and would insist upon each man sticking to his job. Lige Magoffin, our poet's brother, (Hurrah! I've got my name in The Spectator! - E.H.M.) who puts in type what I write for The Spectator, is an intelligent fellow whose ideas are good, but if he ever began to inject his ideas into anything I write I would wrench the self-starter off his Mercerthaler and brain him with it. My job is to write the stuff and his is to put it in type, ignoring all the obvious opportunities to improve its quality. Ink's job would be to provide a perfect script, and if he could not do this, it would be up to Blank to fire him and hire someone who could. The perfect script would eliminate the waste from production, for when it was followed fewer sets would be constructed and much less footage shot. And we would get a perfect picture, which would please the public to the extent that that kind of picture would give it pleasure. We now have perhaps a dozen, and always will have some, directors who can make valuable contributions to a story, and to achieve the best results they should be allowed to screen their stories in their own way. They are the men who will give us the big specials. The directors of the program pictures never should be allowed to have a voice in the construction of their stories, and the one who boasts that he throws away his script should be exiled from Hollywood. We do not arrive at this conclusion by reasoning only, nor by the contemplation of ideal conditions. We arrive at it directly by contemplating the pictures we are getting now, the ones the public declares are getting worse, but which I maintain simply are standing still. Any system that produces these unsatisfactory pictures must be changed if the future product is to be satisfactory. "Where are we to get our perfect stories?" is the constant plaint of producers. There are hundreds of writers who can be trained to turn them out, but such training will be fruitless until we have in the executive offices people who realize that they could not recognize the perfect story if they read it, and who will rely upon the judgment of those who know. The custom of turning over a story to the pan-handling of a supervisor and a director who know nothing whatever about writing stories, is as idiotic as turning over the camera work to a property boy who knows nothing about lights.

* * *

Jack Ford to the Front
With Another Good One

THREE in a row for Jack Ford — Mother Machree, Four Sons, and now Hangman's House. The first two are having Broadway runs, and they tell me that the other is merely a program picture, but Hangman's House is the best motion picture of the trio, although it will not come anywhere near taking in as much money as either of the other two. In Mother Machree and Four Sons Ford had a definite and "fat" theme to work on—sure-fire hokum of universal appeal. All he had to do to make us cry was to make his two mothers real. In Hangman's House he was faced with different material. There was no sure-fire stuff in the story. It primarily is a story of a great hate, and it revolves around a particularly nasty villain. Ford had in his hands just motion picture situations, without a tear-drop in them, with nothing to make us either laugh or cry. And Jack took these situations and has given us what I think is the finest program picture ever turned out by any studio. As the story is one without particular appeal, the merit in the production is due to its perfection as an example of motion picture art. This is a quality put into it by the director, and to which no one else could contribute. Often we praise directors for being responsible for originating bits of good business that undoubtedly were in the scripts, but in Hangman's House there are no good bits. I can not recall one little touch that is an outstanding piece of direction. The story is laid in Ireland, and Jack Ford took the Irish heart of
him, and his belief in fairies and banshees, and the smell of an Irish moor, and the fog that comes up from the sea to be twisted into wrath-like veils that hover over marsh and meadow; he mixed the blue of Irish eyes, and clay pipes, and jaunting cars, and the curve of an Irish hunter's neck, and out of all of them he has written an Irish poem and spread it on the screen. There could have been no more of him in the picture if he had played the leading part. The Fox organization unquestionably is giving us the finest photography that is reaching the screen. Hangman's House almost outdoes for sheer beauty the amazing shots in Street Angel and Sunrise. The fog effects are marvelous, and all the out-door scenes are rich in pictorial value, but the cameraman was as compelling in the lighting and photography of the interiors, which reflect perfect taste in designing and which maintain admirably the Irish atmosphere of the production. The whole picture emphasizes the important part in story-telling that is played by the scenic investiture of a motion picture. Rob Hangman's House of the quality lent it by its sets and locations, and we would have nothing left but a rather conventional movie story. The Fox organization gave it all the material aids to perfection and Ford supplemented them by selecting human types that suit exactly the settings in which he placed them. In the ensemble scenes there may be the usual number of nationalities represented, but all of them look Irish, and that is all that matters. And notwithstanding the fact that the picture is so rich in atmosphere, the story is not dominated by its setting. Ford never lost sight of the fact that his mission was to keep us interested in a narrative dealing with love and hate. As his humans move through the gorgeous settings we keep our eyes on them and are concerned with what they are doing, but all the time the beauty of the scenes and the wistful quality of the atmosphere play upon our senses as an alluring and soothing obligato. No attempt was made by the art department to steal our attention from the script; no great sets were built to dominate what took place within them. Physically Hangman's House is a perfect picture, but it never loses sight of the fact that a picture's first mission is to tell a story.

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"Hangman's House" Is Notable in Many Ways

WHILE Jack Ford never loses sight of his story in Hangman's House, he has made a fine picture out of it because he apparently grasps the elemental fact that the mind is intrigued more easily when the eye is pleased. He shows, also, that he understands the dramatic possibilities of a group. There is one scene that sums up my whole argument against the ridiculous use of close-ups. There are three characters in it. It is a deep-medium shot, showing the full figures of all three as they stand in tense attitudes, one of them with his back to the camera. Back of the characters we have the rich furnishings and the beautiful paneling of the library of an Irish home, adding beauty to a scene already dramatic. The attitudes of the three players put over the scene. It is what I have been advocating for years: the use of sets and the full figures of players to express drama. But the great majority of directors would have shot that scene entirely in close-ups. The camera would have flashed from one huge face to another to show us near views of famous actors using in turn each of their five different expressions. Directors will argue gravely that the public will not be satisfied unless it can rub noses with acting actresses, and will endeavor to make out a case for close-ups on that ground, but it is directorial incompetence, not public demand, that we can thank for the close-up curse. We get too many close-ups because we have too many incompetent directors. When we have more directors who understand screen art as John Ford understands it, we will have more pictures like Hangman's House. All its excellencies that I have pointed out already would not make a picture notable unless the acting were of a sort that fitted exactly the mood of all the rest of it. Ford was fortunate in not having a star who clings to the craziest belief existing in the screen world to-day: that fame can be built by close-ups. He had parts in his drama and he used actors to play them. Apparently he was not concerned with the amount of footage each was given. The result is that the two main characters, who carry the burden of the acting, enter and exit only when they should, and to no extent are rammed down our throats. Earle Foxe and Victor McLaglen play the parts, and neither of them ever before gave us such an intelligent performance. Foxe's portrayal of the thoroughly detestable heavy is a beautiful bit of screen acting. It differs widely from his Prussian officer in Four Sons, the first role in which he was given an opportunity to show what an excellent actor he is, and he handles it with so much understanding that you get from it the impression of compelling power, although the portrayal is free from all obvious acting and contains even little action. D'Arcy (Foxe) comes of a good Irish family, consequently has all the outward indications of the gentleman, a point that Foxe does not overlook in his portrayal of the character. He is suave, easy and graceful throughout, making it one of the finest performances of a heavy part that I have seen since I viewed the same actor in Four Sons. McLaglen plays a sympathetic part, and invests it with vigor, tenderness, whimsy and humor. Hobart Bosworth appears only in the opening sequences, as he has to die to advance the story, but his excellent performance registers strongly. The love interest is carried by June Collyer and Larry Kent. June has a charming screen personality, and in this picture proved equal to the emotional demands of her part. She is young at the business yet, and from what I have seen of her work thus far I would judge that Fox will be repaid for the effort being made to develop her. Her beauty and the charm and sweetness of her disposition give her a great start. I would have preferred seeing a young fellow of a more dashing type play the role

PHILIP HURN
Wrote the Original Story

"ROAD HOUSE"
A RICHARD ROSSON PRODUCTION

for

FOX
alotted to Kent, even though I have no quarrel with his performance. Several bits in the picture are played excellently. Ford's direction of the performances placed them midway between repression and the opposite, the same average that all humanity strikes. I said in a recent Spec-
tator that the most successful producer would be the one who gave us the best program pictures, not the best spec-
ials. If Hangman's House is a fair example of what we may expect from Fox in the way of program pictures, it looks as if he would qualify as the most successful.

Should Not Be Too Much Straining to Obtain Laughs

There is much in Fools for Luck to interest us. It presents a team of comedians, Chester Conklin and W. C. Fields. It is a refreshing team. One is not a Jew and the other an Irishman. Bill is a crook and Chester a hotel man, and race doesn't enter into it. There is no similarity in the work of these two artists, but each is a gifted comedian who knows how to get laughs. Charles F. Reisner directed Fools for Luck, his first for Paramount, and the love interest is carried by Sally Blane and Jack Ludens. Arthur Houseman, always a capable performer, contributes a clever characterization. Reisner directed intelligently and has given us a picture that is not an endless parade of close-ups. I have one objection to enter. Some laughs are produced by having Conklin appear at an evening gathering in a dress suit several times too large for him, the excess being gathered by basting which gives way during a dance. It is good comedy, for it produces laughs. But I maintain that you can not get the full value from a sequence unless it be built up logically. In this picture Conklin goes to a clothing store and buys the ill-fitting suit, obviously a ridiculous thing to do. Any effort to establish the fact that it is the only suit in stock, or to point out any other reason why he should purchase one that did not fit him, is straining too much to provide comedy. It becomes less excusable when there is no comedy in the establishing shots. If Conklin's visit to the clothing store had been funny in itself we might overlook its lack of logic. But it wasn't funny. He walks in, buys a suit that no one in his right mind would buy, and walks out again. The purchase becomes necessary when Conklin's butler brings from a closet a moth-eaten old suit. The whole sequence could have been made logical by showing the butler bringing an unattractive suit from the same closet and speaking some such title as: "If we take up the slack in the suit your brother left here, you might be able to wear it." The makers of our comedies seem to proceed on the theory that no price is too great to pay for a laugh. Or it may be that they have their eyes glued on the laugh only and give no heed to how much stumbling they do to reach it. The aim of a comedy is not to provoke only some laughter. What it should strive to do is to create the maximum amount of laughter. When Chester Conklin's suit expands on the dance floor it is greeted with some laughter. I did not laugh at it because I could see no humor in a situation produced so labori-
ously and with such lack of logic. Harold Lloyd gives us in every picture a string of happenings more ridiculous than Conklin's experience with the clothes, but they are strung together so well, and presented with so much logic and gravity that the comedy value in them is enhanced tremendously. The obvious answer to this argument, of course, is that Harold takes a year to make a picture and that such a one as Fools for Luck must be thrown together in a few weeks to get its place on the program. That is all right as an excuse for me, but offer it to a furniture worker in Grand Rapids and he would tell you that he is not interested in how much time a producer had, how much money was spent, or how many difficulties encountered; what he wants when he spends his money is entertain-
ment, not explanations. But I don't think it would take any more time or money to make our comedies more log-
ical. A little more thinking should do it. Before getting away from Fools for Luck I want to tell you that it is a pleasing little comedy and exhibitors need not be afraid of it if to obtain it they do not have to purchase also the New York Central terminal and Central Park.

Submerging the Production Under Senseless Close-ups

The latest picture which Alexander Korda directed, The Yellow Lily, starring Billie Dove, probably will do well at the box-office. It has the superb Billie in a role that suits her, and perhaps the best production that has been built around her, as well as such people as these to support her: Clive Brook, Gustav von Seyffertitz, Nicholas Soussanin, Marc McDermott, Jane Winton, Eugenie Besserer, and many other capable people doing small parts and bits. While I can recommend this picture to my exhib-
itor readers as being a little more meritorious than the majority of the films being offered them, I must say that it comes a mighty long way from being a picture that meets my personal requirements. But it is an interesting picture to study. As I am convinced that the close-up habit is the greatest single blight on screen art to-day any discussion of it will profit us to some extent. First National has given The Yellow Lily a picturesque setting that has considerable pictorial value. The brief glimpses we have of the bigger scenes reveal that Korda can handle ensemble shots to good advantage. The interiors are elabor-
ate and attractive, the lighting and photography good. The story is interesting enough, and you can see for your-
self that the cast is excellent. Then what's the matter? Simply that the whole thing, from beginning to end, is a parade of close-ups. We see just enough of the beautiful settings to irritate us into wanting to see more, which is the least important effect of the close-up orgy. Korda makes all his characters act with unusual restraint. He carries repression to its ultimate, which is all right as a change and interesting as a study. But when he presents us with two or three hundred huge close-ups of repressed faces he obviously is carrying either repression or close-
ups too far. The only possible excuse that anyone can offer for the use of a close-up is that it gives us a more intimate view of the emotion a face is expressing. I fail to see upon what ground one can defend the use of a close-
up of a face revealing no emotion. Billie Dove and her sweet heart (Brook) meet in jail. The scene derives much of its strength from the fact that it takes place in the grim atmosphere of a prison. This grim atmosphere is blotted out the instant the two meet. The entire sequence is shown in huge close-ups that convey no impression of a jail. Billie asks Brook what he thinks of her cell, and the two survey it, but we see nothing of the cell even...
when they are doing it. If close-ups of the two had to be used, grouping them so that the bars of a door or window would show would have relieved the sequence of some of its stupidity. I think The Yellow Lily would have been a really good motion picture if it had been edited by people who had at least a slight notion of what a motion picture is. It is a shame to see such fine opportunities lost, and so much money wasted, through the inability of the production staff to grasp the fundamentals of the business it is in. Anyone with the most elemental knowledge of the business knows that a dollar spent on a set must remain on the screen a certain length of time to justify its expenditure. In this picture we have elaborate sets which flit across the screen to give place to an endless parade of utterly senseless close-ups. Ordinary business sense would dictate that the sets should be shown for a longer time to justify their cost. The First National production staff did not seem to understand this picture either as a business proposition or as an example of screen art. It gives us no idea of Korda's qualifications as a director. Any school boy can direct good actors in close-ups. I don't know how much Korda had to do with the cutting. If The Yellow Lily as I saw it is his idea of a good motion picture, one of us must be sadly wrong.

This Sue Carol Miss Is Going to Be Heard From

THERE is something about Sue Carol that is going to make her a tremendous favorite with the public. It isn't her acting, for the foundation of her popularity was laid in pictures in which she was not called upon to do any, and in which she could not have responded if she had received such call, for she knew nothing about the art. All she had at first were beauty of face and form and an air of breeding, and I, for one, did not take her seriously, for it takes more than those attributes to spell success on the screen. The other night I saw Sue again. She plays opposite Lew Cody in a Cody-Aileen Pringle picture, Beau Broadway, and it is mighty lucky for Metro that she does play in it, for she is almost the whole thing. She still is no great shakes as an actress, but she is learning rapidly and is delightful in all her scenes. She is brimming over with personality more provocative even than that of Clara Bow, but I doubt if she ever will develop an acting ability equaling that of the clever Clara. After seeing Beau Broadway I have put Sue down on my exceedingly limited list of attractive girls who are going to get somewhere. In this picture Metro again demonstrates its flair for leaving something out of comedy that it should have in it for its own good. Mal St. Clair wrote the story and directed it. Somebody else adapted it and somebody else wrote the continuity. Probably it was in the adaptation that it first took sick, for it is quite weak as shown on the screen. The thing that Metro does not seem able to get into its comedies is sparkle. They are not alive, buoyant, and brilliant as comedies should be. Beau Broadway plods along, painstakingly resorting to every sure-fire method of provoking a giggle, lacking a connected narrative in which anyone can become interested, and being entertaining only when Sue Carol is on the screen. And Cody and Miss Pringle can be blamed for none of this. Lew is a talented actor and there is no doubt about Aileen's ability, but no amount of artistic acting can overcome story deficiency. There is not a single new thing in this comedy except in some of the titles. Jim Jeffries—a good touch, having him in a picture—is going to die and asks Cody to take care of his granddaughter. Lew prepares a nursery for the reception of the child. The titles keep pounding away at the fact that a little girl is coming, and keep it up so persistently that you know, long before you see her, that the granddaughter is grown up. When Sue arrives and is disclosed as the granddaughter there is no comedy in it for the intelligent viewer because it has been ballyhooed too much in advance. This old thing has been done a thousand times before, yet Metro gives it to us now as the 1928 model of comedy. Cody gives up his room to Sue and sleeps in the bed he prepared for her. It is a child's bed in which he has to fold himself up like a jackknife. He is shown to be a wealthy man, living in a gorgeous home, yet the only beds in the place were his own big one and the child's size one. We are expected to laugh at that sort of comedy. Metro should stop trying to make pictures of this sort. In Miss Pringle and Cody it has an ideal team to give the screen something that it needs, domestic features along the lines of the Drew two-reel comedies. Such pictures would be successful, for their appeal would be universal. But they would have to be clever, which makes me dubious about Metro tackling them under its present production methods. And I would suggest that if Sue Carol plays in any more pictures with Lew she be cast as his little girl, not as his sweetheart. Even in a comedy lacking everything else there is room for the best of taste.

Offering a Suggestion About Adapting Books

ALFRED E. Green, who seemed to be making a specialty of directing musical comedies that were made over for the screen, has come to bat with a drama that is really dramatic. Honor Bound, a Fox program picture, tells a strong story in an interesting way. It deals with the convict labor problem, and has as its principal characters Estelle Taylor and George O'Brien, with Leila Hyams, Tom Santschi, Al Hart, and Sam de Grasse as the supporting players. It is not a particularly enlining picture, as its setting is drab, and Green has taken no pains to soften the harsh outlines of the theme. Miss Taylor does excellent work in an unsympathetic role. I was not aware that she was such a fine dramatic actress as this picture proves her to be. O'Brien carries the burden of the story, and carries it well. If our present crop of young men develops only one really great screen actor, my hunch is that George will be the one. The picture has several big moments in it, and one thrill that thrills. The prison camp dormitory burns down, and it is a sure enough fire. There has been noticeable a steady improvement in the quality of Fox program pictures and Honor Bound is another step forward. No exhibitor need be afraid to book it. The chief weakness of the picture has little to do with its entertainment value. The story is set in a prison camp, and it is necessary to get O'Brien there before the thing really starts, consequently it is of little importance how his conviction is brought about. But even an unimportant feature of a picture should be logical. I have not read the book from which the screen story was taken, but from what I see on the screen I gather that Estelle Taylor is
in love with O'Brien and cannot endure his husband. In a tangle with her husband in O'Brien's apartment, the husband is killed while O'Brien is lying unconscious on the floor from a poke on the jaw. But O'Brien goes to jail for the crime because both he and Estelle refuse to talk. The weakness I referred to lies in the fact that there is no reason whatever why the two should remain silent. I warn all women now that if they bring their husbands to my library and shoot them there, I'm going to talk and keep on talking until all danger of my going to jail has passed. In Honor O'Brien's action makes him out a fool. Possibly in the book he went to jail more logically than he does on the screen. In a book there is more room to develop mental reaction than there is in a picture. Thus we have in a book a full exposition of the cause that produced a given effect, but when we make-over the book for the screen we appropriate bodily the effect and ignore the exposition of the cause. On the way home from Honor O'Brien I told Mrs. Spectator that I thought O'Brien was an ass for going to jail and she disagreed with me. I thought it was illogical, and she did not. But she had read the book and I had not. Everything that happened on the screen was logical to her because she had read its explanation in the book, and some of the things were illogical to me because I did not have the book to help me understand them. Pictures must be made for people who do not read books, and when one is being adapted it would be well to remember that the picture made from the adaptation must make each of its own points logical. If you take seriously the opening sequence of Honor O'Brien and refuse to ignore the fact that there is no reason why O'Brien is in jail, you have nothing left. The screen should not ask you to ignore anything. What can not be made plausible in a picture has no place in it.

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About a Picture's Mood Matching Its Environment

SOMETIMES we see a picture in which the mood of the direction does not match the mood of the story, and then we have a picture that is not as good as it should be, no matter how good it happens to be. The Valley of the Giants is typical of this sort. I liked it for its thrilling scenes, its fine photography and the virile quality of its story. It is satisfactory screen entertainment, but not completely satisfying because by the manner in which it is told the story is thrown out of tune. I doubt if Charles Brabin, who directed, ever spent much time in the woods and rubbed elbows with those who cut down the trees and make lumber out of them. Except for its own noises, those of creaking trunks and moaning branches, and the sound the wind makes, a stand of timber is a silent place, and it breeds men who are undemonstrative and who hate or love with quiet passion. Brabin gives us men who react most extravaganantly to every emotion. There is enough acting in his picture to outfit half a dozen others. You might argue that it can't make much difference to the success of a picture, for mighty few people know anything about lumbering or lumberjacks and would be unable to detect any departure from the authentic atmosphere. I do not believe pictures should be made or excused on this theory. The mood that men born in the woods develop must of necessity match the mood of their environment. The mood of Arabs must match the mood of the desert; that of sailors must match the mood of the sea. Inharmony is something that an untrained person can sense without being able to place his finger on it. When something is out of tune he knows it subconsciously at least, and he knows it consciously if he has had experience that gives him the necessary specific knowledge. At all events, the only safe course for a picture producer to follow is that of assuming that if his picture be out of tune, somebody is going to feel it. The number of people who can tell why a given picture does not please them is so small that the support they give the industry would not pay for its gatesmen, yet they are the very people for whom producers should make their pictures. The weakness that one person can spot is a weakness that a thousand others sense. Constructive critics do not support the industry, but they act as the interpreters of those who do. I believe that Valley of the Giants could have been made a really notable picture that would have appealed to those who know nothing of the woods if it had been made exclusively for those who do. No one can sense an inharmony that does not exist. The men in the picture should have been stern, quiet and determined. Instead they are volatile, noisy, and emotional. If any picture ever called for restraint in acting, this one did, but we are given the opposite. When Milton Sills and Paul Hurst engage in a grim struggle they mug terrifically, and in order that that fact will not be lost upon us we are given huge close-ups of the mugging which amount to exaggerated exaggerations. The drama all the way through the story is dissipated by waving arms and extravagant grimacing. It is impossible to take a lumberman seriously when he behaves like a ballet dancer. But, as I have recorded already, Valley of the Giants is entertaining and as a production is a credit to First National, something that can not be said of all its pictures. There are some inspiring shots in it, and the whole picture has a sweep that almost gives it an epic quality. Doris Kenyon plays opposite her husband and contributes greatly to the charm of the production. Paul Hurst, whom I discovered as a comedian, comes to bat in this picture as a most detestable villain, which surprised me greatly. George Fawcett again proves himself a sterling trouper, and many others in the long cast give good performances. The value of going to actual locations to shoot pictures is exemplified strikingly in this one.

* * *

Some Remarks on the Construction of a Comedy

THEY are beginning to do right by our Bebe on the Paramount lot. After giving Miss Daniëls a number of most indifferent stories they shortly will present her in The Fifty-Fifty Girl, a comedy that will amuse and interest any audience anywhere. It is not a fifty-fifty proposition as far as the laughs go. Bebe, Jimmy Hall and Bill Austin provoke half the laughs, and George Marion Jr., alone and unassisted, gets the other half. No picture with a set of such titles could be altogether a failure. A feature of the Marion titles that I like is the fact that they always are punctuated perfectly. I started to harp on punctuation in the first Spectator I published, and at that time every executive on the Paramount lot proved to me conclusively that he knew all about punctuation, but that the world would get cock-eyed and the motion picture industry collapse if titles were punctuated
properly. I wouldn't be surprised if Marion, who, being an educated writer, must have agreed with all my arguments, insists now upon getting his punctuation, not the studio's, on the screen. Fifty-Fifty Girl is a comedy of situations built on a frail story. In order to stretch it out to feature length some sequences that have nothing to do with the story have been introduced. Two hoboes hold up Austin, and Hall cooks too much rice in sequences that are amusing and provoke laughter, but which could be eliminated without disturbing the thread of the narrative. Later there is a long sequence showing Bebe and Hall wandering along the underground workings of an abandoned mine. It is part of the story. The hold-up and rice sequences are frankly interpolated comedy. They are played as comedy and cause considerable laughter. I enjoyed them immensely. The mine sequence is straight story, and is played straight, but the whole idea back of it is so funny, and the titles add so much to the humor of it, that it is greeted with five times as much laughter as the other sequences I have mentioned. In this one picture I think you will find support for my oft-repeated argument that no really good comedy can be built by interpolating scenes, even though in themselves funny, that have nothing to do with the story. Every scene in any picture, be it a farce or a tragedy, should carry forward without hesitation whatever line of thought has been established in the opening sequence. A comedy of this sort keeps the audience always ready to laugh, and it is much easier to keep it laughing by holding its attention on the story than it is to provoke successive and unrelated bursts of merriment. The sole mission of a comedy is to make people laugh, and one that does it is a good comedy even though it be composed of a score of sequences that have nothing to do with each other. But such a comedy is hard to make because each sequence is up against the fact that it can borrow nothing in the way of story interest from the one which preceded it; and it is hard to make also because the separate sequences have to rely upon the amount of cleverness there is in them as separate acts. The easiest comedy to make in a manner that will assure it being a success, the easiest to write and the easiest to act, is that which has a connected story that runs in a straight line from the opening shot until the final fade-out. Others will make money, but they are hard to make, and a thing that is easy to make always will make more money than a thing that is hard to make. But getting back to Bebe's latest picture, I would like to tip off my exhibitor readers to the fact that they need not be afraid of Fifty-Fifty Girl. Bebe is delightful in it and displays a great deal of downright cleverness. Hall and Austin are splendid and the production is a notable one.

**Can Anything Good Come Out of Russia?**

FEW Spectators ago I said that Hollywood had Russia to fear most as a source of competition. The intelligent and educated Russian is an intellectual force that will leave its impress upon anything with which it comes in contact. As a nation Russia to-day is in a rather chaotic state, but it is not hindering its film-inclined intellectuals from studying motion pictures and putting the result of the studies on the screen. A picture like Ivan the Terrible shows what extraordinary progress the Russians are making. The fact that the story is too morbid to make the picture popular over here is not important. The thing that interests Hollywood is the manner in which it is told. The acting, direction, lighting, photography and production are quite as good as we find in our best American films, which make them better than we find in ninety per cent. of ours. I was in no position to judge of the story-telling ability of the makers of this picture, for I saw it in nine reels, to which it had been cut from the fourteen that were sent over. A story that takes originally fourteen reels to relate can not be cut to nine and do justice to the original tellers. And before we criticize the Russians for making the thing so long we would have to know how it fared in its immediate market, for which it primarily was made. However, as I have said, the story is not important. This picture was made by the Moscow Art Theatre group. It reflects a mentality that will become a potent competitor when it feels it has mastered all the mechanical and technical possibilities of pictures, and passes on to a study of the manner in which the world wants its stories told. Ivan the Terrible is a great example of screen art. I saw it under the most unfavorable circumstances. I sat in a garden on a chilly night and saw it projected, with long intervals between reels, on a sheet hanging on the side of a garage. But despite the fact that I had to rise between reels and wave my arms to keep warm, I was sorry that I did not see the whole fourteen reels instead of nine. That is the sort of picture it is. To start with, it is valuable as an historical document. While I am not aware that thus far in my career I have been handicapped by my unfamiliarity with intimate details of the life of Ivan the Terrible, nevertheless I welcomed the opportunity to learn so easily and so graphically something about the conditions under which Russians lived four or five hundred years ago. There is so much history in the picture that the intimate story is suppressed, and it is not until after the first five reels are run that you begin to take an interest in any of the individuals. There are many characters in the picture, and not one poor performance. We will hear from people who can make such a picture. When I saw it I was the guest of the Russian-American Art Club, an organization of intellectual Russians who are gracious hosts and delightful companions. They have a home on Harold Way, near Western, and foregather there with their friends to keep alive that in them that makes them love an art for something more than what they can get out of it; and also to have a darn good time, another line along which they are talented. Michael Vavitch, that splendid actor, is president of the club, and other accomplished artists whom Russia has sent us are leading spirits in it.

**On the Value of Doing a Thing in the Right Way**

A THRILL is provided by the blowing up of a powder house at a gold mine. Some runaway ore cars dash out of a tunnel and bump into the place where the dynamite is kept; the place blows up, jarring enough rock loose to constitute the assessment work that Bebe Daniels and Jimmy Hall must complete that very second or lose the mine. Its all in The Fifty-Fifty Girl, a quite satisfactory comedy. There is something the matter with the explosion sequence. I have said several times in The Spec-
tator that when you correct a fault in a picture you gain more than the mere fact of being right; that the right way of doing a thing has the most entertainment value in it. Take this sequence. The camera is on the ore train as it comes out of the mine, and as we look down the track we see that it leads straight to the powder house. Instantly the viewer has the thought that no sane person would build a repository for dynamite in such a place as that, for a loaded car is liable to get away at any time. But we have to have the explosion, so what are we going to do about it? I would have placed the powder house in an apparently safe place at a lower level than the tracks and near a spot where the tracks curve. Then I would have the cars hit the curve at a terrific rate, jump the tracks and leap madly at the powder house. As the picture has it, Bebe and Jimmie see they are in danger and make a flying leap from the train. Good stuff that would have been better if they had been making love with so much concentration that they were unaware of their peril. Being unfamiliar with mining, it would be reasonable to expect them to be unaware of the fact that ore trains did not travel at such a mad pace as part of their regular routine. When the train hit the curve it would hurl them down the embankment, thus saving their lives through no volition of their own. They could roll clear of the area affected by the explosion. As we have it now, they save their own lives. It would be better to have fate step in and do the saving. And I would have carried the excitement farther than the picture carries it. It is not the fact of doing assessment work on a mine that fulfills the legal requirements. Mining regulations recognize it only when it is recorded. I would have had Bebe and Jimmie, already reconciled to the loss of the mine through their failure to do the necessary work, suddenly realize that it was done for them, and hot-foot it to the assessment office with such adventures on the way as would make them reach it in the nick of time, and foil Harry Morey, the villain, when his hopes were highest. People familiar with mining will find the same faults with this picture that I do, but Paramount would argue quite reasonably that it does not make pictures for miners, who constitute such a small portion of the public that they may be ignored without disastrous results at the box-office. This paragraph, however, is not intended to be a treatise on mining, but is offered as an exposition of the theory that there always is more good screen material in the right way of doing a thing than in the wrong way. An audience does not need to know anything about the proper place to locate a powder house to get more fun out of watching a train jump a track and hurl itself at one, than it can by watching the same train continuing on a straight line and smashing into one. As we have it in this picture, the audience knows there is going to be an explosion as soon as it sees the house; if it had been done the other way, the explosion would have had the element of surprise in it. And a surprise is good screen material.

* * *

ANY months ago Beatrice Van wrote me a letter in which she asked me why I did not mention her as the writer of the scenario for a picture which I had praised in The Spectator. I told her why in a letter which has been whispered about ever since. My friend Jimmie Starr used to whisper about it at Henry's, and another friend of mine came to me in alarm about three months ago and told me that Variety was going to publish the letter in full. I renewed my subscription to Variety to assure my not missing the number which contained my epistle to Beatrice, and each week brings a fresh disappointment. But the whispering has kept up. However, whispering will not content me. I want the scandal to break with full force and despairing of anyone else doing it, I will bawl myself out. I will not reprint my letter in full for two reasons: I do not want to destroy all hope of Variety printing it, and I am writing this at night, when my secretary is off shift, and I am not going to paw over the files searching for my copy. I wrote Beatrice that I was sore at all writers, very few of whom at that time subscribed to The Spectator, but all of whom complained about almost everything in it, and that I had adopted a policy of mentioning in my reviews only those scenarists and title writers who advertised in this profoundly intellectual journal. I told her the rest could go hang. I have stuck to that policy, which is narrow, grasping, selfish, shortsighted, mean, horrible, terrible, and anything else the whispers have contained, but which, by the great horn I'm, I'm not going to change! I had hoped that Beatrice would post the letter on the bulletin board at the Writers' Club, for I wanted all the writers to know about it; and then I expected Variety to give me the necessary advertising, and it has failed me, leaving it up to me to tell the world what a narrow-minded guy I am.

* * *

HOBART Henley has made His Tiger Lady a nice little picture. In it we have Adolphe Menjou and Evelyn Brent, two splendid performers with ability enough to make any picture acceptable if they are given half a chance. An interesting feature of this production is the fact that Ernst Vadja both adapted the story and supervised its making into a picture. Not until story-tellers do all the supervising will we get pictures that will strike a satisfactory average of entertainment value. In this instance the plan was a success. We may assume that His Tiger Lady reached the screen exactly as the adapter, if not the author, wished it to, and that Vadja must share with Henley the credit for whatever share of merit it possesses. The locale is European, which always has seemed to me to be particularly appropriate for Menjou's personality and manner of acting. Henley preserves the Parisian atmosphere throughout, and the picture leans heavily upon it, for there is not a great deal of story. What there is, is interesting and amusing; the production is artistic and adequate, and the acting of the two princi-

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pal characters quite up to the high standards they already have set for themselves. There is one scene that jars. Miss Brent is shown in a fashionable cafe, occupying a table with three titled Frenchmen. She rises to leave the table and the men remain seated. I can not understand how mistakes of this sort are made. Either Henley or Vadja would be prompt about jumping to his feet if a woman guest were leaving a table at which he was dining in either a private dining-room or a public place, yet both of them give us a scene in which cultured Frenchmen do not perform this universal and conventional courtesy.

* * *

AFTER I viewed The Tempest I made a note to write something about the habit pictures have of showing inserts in a foreign language before the dissolve into English. The Tempest is an all-Russian picture, therefore everything in it had to be Russian. The audience knows this, consequently when John Barrymore writes a note to Camilla Horn there is no reason whatever why it should be shown in the Russian language first and then translated into English. If John were Russian and Camilla were English, it would be all right, for it would emphasize their separate nationalities by showing her receiving a note which she would have to translate into her own language before she would understand it. It detracts from the spirit of an all-Russian picture when inserts are shown in these bi-lingual dissolves. The audience always should be made to feel that it is part of what is going on. When you translate things for it in such a picture as The Tempest you are reminding the audience that it is alien to what is going on. I said that I had made a note to write something on this topic, but along comes Ernest Lubitsch with his perfect Patriot and makes the comment unnecessary. In this absolutely flawless picture Lubitsch presents all his inserts in English, even though it is an all-Russian story. The signs on shops are in Russian, which is as it should be, but everything that the audience must read to keep abreast of the story is presented in English without dissolves from Russian.

* * *

WHEN executives are looking about for ways of saving money they might pause long enough to consider the economic aspect of punctuality. It has also an ethical aspect, but a man so unconscious of the dictates of courtesy as to keep another man waiting an hour, can not be reached by an argument based solely on an ethical ground, consequently we will make it an economic discussion. In analyzing what a man has to sell we find that the laborer, banker, author, druggist and motion picture producer have one and the same commodity: time. In all businesses and professions other than the film business this fact of the value of time is recognized. The studio executive who can be seen at the time he himself fixes for an appointment is rare. During the course of a year I call on perhaps all of them and I know of only two whom I can see within reasonable approximation of the fixed hour. It is a habit motion picture people have of telling me that my time is worth nothing to me or to anyone else; all of which may be true, but when the people in the industry do the same thing to one another, then the industry as a whole pays for a lot of time that yields nothing. Not once in a thousand times is there any excuse for lateness. There could not be any excuse for anything that is both a bad breach of manners and an economic folly.

* * *

UNDOUBTEDLY the habit of calling upon extra girls to entertain parties of exhibitors or film salesmen will continue until Equity grows strong enough to stop it or until the actors' branch of the Academy gains courage enough to prompt it to say something that the producers won't like. At the present time it is an evil that is a disgrace to the industry. I have in my files detailed information about parties at which film salesmen and exchange managers were entertained by street walkers and such, who were presented as screen girls, because the decent girls who work in pictures could not be coerced by casting di-

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rectors into being present at the drunken riots. If the Hays organization disputes my assertion, I am ready to relate such facts as the post office regulations will permit me to relate without sending me to jail for forwarding obscene matter through the mails. I am not acquainted with the provision of the blackmail law, but I'll take this chance: Unless studios stop impressing girls as entertainers, upon promises of work, I will tell as much about the situation as I can without disgusting too much my readers and myself. One girl who needed work consented to attend a party after the studio's casting director had given his word that there would be lots of work for her. That was months ago. Since the party the girl hasn't even been able to see the casting director and has received no call.

* * *

WHEN I first saw Good Time Charley, a Warner Brothers picture, I did not like it, and said so in The Spectator. That was some months ago. The other day I saw it again. It has been tightened up and given a Vitaphone symphonic accompaniment. In its new form it is very good screen entertainment. Practically everything to which I objected is missing in the new version. And the intelligent music certainly is a great help. Lately I have been seeing and hearing quite a lot of pictures which have been scored by sound devices and have noted one interesting thing about them. When the music starts it sounds tinny and the individual instruments can not be distinguished readily, but after it has continued a few minutes its artificiality is apparent no longer and all the orchestral values come out. The same thing is true of voices. The first spoken words seem unnatural, but the ear becomes attuned quickly to the voices and thereafter the unnaturalness is not noticeable. As I said in the last Spectator, nothing is more certain that that the sound era in pictures is upon us. By this time next year every important picture will be shot on a silent stage and sound devices will pick up the voices and all the noises that properly belong in a picture.

* * *

POSSIBLY as good a way as any to size up in advance the characterization of a hero, would be to answer these questions: How would a fellow of this sort get along with a bunch of regular fellows? Would a decent, well-bred fellow do what we have him doing? Would he be popular in a drawing room? If Metro had asked these questions about Bill Haines he would have been taken out of his smart aleck roles before the public got tired of them. If First National had asked them about Clive Brook when his part in The Yellow Lily was being drawn, the picture would have been better. Brook is one of our finest actors, but his characterization in this picture is impossible. Although the hero, and an archduke, he is a surly, moody bore who behaves as a person lacking both breeding and training. It is poor stuff out of which to make a hero. Korda's direction accentuates the weakness of the characterization. All the acting in the picture is repressed, with the result that we have scores of big close-ups of Clive's face expressing the ultimate in repression, and contributing no more to the picture than equally big close-ups of the back of his head would have contributed.

* * *

WHEN sound devices are used generally those people who are excited about the invasion of foreign actors will calm themselves. As maintained in the last Spectator, The Lion and the Mouse will start the vogue of speaking pictures with no titles in them. Public demand for this form of entertainment will be so great that producers will be powerless to resist it. It will play the duce with foreigners who speak English with an accent, for they no

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**AVIATION**

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longer will be able to play Americans or Englishmen. A
Russian artist who does not speak perfect English will not
be able to play a Russian in a Russian picture, for in an
all-Russian picture the titles have to be spoken in
straight English to denote that they are translations.
Accent is permissible only when a Russian character is
speaking English. The use of sound devices will limit
American-made pictures to English-speaking countries.
But as we seem to be losing the other countries anyway, it
won't make a great deal of difference.

The conviction that teams are of value to the industry
is dying hard. I believe the only really worthwhile
team is being overlooked. I had no direct interest in pic-
tures when Wally Reid was on the screen, but one of the
features of his films that pleased me most was the presence
in so many of them of Theodore Roberts as Wally's father.
If some of our girls like Bebe Daniels, Madge Bellamy,
Dorothy Mackaill, and Esther Ralston used the same good
actor each time the scripts called for a father of one of
them, I believe the public would begin to look for these
fathers as eagerly as I looked for Theodore in Wally's
pictures. It's worth thinking about.

Producers turning out pictures that contain scenes
of social gatherings should be careful about showing
their men wearing dinner clothes. Dress coats are com-
ing back and the styles are now in the condition of inter-
locking without showing which one ultimately will prevail.
A picture presenting men in dinner coats may be out of
style in a year, and it may not. I believe the safest method
would be to go fifty-fifty on the proposition while the
styles settle themselves. Personally I have advanced my
tail-coat to a position near the front of my clothes closet
and am ready for anything.

When a man and a woman appear together in a
close shot care should be exercised to show that both
of them wear the same kind of lips. Generally in shots

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ONE reason among many why actors should join Equity and make it a powerful weapon of defense, is the question of rehearsing that the general use of sound devices will present. Lois Wilson and Eddie Horton spent a week rehearsing a sketch for Vitaphone. They worked on the set one day and got one day's pay. And you can't blame Warner Brothers. The condition is a new one, and no one knows yet how to handle it. But a precedent is being established that may give actors trouble. If all of them joined Equity there would be no danger of trouble.

ONE by one little improvements are getting into pictures just to prove that screen art is not altogether stagnant. One that I have noticed lately is the growing habit of showing only one side of a screen telephone talk. This is an improvement founded on common sense. When we know a man is telephoning to his wife there is no reason whatever why the wife should be shown if the husband’s message is the only part of the conversation that advances the story.

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By Donald Beaton — The Spectator's 17-Year-Old Critic

The nearest approach to the perfect picture has been made in The Patriot, Ernest Lubitsch directed it, and Emil Jannings and Lewis Stone acted in it. There were other good performances, of course, but the work of Jannings and Stone will go down in motion picture history, as will the direction of Lubitsch. But for the fact that it does not have sound, The Patriot would be at least five years ahead of any motion picture released in the last few months. I think it is ahead of its time, because it leaves more to the intelligence of the audience than any picture yet made. In a few years pictures will have to respect the intelligence of the audience, something they rarely do now. Every director in the motion picture industry should see The Patriot at least three times. It is the perfect textbook. It is also the sort of picture that would go to see several times. I imagine that it could be enjoyed just as much the second or third time as it could be the first. There would be new things to find in it each time. The Patriot has no tremendous sets in it, at least none people to any great degree; yet during its entire ten reels there is not a dragging moment. Everything moves along swiftly, but at no time does it move so fast that it gets away from the persons who see it.

There never has been a performance on the screen before like the characterization of the mad czar which Emil Jannings creates in The Patriot. The assassins of the czar are the real sympathetic characters of the picture, but Jannings manages to make himself also sympathetic and still leave the murderers in the right. One of the many things which contributed to the tense drama of the story was the forming of the murder plot by the czar's only friend. Jannings had a ticklish thing there, because if he failed to win the sympathy of the audience, his death, at the instigation of his friend, would have had no dramatic interest. On the other hand, if he won the hearts of the audience completely, his friend would become the heavy instead of the hero. The master hand of Lubitsch was evident in the brilliant medium Jannings finally struck. In all the years Lewis Stone has been on the screen and in all the clever performances to his credit, he never has given a hint of the ability and power he displays in The Patriot. The greatest compliment I can pay him is that he can think of that he comes closer than anyone else ever has to stealing a picture from Jannings. Florence Vidor never for a moment allows her part to get away from her. Her work is very clever. She is a newcomer, but he is splendid in a character part. Vera Veronina impresses in a small part.

The only fault to find with Good Time Charley is that it deals with a character strange to the average. Good Time Charley is a song-and-dance man, and what is a normal action to a song-and-dance man is insanity to some one who is not or has not been connected with the stage. I dare say that the clever characterization of Warner Oland as Charley was only understood by about one in twenty-five of the people who saw it. However, the Vitaphone connected with the picture is far more interesting than any of the merits or demerits of the visual parts of the combination. I saw Good Time Charley in a projection room, yet it had a complete score all through it. There is no doubt but that sound is a great invention. All through the showing of Street Angel, which had a Movietone score, I wanted the characters to speak. At times it would seem that they were going to, and I would lean forward with a feeling of expectancy, only to sink back, disappointed, when nothing happened. Even during The Patriot, which had no sound of any kind, I kept imagining the added power of the scenes if only some of the titles were spoken. Good Time Charley was like Street Angel. There were splendid places for the characters to speak. However, they were passed up even when they could have been put in very easily.

Warner Oland, a splendid character actor, has the leading role as “Good Time Charley,” Clyde Cook, who, with the exception of Charles Chaplin, is the finest comedian in motion pictures, gives a brilliant performance. Cook is not only a fine comedian, but he is one of the best actors in the business. He should be given bigger parts. I don't know the name of the man who played the heavy in Good Time Charley, but his work deserves favorable mention. Helene Costello does good work also.

BEAU Broadway may be a good picture. It may be bad, too, for all I know. Sue Carol was in it, so it was naturally a success for me. I said a little while ago that she would be a good actress as soon as she got some more experience. Well, she is getting experience all the time, and in Beau Broadway she is delightful. But for Lew Cody's clever work, she would have stolen the picture. Sue has a splendid personality, and some producer is overlooking a great bet in not starring her in a series of stories about young people. She has the quality that made Wallace Reid successful. He was successful because he was typical of young American men. Everyone who saw him on the screen
felt as though he knew him. Sue, in a superlative way, is the typical well-breasted, beautiful, intelligent American girl. In the eyes of the young man she is his best girl personified; the girl sees herself in her; to the older man or woman she is the sort of daughter he or she would want to have. She would be lovely.

Apart from Sue, Beau Broadway isn't much. To do it justice, it is better than the last Cody-Pringle atrocity I saw; but then that's not much of an achievement. The ending is a bit unexpected, and Ralph Spence's titles are better than any he has done as yet. They managed to contribute the majority of laughs to the picture. Those are about the only two things of any particular merit in Beau Broadway. The story is not consistent enough and looks as though it had been patched together as the company went along with the shooting. There was one very funny scene where Cody and Sue go to church. That was about the only scene where Mal St. Claire gave any evidence of his usual good direction. He did a pretty fair job, but it was not nearly as good as he should have done. Lew Cody was splendid. His performances are always pleasant to watch, because he has the art of comedy completely at his command. Aileen Pringle did not have to do as much as usual in this, but she was good. Hugh Trevor was highly satisfactory, as was the rest of the cast.

The Valley of the Giants was a silly motion picture, but it was good entertainment. Only when there was an attempt at a dramatic moment by any member of the cast did the picture become interesting. The actual dramatic moments were supplied by train-wrecks and fire-for-all fights. Several private fights between Milton Sills and Paul Hurst also enlivened proceedings; because when Sills makes a picture, the wear-and-tear on actors, furniture, and clothes is terrific. Several things in The Valley of the Giants were absurd. Sills is supposed to be a business man, yet when he finds out that the money he wants to borrow from a friend is going to be loaned him, he gives a yell of glad surprise and falls all over the friend. To see him, one would imagine that he was very grateful for the money, but doubted that the friend would get it back. Another sequence that was silly was the one where the heavy turned a machine gun on Sills' railroad builders. Sills goes all alone to make him stop, instead of taking three or four men. As a result, he and the heavy have a terrific battle.

The good points of the picture were the he-man fights, the train wreck, and the beautiful shots of the redwoods. A good, gory fight is always great stuff on the screen, because the average audience is still cave-man enough to enjoy the spectacle of strong men being scattered around. The average audience also has enough of the child in it to enjoy destruction, and a train wreck, particularly when the train is loaded with logs, is a destructive enough sight for anyone. Anybody who wouldn't enjoy some of the beautiful shots of the redwoods would have to be dead from the ears up.

A t last Bebe Daniels has made a really clever comedy. It is called The Fifty-Fifty Girl and is more amusing than anything I have seen lately. George Marion has written a set of titles for it that should make him a nice gold medal, because they contributed a great deal to the picture, and there wasn't a misplaced wisecrack anywhere. The majority of the Daniels comedies look as if they had been put together as the shooting progressed, but this had a definitely worked out story. As a result, there were no long periods where no laughs cropped out, as has usually been the case in this star's comedies. I know nothing about law except the few axioms I picked up under pressure after an unfortunate attempt to race a fat gentleman on a motorcycle, but there was one thing in The Fifty-Fifty Girl which didn't seem right. A mine is tied up by the litigation between the two partners who own it. One dies, and the other one calmly takes the mine. In my ignorance I always thought that a court-battle was in no wise affected by the death of

AT WORK ON

GEORGE WASHINGTON COHEN
Starring GEORGE JESSEL

Adaptation and Continuity From the Play "THE CHERRY TREE"

Address 1337 N. Sycamore Ave. Phone HOLywood 3792
The Film Spector

May 12, 1928

one of the contestants, and I always have been sure that the death of one part of the argument has surely given the case to the survivor. However, I may be wrong. I usually am.

I never have cared much for James Hall on the screen, but in this he was very good. He has a likeable personality which has been rather smothered by the fact that he has been merely a refuse hanger himself. His acting here is as good as she usually is. William Austin turned in a creditable performance.

Ivan the Terrible, a Russian-made picture, is a very interesting story for anyone who is interested in motion pictures. The Russian idea seems to be to make the story subordinate to the atmosphere of the scene, because Ivan the Terrible has very little consistent story up until the last few reels, where it begins to get interesting. During the first part, several stories are told, but it is a story which is never well done. It is a three or four reels which is told most clearly. At the beginning three stories are started, one about the czar's oppression of the old nobility, one about the love of the two peasants, and one about the peasant's desire to fly. All three men for furnished, and while one is taking his chance of which one he wants to regard as the main theme, the story of the czarina's intrigue with the peasant is developed. The first three stories are confused by a lot of characters. There's no real character that distinguishes the attention, but the last allows nothing to interfere with it, and so it is more powerful than the others. The Russian method of opening every scene with close-ups does not help to make the story any clearer. Their search for readable characters is commendable; but when they get people who do not conform to our ideas of good looks, one is not vitally interested in what happens to them. There is a total lack of sympathy in Ivan the Terrible. However, it is a very interesting picture.

John Ford is an artist. The Four Sons and his other successes establish him, and Hangman's House proves it. When I read Donn Byrne's book, I doubted whether there was any director in the business who could get the Irish spirit of it on the screen. Ford has done it beautifully and deserves a tremendous amount of credit. Spalding Gray, who makes it a pleasure to look at, and contributed a great deal to the picture's sticking close to the book. Victor McLaglen was featured in Hangman's House; and he was splendid in what he had to do, but his part was hardly the one featured. Earle Foxe, who is the heavy, gives a performance which is better than his work in The Four Sons. Never for a moment does he over-act or let his part get away from him. His is the outstanding work of the picture as far as acting is concerned. June Collyer and Larry Kent were very satisfactory in their parts. Hobart Bosworth was also very good.

Hangman's House contains so many beautiful scenes, and much dramatic situations that one would have forgotten the story altogether had it been told less adroitly. There were some beautiful scenic effects obtained through the use of fog. To my knowledge, this is the first time fog has been used extensively. Occasionally there have been shots of it, and it was used quite a lot in Street Angel. No previous fog scenes ever have attained the beauty of those in Ford's picture. Aside from the beauty of the scenes, the atmosphere always seemed very complete. Ford being Irish himself, the atmosphere naturally would be correct. There were some clever little touches of comedy here and there in the picture which also deserve favorable mention.

Alexander Korda is an absolute genius at creating beautiful scenes for the motion picture camera. He can take any sort of set and make it look beautiful. However, when he has created a beautiful picture, he goes right into close-ups and gives one no chance to enjoy the scene. This fault is from the German influence which Korda is so proud of. The Yellow Lily, a poor picture. Billie Dove and Clive Brook are the principal characters, and while they are both good looking people, one begins to get rather tired of them after about five reels of close-ups. The continual close-ups are unfair to the actors. For one thing, the acting is so good when they are confined to nothing but facial expressions; and for another, after the close-ups get tiresome, one loses interest in what the performers are trying to convey and begins to find faults in the work. The film is unfinished, and the close-ups, the story weakened the picture considerably. It was too vague and disconnected to be good. Korda, who, by the way, directed The Yellow Lily, is good at creating beautiful scenes, but he made some very pretty shots of the setting which has any originality or particular power. The brother of the girl is strong one minute and weak the next. Nicholas Soussnnin played the part quite acceptably, but he apparently was as confused about what he was supposed to do as the scenery. The picture was full of ridiculous things, more the fault of the story than the direction. The brilliant performance of Gustav von Seyffertitz was one good thing which stood out.

Dolphe Menjou has made another good picture in The Tiger Lady. A year or so ago, he was being ruined by poor pictures, but he has made so many good ones since then that he is more popular than ever. Hobart Henley is responsible for the direction, and his work is very good. He made some very pretty shots and developed the production value to the full. The Tiger Lady is classed as a comedy, I suppose. It has no big laughs, but manages to be amusing at all times, somewhat after a few comedies ever attain. The story is logical at all times, and there is nothing to strain one's credulity. Menjou and Evelyn Brent, who are featured, give splendid performances. One scene in particular, where the man is deceived on a doorway after some practical jokers have soaked him with water and dispelled his romantic dreams, is one of the finest things Menjou ever has done. Miss Brent, in addition to her good performance, expanded and wore some beautiful clothes. She wears clothes splendidly, but lately her roles have not allowed her to demonstrate it.

All in all, The Tiger Lady is one of the best entertainments I have seen in a long time.

The Wastefulness of Waste

My dear Mr. Beaton:

I read with mingled amusement and concern Mr. A. Scholtz' opinion that the present waste in the movies serves to make work for the carpenters, electricians, cameramen, etc., that they would otherwise not have.

Mr. Scholtz, I am afraid I must do day only—and not the year's average. If every studio to-day issued a call to workers, "We will immediately shoot for two weeks on absolutely superfluous film," it would give work to hundreds who are standing to one studio.

But if the cost of that film should appear on the financial statements of the various companies, labeled "Cost of superfluous film," and then should reach the eyes of Wall Street, "Bang," down would come the axe, and the studios would all close, everybody being out of work for a period far greater than the two weeks spent in shooting. In fact, the recent shut-downs are without doubt due in large measure to this very cause.

And yet that the pictures not labeled "Superfluous" did not pull the wool over the eyes of Wall Street.

If Mr. Scholtz can see any gain for himself and his fellow workers in, for example, the fact that First National shot for the war sequences alone of the Patent Leather Kid, 500,000 feet of film, of which about 1,500 feet appeared in the finally cut picture (these are the figures the cutter himself mentioned)—if, I say, he can see any gain in this, it is most remarkable.

I am sure that First National will soon fall line and shut down for a greater or less period, which will be glossed over by the publicity department as due to their year's product being finished ahead of schedule.

GAYLORD A. WOOD

Indianapolis, Ind.
The Filmmaker

**REVIEWED IN THIS NUMBER**

**Beau Broadway**—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by Malcolm St. Clair; story by Malcolm St. Clair; adapted by F. Hugh Herbert; continuity by George O'Hara; titles by Ralph Spence; settings by Cedric Gibbons; wardrobe by Gilbert Clark; photographed by Andre Barlatier; film editor, Harry Reynolds.

The cast: Lew Cody, Aileen Pringle, Sue Carol, Hugh Trevor, Heinie Conklin, Kit Guard, Jack Herrick, James J. Jeffries.

**Fifty-Fifty Girl**—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Clarence Badger; associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; author, John McDermott; screen play by Ethel Doherty; editor-in-chief, E. Lloyd Sheldon; photographed by J. Roy Hunt; assistant director, Henry Hathaway.

The cast: Bebe Daniels, James Hall, William Austin, George Kontonaros, Johnnie Morris.

**Fools for Luck**—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Charles Riesner; associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; adaptation and screen play by Sam Mintz and J. Walter Ruben; story by Harry Fred; photographed by William Marshall; editor-in-chief, B. F. Zoldman; assistant director, Paul Jones.

The cast: W. C. Fields, Chester Conklin, Sally Blane, Jack Luden, Robert Dudley, Mary Alden, Arthur Housman, Eugene Pallette, Martha Mattox.

**Hangman's House**—
A William Fox picture. Directed by John Ford; story by Donn Byrne; adapted by Philip Klein; scenario by Marion Orth; assistant director, Phil Ford; cameraman, George Schneidermann.


**His Tiger Lady**—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Hobart Henley; associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; adapted by Ernest Vajda; from the play by Alfred Savoir; supervised by Ernest Vajda; photographed by Harry Fischbeck; titled by Herman J. Mankeiwicz.

The cast: Adolphe Menjou, Evelyn Brent, Rose Dione, Jules Raucourt, Mario Carillo, Leonardo de Vesa, Emil Chautard.

**Honor Bound**—
A William Fox picture. Directed by Alfred E. Green; story by Jack Bethea; scenario by C. Graham Baker; assistant director, Jack Boland; cameraman, Joseph August.


**Valley of the Giants**—
A First National picture. Directed by Charles J. Brabin; from the story by Peter B. Kyne; adaptation by L. G. Rigby; photographed by T. D. McCord; assistant director, Bob Landers; film editor, Frank Ware; produced by Wid Gunning.

The cast: Milton Sills, Doris Kenyon, Arthur Stone, George Fawcett, Paul Hurst, Charles Sellon, Yola d'Avril, Phil Brady.

**Yellow Lily**—
A First National picture. Directed by Alexander Korda; produced by Ned Marin; adapted from the play, "Sarga Lilliam", by the author Lajos Biro; continuity by Bess Meredyth; photographed by Lee Garmes; film editor, Harold Young; art director, Max Parker.


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**THE FILM SPECTATOR**

May 12, 1928

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Haven't seen

AL COHN
for a dog’s age. Understand he’s doing some writing for the Christies. That’s nice.

ALEXANDER MARKY
is just making his parting shots of the South Sea story he is directing and supervising for UNIVERSAL in the distant waters of the Pacific. He is expected to arrive in Hollywood some time in June, and the next issue of the Spectator will tell of another motion picture tradition he is infringing upon on his way back.

His Fellow Violators
LEW COLLINS    WILFRID M. CLINE
HAROLD I. SMITH  ZOE VARNEY

JOHN FARROW
Writer
WITH PARAMOUNT

TAY GARNETT
Writer
DE MILLE STUDIO

CHARLES KENYON
Free Lancing
Recently Completed
Show Boat
Foreign Legion Symphony
In Preparation
A Girl on a Barge
For Universal
Demmy Lamson Management

ALFRED HUSTWICK
Film Editor
Titles

Since 1919 with Paramount

GEORGE SIDNEY
SAYS:
“When this is printed, I’ll be East having fun, to say the least.”

About time George was saying something else.

GRETTA TUTTLE
Ingenue Leads

Telephone GRanite 5151

LEW COLLINS    WILFRID M. CLINE
HAROLD I. SMITH  ZOE VARNEY

JOHN FARROW
Writer
WITH PARAMOUNT

TAY GARNETT
Writer
DE MILLE STUDIO

Demmy Lamson, Manager
Ruth Collier and W. O. Christensen, Associates

ALFRED HUSTWICK
Film Editor
Titles

Since 1919 with Paramount
TED WILDE

DIRECTED

“SPEEDY”

Now Preparing a New Harold Lloyd Production
Shouldn’t let box-office do the thinking

Doing the same old thing in the same old way

Method of production puts curb on imagination

Film barons convinced they have no faults
CONSENSUS

Harrison's Reports: An excellent drama! The interest is kept tense all the way through. It was adapted by Harry Carr and Paul Sloane, and has been directed by Sloane with great skill.

Motion Pictures Today: This is the best Leatrice Joy picture for a long time. Paul Sloane missed no opportunity to take advantage of the highlights in the story and as a result he has produced a picture that should be well received by audiences everywhere.

The Film Mercury: "The Blue Danube" has more distinction and quality than any picture that has come off the De Mille lot in many months. The direction, both in the handling of players and subtle effects, is especially noteworthy.

The Times: New York, May 5.—"The Blue Danube" at the Strand is a light, graceful romance, conspicuous for its distinguished and beautiful production, its convincing foreign atmosphere and its brilliant acting. More could not be desired to make Leatrice Joy's last picture for De Mille, which is, appropriately enough, her best.

Paul Sloane's Latest Production
Gladstone 1096
THE FILM SPECTATOR

EVERY OTHER SATURDAY

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May 26, 1928

THE FILM SPECTATOR

Page Three

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He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and
sharpens our skill.—Burke.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, MAY 26, 1928

Box-Office Can't Tell
When Public Is Satiated

THROUGHOUT its career the film industry has been
handicapped somewhat by the fact that it was born
without reasoning faculties and has failed to develop
any. Since birth it has allowed the box-office to do its
thinking for it. The weakness of the box-office is that it
has no imagination. It can tell you a lot about to-day's
events, but can not guess correctly what is going to happen
to-morrow. When The Spectator first said that Metro
was spoiling Bill Haines as a box-office attraction, the box-
office itself was telling an entirely different story. Now
the box-office agrees with The Spectator. No real advance
that has been made in the technical branch of screen art
has been thought out within the industry. The industry's
only contribution to its own advancement has been belated
development of an idea that originated outside it. Sound
and color as picture adjuncts were not originated by the
industry itself, nor is the industry playing any important
part in their present development. But in spite of its own
mental shortcomings it has advanced tremendously along
paths down which mechanics can lead it. Photography has
improved amazingly, thanks to the steady development of
the camera and lights; and sound and color will give the
art new dignity. Where mechanics can not be applied to
it, the screen has stood still. The treatment of stories is
not improving, and I see no indication of any future move-
ment towards improvement. Only along lines of which
producers will acknowledge they are ignorant has any for-
ward movement been made. The producers can not under-
stand the camera, nor the processes by which sound and
color are reproduced. They freely admit their ignorance
of such matters, and do not retard by their own interfer-
ence the development of these things that they do not un-
derstand. But no producer will acknowledge that he does
not know all about stories. Uneducated people who can
not speak grammatically will discuss with you gravelly the
works of great writers, and will tell you exactly how the
stories of such writers must be prepared for the screen.
They interfere most with the one department of making
pictures that they are equipped least to touch at all. And
this one department that is not mechanical, they are making
the most mechanical of all. They listen to the box-
office when it tells them that a picture showing a storm at
sea made money, and they insist that the taste of the
public has veered to storms at sea, and that there is no
hope of a picture without one being received kindly by
the people who support the industry. The fact that the
characters in one of their stories can not be dragged to
sea logically disturbs them not at all. Mechanically it is
possible to send the characters to sea; the public is crav-
ing storms at sea— voila! The public taste is definite and
fixed on only one point, and no other should give producers
any concern. It is the one ingredient that should be com-
mon to all screen mixture: logic. And all that logic is
applied common sense. Common sense would dictate that
the story is supreme and that everything should be sub-
ordinated to it. At the present time a director who has
no ability for story-writing is allowed to dictate how one
he is going to direct should be written. It must contain
only what he can "feel". If he cannot "feel" the author's
characterization of the hero, the characterization is
changed to come within his range of feelings, which is
exactly the opposite of what should be done. When a
director cannot "feel" a story, it is the director, not the
story, that should be changed. The average program pic-

"TRUST HER NOT, SHE IS FOOLING THEE!"

By GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN

The above line from Longfellow's "Beware!" is suf-
fi-ciently elastic in its application to encompass motion pic-
tures. They, like his coquettish girl, can be both false
and friendly. We all know the charm of a worth-while picture
—and therein lies the joker, as every picture is press-
agedent as the "greatest ever". Beware! lest the fair
garland of their ballyhoo prove "a fool's-cap for thee to
wear". "Trust her not, she is fooling thee"!—unless, of
course, you read The Film Spectator.

O boys, beware! The upward trend
Of woman's thought to-day
Is exemplified by ultra styles—
A most ingenious way.
The balance of power goes up and down—
Well may all he-men tremble.
Hygienic clothes! The female knows
That to win she must dissemble.

So, taking her cue from that great molder of styles and
manners, the motion picture show,

She hitches her hose to circumstance,
Reefs her skirt above the knee,
Crosses her legs in an omnibus,
And the cock-eyed male can't see
Her cerebration comprises things
Too utter for words to tell.
But the initiate know she's a dynamo—
She's a radioactive SELL.
Screen Should Get Busy And Develop Imagination

SCREEN art should be the world's richest field for the exploitation of the imagination. Almost anything that man can imagine can be caught by the motion picture camera, and yet the lack of imagination that they display is responsible for the world-wide charge that pictures are getting worse. Instead of conducting itself thus far in its career in a manner that would develop imagination, the most noteworthy accomplishment of the screen has been its proficiency in developing habits. So faithful is it to those habits that given a certain situation on the screen, the public knows at once what is going to happen. When the hero arrives and finds the heroine being treated roughly by the villain, the public knows there is going to be a fight in which one of the combatants will fall over a table, the other is going to hurl a chair savagely aside, and eleven other standard parts of film fights are going to be used; and it knows also that the heroine is going to mug horribly while she places one hand over her left breast and the other above her head and uses her teeth in a frantic effort to change the design of the portieres. Let us give directors the best of it and agree that the film fight has been developed into an example of cinematic perfection. Is it not possible that the public has grown tired of this reiterated perfection? A little imagination applied to a fight would give the public much needed relief. Despite the fact that in real life no woman would smear the wallpaper with her lipstick while the man she loves was being beaten up by a rough fellow whom she hates, it seems to be against the accepted traditions of the screen to give us such a woman. Yet all the screen needs is a departure from its conventions, the ridding itself of those things that audiences have learned to anticipate. Audiences wish to be surprised. The best picture is the one that gives it the most surprises. I have no ambition to direct a picture, but if I had to, and were given a script that called for a fight between the hero and the heavy in the presence of the heroine, here is how I would direct it: I would make the preliminary stages conform to standard, even to having the terrified heroine clutching the portieres. In this way I would give the audience the impression that it was going to see the regular, furniture-destroying affair. But when the villain circled near her as he was getting ready for his opening leap at the hero, I would have the heroine remember suddenly that her lover was in danger, quickly snatch up a candlestick and with it knock the villain unconscious. Thus we would have a fight in which but one blow was struck, and that by the person who, in striking it, would surprise the audience most. I would approach the direction of the fight with uppermost in my mind the thought that no matter how commendable was the usual manner of doing it, I had to evolve something different to give my picture the individuality that would make it refreshing. I would proceed on the assumption that the public wanted a new creation, not an imitation. This imitative weakness is one of the fundamental ills of the screen. It will persist as long as those who do not know how to make pictures continue to dominate their making.

Screen Does Not Keep Pace With Public Taste

THE way to make most money in any line of venture is to forget money and to concentrate on the quality of the output. This applies to the practice of law, shoemaking, the production of motion pictures, and writing The Spectator. It is a fundamental truth about business that the film business has not learned yet. The men who control the industry had forced on them by an entertainment-hungry public, millions of dollars which they honestly believe they earned by the exercise of business acumen far above the average. Nothing can disturb their belief in themselves or their methods. Having made their millions in spite of the fact that they ignored every business principle that has contributed to the success of all other established industries, they believe they have discovered something new in economics, that they have evolved a perfect system of assuring success. Their mental attitude is a solid wall which screen art encounters when it would try to advance. The millions that the producers own now were made by their present methods, and they are content with the methods. Tell them that possibly the public is tiring of the standard fight in pictures, and they will produce figures showing the profits made by pictures containing fights. Instead of centering their attention on the minds of the public, they keep their eyes glued on the box-office. Any progress that screen art has made has been forced on it by the public. The screen has trailed behind a public that it should have led. Because Metro made money out of pictures showing Bill Haines as an impossible pest it considered that such characterization would be popular forever. When the third picture of the series appeared, I said in The Spectator that Haines' box-office value was being lessened and that no matter how much money such pictures made, making them was poor business because they were giving Haines no permanency as an asset. I happened to be one picture ahead of other reviewers. When the fourth Haines' film appeared and he was revealed in it as once more the pest, almost every paper in the country asked to be delivered from further Haines wisecracks. Metro was forced to change its plans for Haines, and hereafter he will be presented as a chastened, normal human being. But he has lost millions of friends solely on account of Metro's inability to measure its doses properly. I, a very dull person not even in the business, predicted precisely what happened to Haines. It is surprising that Metro could not do its own predicting. It proceeded on the well established film
May 26, 1928

THE FILM SPECTATOR

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Page Five

convention that the public must not be surprised, that picture patrons go to theatres to see Bill Haines in a wise-cracking role, and such a role must be provided for them. That the public wants nothing to go on forever is something that producers can not grasp. Suggest to Paramount that Jannings should now and then play a part that is rich in comedy, and unquestionably you would be faced with the argument that the public expects to see him in the kind of roles he is playing now, and that you must not disappoint the public. This reasoning is wrong, although producers consider it sound. Anyone watching Jannings’ performances can not escape arriving at the conviction that he should be able to give a great performance of a light role, and the friends he has made would like to see him in such a part, for it is the actor, not the character, that pulls at the box-office. Widening his range of characterizations would lengthen his screen career, for the public can not tire of something that has variety in it. Metro has just about killed Bill Haines by refusing to recognize the box-office value of variety. And what applies to wise-cracking, applies equally to tragedy.

Too Bad Producers Can’t See That System Is Wrong

More discouraging than the fact that the method of making pictures is grotesquely inefficient is the absolute absence of any indications that there ever will be an improvement. We know, of course, that there will be, for nothing unsound can continue to exist in anything of itself inherently sound, but it would be more encouraging if we could see some signs of realization on the part of producers that their system is wrong. We never will have uniformly satisfactory pictures until there is a revolution in the manner of preparing stories. When we contemplate how most of the screen material is prepared for shooting, we only can wonder why pictures are not worse than they are. Let us consider one case, with the details of which I am familiar. I read a play and in casual conversation with a producer told him I should read it. He both read it and bought it. He saw in it what I did, clever scenes and brilliant bits in a well constructed plot that should make a scintillating comedy when transferred to the screen. He selected a director who used to be an actor, and who, like all directors, thinks he can write stories, although he has had neither training nor experience to justify his confidence in himself. A girl in the scenario department who makes notes in story conferences and later types them, was assigned to the director. A supervisor was appointed, a man who is connected with pictures by the grace of God, and not by virtue of any qualifications he possesses. These three began the task of preparing the clever comedy for the screen. They pulled in three opposite directions. No two could see the characters alike. As the play, of course, was all conversation, they had, in effect, to write a new story, and not one of the trio had had any experience in story writing. When they had completed their treatment my producer friend asked me if I would read it, and I told him I would if he would pay me for it. He did, which has nothing to do with the ease, and I read it, visualizing it and criticizing it as I would a picture on the screen. I told my employer that in my opinion it was a hopeless mess. He informed me that its creators thought it would make a notable picture, and that as there were three of them to one of me, he would be guided by the majority. He made the picture. Every reviewer in the country panned the life out of it, and it was a box-office flop. The weaknesses mentioned by those reviewers who criticized the picture constructively, were the weaknesses that I had pointed out to the producer, but which ceased to be weaknesses to him when they were approved by three people who knew nothing about story construction. The play had everything in it that a screen story needs, but what the producer overlooked was the fact that the story should have been handled by one person with a story-telling mind, and not by a number of persons with purely mechanical picture minds. Picture mechanics were applied to it while it still was a piece of literature. It was given no chance, being doomed from the first to be merely another movie. It should have been prepared by one person skilled in writing for the screen, as a novel is written by one person skilled in writing fiction. Instead of being written down to come within the narrow limits of the director’s ability, it should have been kept on the high plane of the original and given to a director to shoot as written. We never will have good pictures until this method is adopted. We have writers now who can turn out perfect scripts, and others can be trained, but as long as pictures are dominated by people who know nothing of the literary end of the business, but who think they do, the screen will maintain its present low standard. Producers give no evidence of appreciation of present writers or the necessity of training others. What bewilders me about their stupidity is their failure to realize that they would double their profits if they reformed themselves. Their confidence in their own knowledge of story construction is costing them millions of dollars each year.

Should Cease Being Same Old Thing Always in the Same Way

Proof that the minds that dominate production have become standardized is established by the fact that all pictures end in the same manner—with the girl in the boy’s arms. I can not conceive how any writer, director or supervisor can take such small pride in his work as to be satisfied with a lack of originality in any part of his picture. Every time you see that stereotyped ending you may be sure that the people responsible for the picture did not have brains enough to think up anything new; and you may be sure also that they will tell you that they had something pretty clever figured out, but that the audiences demanded clinch endings, therefore art had to be sacrificed to public demand. How is it that these people, so profoundly ignorant on everything else that pertains to pictures, are so profoundly wise in estimating the public taste? (I could make better progress with this paragraph if my cat would cease biting the end of my fountain pen.) They know nothing whatever about the public, not having grasped even the elemental fact that all humanity likes variety. The fact that practically all pictures end in the same way shows that the minds that make our screen entertainment are not the kind of minds that should be assigned to the task. In order to make directors realize that the final fadeout is important enough to receive some thought, I announced that I would present a gold medal to the director who gave the screen the best closing scene during this year. With the year over one-
third gone I have seen nothing that deserves recognition as a possible prize-winner; and the same is true of love scenes, for the best one of which I also offered a medal. Screen art has become stagnant and stupid, to match the mentalities of those who have it in their keeping. Occasionally a Lubitsch breaks through with a Patriot, a Borzage gives us a Seventh Heaven, a Ford gives us Four Sons and a Hangman's House, a Vidor gives us a Crowd, and one or two others distinguish themselves, but such pictures are exceptions. They have this important effect, however: they show the public just how fine screen entertainment can be made, what wonderful results can be obtained by intelligence applied to story-writing, acting, direction and photography. Such pictures should teach the industry something, but the industry is too stupid to learn. One of its greatest follies is that it does not put on the screen what it buys from an author. Paramount bought Gentlemen Prefer Blondes because it was so unusual as a book that it commanded wide attention, and made from it a picture that was such a usual sample of screen entertainment that it commanded no attention. The industry claims that audiences are stupid, buys clever and sophisticated books and plays for it and makes out of them pictures more stupid than any audience possibly could be. It buys a book because a certain quality in it gave it wide popularity, and makes of it a picture that does not contain that quality. It buys a play that was successful because it differed from other plays, and makes of it a picture that is like all other pictures. If the industry intends to pursue its policy of curbing whatever imaginations it has at its command, it might get somewhere without them if it would issue forthwith a ban on senseless close-ups, stereotyped love scenes, clinch endings, and ignorant punctuation of titles. That would be enough to start on. Of course, stripping production of these hard and fast conventions would leave many of our writers, directors and supervisors without any ideas whatever, but perhaps others with ideas could be found to take their places.

How About Foreign Audiences When Pictures Speak English?

DUNHAM Thorp writes me a letter which I quote in full: "There is an aspect of the talking picture that I have not yet seen discussed; an obstacle that seems to me quite formidable, and yet to the overcoming of which no thought seems to have been given. You say that the Warners' experiments have shown the use of doubles to be impracticable; if this is so, how are we to pass the bounds of our own language? And even if doubles could be used, how are we to do this with a device such as Movietone that records directly on the film, a device that on all other counts seems the best of the lot? With sub-titles eliminated, and with the story carried entirely by dialogue in English, how is our poor Abyssinian to enjoy Tom Mix? And, too, are we to be deprived of German, French and Russian work? In sum: is the market for a talking picture to be confined within the limits of the language spoken by its makers? I do not advance this as an argument against the sound devices; but I do think that it is a problem to be solved." Mr. Thorp raises a point that I have heard mentioned several times. Although I have heard no one offer a solution of the problem, I do not think that it is one that will present any difficulties when the time comes to tackle it. At present titles in English have to be translated into the languages of the countries where the pictures are sold. The same thing will have to be done with speeches that will be reproduced by sound. In the not distant future all pictures will use sound devices, and settling the merchandizing problems that the innovation will present will be a task that the industry will accomplish because it must. Let us consider first a picture made in Germany. The speeches, of course, will be in German, and care will be exercised by the producers in securing perfect synchronization of the words and the lip movements of the artists speaking the lines. German-speaking audiences would insist upon this perfection. But when the picture is shown in this country the speeches will have to be in English, making synchronization impossible. Our audiences will appreciate this fact and will not insist upon the lip movement matching the words. In other words, allowance will be made for the fact that the picture is a foreign-made one. When one of our pictures is shown in a foreign country, such allowance will be reciprocated, but when the same picture is shown here no allowance will be made and perfect synchronization will be insisted upon. There is no mechanical obstacle to the reproduction of the words of a speech in a voice other than that which first spoke them. The difficulty lies in obtaining someone to speak words to match the lip movement of the original speaker. It can't be done. When a foreign picture is screened in this country the speeches in it will be accepted frankly as translations of the originals, and the lack of relationship between the words and lips will be looked upon as a regular feature of a picture made abroad. And if this solution of his problem doesn't satisfy Mr. Thorp, I'm sorry. I can't think of a better one.

Grouping Characters to Make Them Face Camera

THERE is one shot in The Golden Clown, the initial picture at the Filmartre theatre, that should convey an idea to our directors who are in the habit of turning all their characters to face the camera. In this Nordisk film the director apparently wanted two characters to face the camera while they are conversing. He accomplishes it by having one of them seated on a bench-like affair when the scene opens, and having the other enter and seat himself by the first. Sitting side by side, naturally they face in the same direction. In most of our pictures the directors make their characters face the camera by the simple expedient of turning them around until they face it, no matter how unnatural the scene is made thereby. In Gentlemen Prefer Blondes there is an exhibition of flagrant disregard of common sense in grouping characters. Ruth Taylor, Alice White, and Ford Sterling are shown seated at a round table in a restaurant. Instead of forming a triangle, they are squeezed together so closely that Sterling in the center, scarcely can move. They do not occupy more than one-third of the table. They are seated in this fashion in order that all three of them at all times face the camera. In medium shots embracing the three their arms are shown overlapping one another, so closely together are they sitting. In the inevitable but unnecessary close-ups the arms are shown free from all contact. Paramount is a big producer, Blondes is a big picture, and Mal St. Clair is one of our big directors, yet the film contains
such utterly absurd stuff. Golden Clown escaped this
stupidity, but did not escape others. Regge Doran, the
intelligent young woman with a charming personality and
an alluring suggestion of an Irish brogue, who selects the
programs for the Filmarte theatre, is doing Hollywood a
service in bringing to it such films as Golden Clown, even
though its entertainment quality is no higher than that
of most of our own productions. As I viewed it I was
impressed again with the fact that the Europeans are
duplicating our best efforts. This Nordisk production might
have been made in Hollywood. It possesses both the virtues
and faults of our pictures. The direction throughout re-
tlects too much exuberance. Husband and wife, married
long enough to have a married daughter, are as extrava-
gant in the expression of their love for one another as we
would expect the bride of a week to be. Once, when there
is a knock on the door, the American habit of "taking it
big" is followed, always a silly thing. But one thing we
can thank Golden Clown for is the fact that it ends logi-
cally with the suicide of the heroine. The story is a trag-
edy based on the triangle theme, and it is worked out to its
logical end. The picture will not be an outstanding suc-
cess in this country, and producers will ascribe its lack of
box-office strength to the unhappy ending, thus putting a
premature blight on some of our own pictures that should
end logically. But it is not on account of the ending that
the picture will not make a lot of money over here. It
will cause no furore because it has no outstanding merits
to offset its lack of people with whom American audiences
are familiar. The ending is one of its strongest points,
but I'm afraid no producer will believe it.

* * *

Joe von Sternberg Slips
Up on His Latest Job

JOE von Sternberg apparently set too hot a pace for
himself. He came away behind with Under-
world, the direction of which he must have approached
in a differd mood, for his background was composed of
nothing but failures. While still more or less in this
chastened spirit he directed Emil Jannings in The Last
Command. Apparently the cheers with which the populace
received his first two pictures were ringing in his ears
when he tackled his third, and created within him a de-
termination to show Hollywood peasants just how a mo-
tion picture should be made. Instead of accomplishing this
worthy ambition, Joe has managed to demonstrate to us
just how a motion picture should not be made. The Drag
Net is so proud of being a movie that it advertises the fact
in every scene. It shrieks it, something that a nice, mod-
est movie would not do. The story and the production
are commendable, but the direction is terrible. The only
convincing sequence is the opening one which plants the
story in a gripping and businesslike manner. Then the
thing goes blooey, if this picturesque word means what
it sounds like. The characterizations are impossible. The
same people who made Underworld a notable picture are
in this one: George Bancroft, Evelyn Brent, and William
Powell. In Underworld George was an underworld char-
acter; in Drag Net he is a movie actor who pretends that
he is a great detective. Evelyn Brent in the second pic-
ture is a movie actress who pretends that she is a terrible
person, and Bill Powell is a non-moving movie actor acting
superbly Joe's conception of an utterly unreal person. For
good measure we have Fred Kohler mugging frightfully,
and Francis McDonaldcontinuously laughing uproariously
at nothing whatever. Such characterizations would ruin
the best film story ever written. Scenes that I would
gather are plausible in the script are handled on the screen
in a manner that makes them ridiculous. Bancroft, a cap-
tain of detectives, kills a man in a cafe, and there is neither
official nor social recognition of a fact that one of the
merry party has been transformed into a corpse. With
crooks to the right of him, crooks to the left of him, behind
him and in front of him, George mugs and thunders. In
real life he would have lasted just as long as it would have
taken a score of bullets to reach him. He goes to a table
at which are seated some peaceable people in evening
clothes, drops into a chair without removing his hat, and
insults a woman. And he is a captain of detectives! Later
he goes alone to a mysterious house in response to a call
so obviously a ruse that it should not fool anyone with as
much brains as a traffic signal, is deluded into the belief
that he has killed Leslie Fenton, that excellent actor who
is more nearly human than any other member of the cast,
and becomes a drunken bum. Any hero loses all his heroic
qualities the moment he becomes a drunkard. It makes no
difference what tricks fate has played on a man, what mis-
fortunes have been his—the moment he becomes sodden
with drink to forget his sorrows he reveals himself as a
character too weak to be the hero of anything, either in
real life, in a book, or in pictures. Von Sternberg's idea of
comedy is doleful. He has George Bancroft and Evelyn
Brent jaying at one another, their noses almost touching.
It is very silly. In a cafe scene so much confetti is used
that the revellers have to wade through paper streamers.
Scores of people are smoking. The greatest precautions
against fire must have been taken when the scene was
being shot, for one misplaced cigarette might have made
the set a mass of flame. Apparently no one thought of the
fact that on the screen the impression would be given that
the same thing might happen in the cafe.

* * *

Apparently Bert Glennon Is
a Reader of The Spectator

MANY motion pictures have been enriched by the
fine quality of Bert Glennon's camera work. He
has photographed many Paramount pictures, some
of them having been supervised by William Le Baron. Bill
sized up Bert. He noticed that the cameraman seemed to
have an intelligent grasp of the story and of everything else
that entered into the making of the picture he was photo-
graphing. When Bill started to uplift F. B. O. pictures he
remembered Bert. The other day I saw a picture directed by
Glennon, the story being an original by Le Baron. The
cameraman has become a director, and unless I miss my
guess he is going to be quite a notable one. The picture
is called The Perfect Crime, and is interesting as a narra-
tive, as well as being a medium that allows that splendid
actor, Clive Brook, an opportunity to give the screen an
extraordinarily clever characterization of a doctor, brilliant
professionally, but just crazy enough to cut a man's throat
for no other reason than to see if he could fool the police.
Brook's performance is a brilliant example of intellectual
screen acting. But to me the most interesting feature of
the production is the direction given it by Glennon. A
man's first adventure in any conspicuous field of endeavor
is something to command attention. The dominant note that this new director strikes is the application of common sense to his work. When someone knocks at Brook's door, he registers that he hears the knock simply by glancing at the door, a fleeting glance that is little more than a flutter of the eyelids, but it registers the knock as completely as if he gave the violent start and looked terrified, the usual method of doing the scene. By the use of a shadow Glennon continues the action when a character moves out of a scene. This method eliminates one cut, and every cut eliminated makes any picture just that much better. When he feels that individual close-ups are necessary, Glennon groups his characters far apart, thus making the close shots seem more plausible. Readers may remember that recently I classified close-ups of kisses among the major vulgarities of the screen, and generally condemned the method of handling love scenes, contending that love is sacred and should not be made so blatant. In The Perfect Crime Glennon—I think he must read The Spectator—shows us a love scene in a decidedly clever manner. Irene Rich and Clive Brook are in love with one another. They enter a room, closing the door after them. The camera is lowered to the keyhole and through it we see the two kisses. I am not going into the ethics of keyhole gazing, but I contend that in this instance it conveys an ideal of the privacy that should surround a love scene. I have thought on only a few of the little things that Glennon has done in his first venture as a director. All the way through he displays intelligence, no more marked than in his method of telling his story. He seems to have realized that that was the biggest part of his job, and he has given us a thoroughly entertaining picture, quite good enough to be shown anywhere. Also he introduces to us Gladys McConnell as a dramatic actress. I believe I have seen the young woman slapsticking about the place, but I never received the impression that she has such talents as Glennon uncovers. I recommend her to producers. Miss Rich has little to do. Tully Marshall, Edmund Breese, and Carroll Nye contribute entirely satisfactory performances. All in all, Bert Glennon's debut as a director may be numbered among the auspicious occasions. But I insist that he must be a reader of The Spectator.

** Why Must We Have a Close-up of a Harp? **

Lois Moran, ably abetted by Neil Hamilton, Henry Kolker and Claire McDowell, make a merry affair of Don't Marry, a comedy directed for Fox by James Tinling. It is the business of any motion picture to catch the attention of the audience with its first sequence, which should suggest that some interesting developments are to follow. Don't Marry does this. Tinling opens his story briskly and proceeds to tell it without any dull interludes. The story is interesting. It is an answer to those who view with alarm the fun our modern misses are having, and who can see no virtue in a girl's knee, which prompts the reflection that even a comedy might as well be about something. To provide us with an opportunity of satisfying ourselves as to the relative merits of the old-fashioned and the modern girl, Lois Moran plays both kinds, portraying a flapper who masquerades at times as an innocent creature of the old type. I vote for the miss of to-day, although I confess that the girl of the masquerade is the sort I used to love, undoubtedly because of the lack of anything else to love. It is sometime since I have seen Lois on the screen, and it was a pleasure to rediscover her in a part that allowed her such wide latitude for the displaying of her talents. She is an accomplished young woman, and proved equal to the rapid transitions that the role called for. I always have imagined her as only in sweet-girl characterizations, but am willing now to accord her rating as the latest model flapper. She has a fine sense of comedy, and in the serious and sentimental phases of her part is equally convincing. Neil Hamilton in this picture proves himself a comedian of parts. He is another whom I could see only in serious roles, but he surprised me by the easy and entertaining manner in which he carries off his lighter scenes. He is one of the few young men who never fail to please me. Kolker and Miss McDowell make valuable contributions to the general charm of the picture. In general Tinling's direction is commendable. He knows how to tell a story, a detail that is important. In one scene he shows a too great regard for screen conventions. Hamilton comes to the office of his father (Kolker) and converses with him. The son stands with his back to the father as the two talk, a position made necessary by the director's conviction that he would be arrested if he did not keep the faces of his principal characters always towards the camera. Why directors cling to this stupidity is beyond me. What if Hamilton had to stand with his back to the camera while he spoke titles to Kolker? Is there any law against it? Must ordinary common sense in grouping characters always be sacrificed to the crazy notion that the audience insists upon seeing only faces? The close-up pest does not afflict Don't Marry greatly, but it is applied in one instance in a manner that deserves comment. Lois Moran sings while she plays her accompaniment on a harp. A pretty girl at a harp always is an alluring picture. We get a glimpse of Lois and the harp in a nicely framed long shot, and then the scene goes into the inevitable close-up. Will someone kindly tell me why under the sun we need a close-up of a girl singing? And must we have such a close-up at the expense of a most attractive picture? I like Don't Marry, and recommend it to exhibitors, but I refuse to forgive Tinling for refusing to show me Hamilton's back and for insisting upon showing me a close-up of a harp.

** Arthur and Dane in One That Misses Fire **

Metro has made another pitiful attempt at comedy. Detectives, in which Karl Dane and George K. Arthur are starred, has nothing to recommend it. It is a farceical comedy that is not either good farce or good comedy. It is lacking totally in cleverness and originality. Every piece of business in it has been borrowed from productions that went before it. I can understand how a producing organization can slip up now and then in making a comedy, but I can not understand how an organization as important as that of Metro can keep on making such indifferent comedies as it is giving us now. As each appears it emphasizes the fact anew that the M-G-M people do not know what comedy is. We laugh at situations that are made funny by their relation to the thread of a well told and plausible story. Such a comedy of situations
must be played straight. We laugh also at scenes that are absurd and which take their places in a long line of absurdities. We know they are presented frankly as ridiculous fancies, and if they are played with a rollicking humor that makes them irresistible, their lack of logic does not disturb us at all. I think the heartiest laugh I've had in a picture house since I've started. The Spectator is prompted by the appearance of George Sidney on the wing of an airplane while it was above the clouds. He was standing up, wearing a nightshirt and carrying a hot water bag. Nothing more wildly impossible could be imagined, yet it was one of the funniest scenes I ever saw on the screen. Illogical humor is just as funny as logical humor, but the two can not be mixed. M.-G.-M. is falling down with its comedies because it mixes them. Detectives opens in a hotel lobby. Every care is exercised to show it as the lobby of an important and well conducted hotel. Chester Franklin's direction emphasizes the matter-of-factness of the scene as a normal manifestation of the hotel's routine. Marceline Day is a public stenographer whose desk stands in a position that can be seen from any part of the lobby. Dane, house detective, characterized so extravagantly that it makes his employment in the hotel unbelievable; and Arthur, a bell boy, whose characterization is satisfactory, conduct themselves with Marceline in a manner completely out of place in such surroundings. They throw things at one another and do other violent things without attracting the attention of hotel guests standing within ten feet of them. When a picture opens in this way, how can anything that happens in it appeal to a person of intelligence? What is it, anyway? You can not superimpose farce on a background of the moving drama of everyday life. Only straight comedy can have such a background. In this picture the whole lobby should have been given farcical treatment or our main characters should have produced their comedy by making it consistent with the background. Detectives never recovers from its bad start. Even the generous contributions made by other producing organizations do not relieve it of its sadness. When I saw it in preview I was aware of the fact that some scenes in it provoked laughter, but not once during its screening did it cause one of those roars from all over the house that should greet a comedy at least once in every reel. I will give you one more sample of the silliness of the thing. The gang escapes from the hotel with the jewels. Dane, the house detective, gives chase to the thieves. They are in a high-powered automobile; Dane is riding a bicycle. A title says they go miles into the country. It is a stormy night, but Dane, on his bicycle, arrives at the mysterious house as soon as the racing motor. That is the kind of stuff that Metro asks us to take seriously. And it is only one of a score of incidents equally absurd.

Atmosphere in This One Is Drab and Uninteresting

THEY still credit Mauritz Stiller with the direction of The Street of Sin although I believe it required a couple of months in time and much argument in conference to get the thing far enough away from the direction he gave it to make it safe for release. I understand Joe Von Sternberg tinkered with it, and I think Lothar Mendes finished it. I am not presenting the foregoing for its gossip value, but solely to establish the fact that I don't know whose direction to praise or blame when commenting on the picture. Barney Glazer supervised it, and I would hop on him except for the fact that the supervision, editing and cutting are the most commendable features of the production. Street of Sin gains its importance from the fact that Emil Jannings is its star. It will not disappoint those who go to a picture house solely to see Jannings act, even though in this film he enacts a role for which I would have cast George Bancroft or Wally Beery, either one of whom probably would have done more justice to it than Jannings manages to do. To keep Jannings for an entire picture within the drab and sordid atmosphere of the slums of London is to deny us sight of him in a setting that seems were suitable to him. I want my Jannings to have heroic moments, to wear uniforms and war decorations. I do not want to see him with one greasy-looking sweater for an entire picture, and to come mighty close to wearing one expression for the same length of time. What I want, however, is important to Paramount only to the extent that the public shares my taste, and perhaps the majority will have no objection to Jannings remaining in the slums. But I can not see how his performance is going to satisfy anyone. Jannings played in this picture prior to his appearance in The Patriot, and I saw the latter first. Jannings is so truly magnificent in The Patriot that by comparison his performance in Street of Sin is dull and uninteresting. The most intriguing performance is that of Olga Baclanova, the talented Russian actress who is showing herself equal to the growing importance of the parts assigned to her. Her characterization of a street-walker in love with Jannings and fiercely jealous of Fay Wray, is an intelligent and brilliant exhibition of screen acting. Fay has a part that is too much a monotone to make a great impression. She is a patient, long-suffering Salvation Army lass who is played according to the screen's conception of such a person—one with an angelic coating so thick that her humanity does not show through it. While Street of Sin is well worth the time of those who like Jannings, I am not sure that it will be a popular picture. It lacks in contrasts. During its entire footage it makes but two brief excursions from the confining, gruesome, seamy side of London, produced on the screen with so much sincerity and candor that the viewer almost thinks he can smell it. This is hard on stomachs already upset by an early scene which is so disgusting and nauseating that I refuse to describe it to you. I can not imagine how Paramount excuses its sponsoring of such filth. To offer in extenuation...
that it is art is to indulge in an idiocy, for on the same plea everything disgusting in life could be offered as screen entertainment. There is one feature of Street of Sin for which, no doubt, Stiller deserves thanks. It is that rich quality of photography and lighting that foreigners first suggested to us, but which we do not avail ourselves of as much as we should.

* * *

Funny Way in Which the Industry is Fooling Itself

The fellow who copied the script had an agreeable personality. Everyone liked him. So many people had helped with the adaptations of the story that it was found difficult to apportion the credit. Someone suggested that the fellow with the agreeable personality be given the credit. He had contributed nothing to the adaptation, but on the screen he was given credit for all of it. The picture was a big success, and another studio did a quite clever thing. It found that this new writer was not under contract and it snapped him up—and it spent nine thousand dollars on him before it learned that he knew nothing about writing, and trying to get rid of him after it made such discovery. Everyone connected with pictures knows of scores of similar cases. If the present system of distributing credits consisted merely of flattering people, the idea that it is based on, it would be only funny, but it has its financial side and has been responsible for the loss of a considerable amount of money. As long as the credits fooled only the public it made no difference who received them, but when they fool the industry itself it would seem to be time to change the method. The motion picture business has not learned the fact yet, but it is a fact that the safest and most comfortable way to run any business is to be absolutely on the square even with the smallest details. It is a cheap and paltry habit, this one of giving people credit for things they have not done. One writer wrote me complaining that I did not give her credit for the adaptation of a story screened by a famous star. The screen gave her credit for it, but I happened to be calling on the famous star when she dropped this writer's adaptation into the waste paper basket and sought my advice about the employment of someone who could make a useable adaptation. Because the screen gave the woman who wrote me credit for the adaptation she has been kept busy since the release of the picture, and as she is not worth what is paid her, a considerable amount of money wasted on her. I believe the greatest joke, however, is the credit for supervision. People who have not read the script or visited the set often are given credit for having supervised successful pictures, thereby improving their standing in the industry. In this respect Metro has the only sensible method. It gives no credits for supervision. The idea should be carried a little farther in all the studios. It is a waste of footage to give credit to anyone except the director, and I can not see that it makes much difference if he be overlooked. No one outside of Hollywood pays any attention to the credits. Cameramen have been given credit for the past fifteen years, yet my idea of an easy way to make money would be to bet that no picture fan not engaged in the industry could write a list of the names of five cameramen. But the name on the screen pleases the cameraman and his wife, and it does no one any harm when the credits are distributed hon-

estly, but the industry will have to do one of two things: it either will have to stop believing its lies or it will have to stop telling them. At present it is making a perfect donkey of itself. Someday, perhaps, the film business will become ethical. When this stage is reached even those in it now who inaugurate, encourage or tolerate unethical practices will find that it is a much nicer business to be in. At the present time it has an outward appearance of breeding and culture, but at heart it is a cheap lowbrow; and it never is going to get all the fun it can out of life until it becomes a highbrow and sticks to highbrow methods.

* * *

When Bill Beaudine first went on the set to make Give and Take he had Jean Hersholt and George Sidney, and a pleasant little story. That ought to satisfy any other director. Apparently it satisfied Bill. He mixed his three main ingredients, folded in Sharon Lynn, flavored with George Lewis and Sam Hardy and turned out a dish that will tickle the palates of picture patrons.

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everywhere. Although I think it is the height of folly for Universal to put Hersholt in small pictures, I must say I thoroughly enjoyed him in Give and Take. A great deal of footage is devoted to a quarrel between him and Sidney, but owing to the superb acting of both of them the sequence does not drag for a moment. In less capable hands it could not have gone half the distance before becoming tiresome. Both of them are Germans, and Jean's uncanny mastery of the art of submerging himself in his part was never exemplified more strikingly, nor was the fact that he is a great actor ever more apparent. George Sidney always is a delight. His work gives the impression that he enjoys hugely every part he plays, a valuable asset for a comedian. But even when I laughed at him in this picture I felt that I would like to see him occasionally in a role that gave him an opportunity to display his great human quality. It was my first view of Sharon Lynn in action. She is a fine looking girl who radiates intelligence. There is something about her that convinces me that she has a future. Studios are grooming young women without half her promise. In good hands she should become an asset of any producing organization. George Lewis again gives a capable performance as a young man who grooms up his father's business. Sam Hardy plays a character part with vim, vigor, and intelligence. His breezy performance provokes many laughs. Beaudine directed Give and Take with his usual appreciation of comedy values. But I don't understand why he has a bank president wearing his hat in the home of a man upon whom he is calling. The titles in the picture are excellent and will be responsible for many laughs.

** THE "Wright Idea"

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and he must be indifferent to where it lands. It is one of the screen’s silly habits, and it is not good characterizing. To start with, the greater the stress under which a man is laboring, the greater is the hold that his instinct has on him, and the more prone he is to conform to his established habits; therefore, no matter how intent he is upon his villainy, he would dispose of his cigarette in a conventional manner, which does not include throwing it on the floor. In the second place, showing him calmly disposing of his cigarette in an appropriate manner would add point to his villainy. You have something in the way of a character when you give us a man who would ruin a girl, but not a rug. Every time a cigarette or a match is thrown on the floor in a film scene you may put it down as a flaw that every woman and nearly all the men in the audience notice. No director will be a really good one until he is as careful about the disposal of a burnt match as he has to be about the manner in which his male and female leads do their big love scene.

* * *

QUOTED from Film Daily: “The latest point that has arisen since the new free lance actors contract has taken effect deals with a producer who wished to know whether he could require an actor, engaged for a specific role in a picture, to also work in another picture during his engagement on the first picture. In this case, the actor’s services would not be needed for a period of ten days on the first picture, a period, of course, on which he is on pay. It is the general belief that the producer cannot require the actor to appear in two pictures while engaged for only one, but that the producer might make such a request.” The closing words are illuminating. If the producers put that over, they can congratulate themselves upon having taken a further unfair advantage of actors. They “might make such a request!” You may imagine the fate of the free lance player who refused the request. There is only one way to handle such a situation. It is for screen actors to join Equity and make that organization strong enough to enforce its demands on producers—and to make them recognize Equity rules. One of these rules should be that Equity would not allow any of its members, when called to work in one picture, to play in another during the term of the contract. This would relieve free lance players of the necessity of making the decision for themselves, and would relieve them also of the consequences of the refusal that they would be justified in making.

* * *

ONE of the things that the Academy should devote attention to is the cost of glycerine. While I have not been in the market for any, and have no direct information regarding its cost, I am convinced that the price is higher than it should be. If this were not so, I feel that directors would allow their players to wipe away their glycerine tears, as in real life a crying person always does with his natural tears. If the price were more reasonable.
then it must be, I am sure that Herbert Brenon would have been much more daring in his use of glycerine in Sorrell and Son than he apparently thought he could be and keep within his budget. Harry Warner, with a handkerchief sticking out of his up-stairs pocket, wore the same glycerine on his face for an entire sequence, but in another sequence when he shed real tears he wiped them away as soon as they fell, which shows how reckless some people are in squandering the resources of nature. In the same picture Nils Asther, having at his disposal as a tear-wiper only a comforter, sheet, pillow cases, pajamas, his wife's nightgown and a handkerchief, was unable to make a choice, consequently wearing his glycerine tears even though they were dripping off his chin. If I were a director I would endeavor to save money by eliminating unnecessary sets. In this way I could wipe away glycerine tears and still keep within my budget.

* * *

At one time during the shooting of The Patriot I was a visitor on the set. Emil Jannings was doing some magnificent acting before the camera and Lubitsch was demonstrating how a great director works. There were about fifty extras waiting for their scenes. Some were playing bridge, some chatting in groups, a few reading, and a couple stretched out asleep. One girl, possibly eighteen years old, was watching intently every move of Jannings and Lubitsch, and she was the only one of the lot similarly engaged, the only extra in the fifty who realized that she had an opportunity to receive free tuition in the art that she had adopted as a career. She is going to get somewhere. The others, who were paying no attention to what was going on in front of the camera, and who failed to take advantage of a chance to learn something, may turn out to be pretty good bridge players, but they probably never will cease to be extras. Extras who are called for work on sets where they can see real artists in action, are in a position to learn something that will help them get out of the extra class. They should not overlook it.

* * *

Let us consider No. 128 of Silly Screen Habits. Bedroom scene. A in bed, B fussing about. B leaves the room for a moment, of course expecting to find A still in bed when he returns. But the audience sees A scamper from the bed and leave the room. B returns and is amazed when he sees the bed empty. He stands in the doorway as he registers his amazement. We know he is looking at the bed, and we knew in advance that he was going to be

K. C. B.

desires to announce that he is now free of contractual obligations that have confined his activities solely to writing a newspaper column which for the past sixteen years has appeared daily in many metropolitan newspapers throughout the country, and which continues, through the Bell Syndicate, New York, to keep the initials before the public. He now is at liberty to write

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Kenneth C. Beaton
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Hollywood

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amazed when he saw it. But film editors do not give us credit for having that much sense. They insist upon showing us the empty bed. Like scores of other screen habits, it is one without any sense in it. No opportunity to allow the audience to use its imagination should be overlooked, and no quick cut that can be avoided should be in a picture. The characters in a picture, not the camera and the cutter, should provide the action. These objectionable cuts are little things, but they are silly, and silly things on the screen are big things.

** * **

ALL the other directors in Hollywood should consider seriously the case of Eddie Sutherland. I do not like to stir up trouble, but I feel it my duty to inform directors generally that Sutherland is untrue to their best traditions. He absolutely ignores the alibi. The other day he asked me if I had seen Tillie’s Punctured Romance, which he directed. I told him I had, not, as I did not view pictures that I knew in advance I would roast, and that I understood that this one was very bad. “It is lousy,” agreed Eddie. “I suppose it is impossible to turn out a good comedy by the Christie system,” I added in the way of comfort. “The system had nothing to do with it,” said the director. “All the fault was mine. I was given everything I wanted, was not interfered with in any way, and the picture is a rotten one solely because I got all balled up and didn’t know where I was at.” I presume now that I have related the incident as it happened, all self-respecting directors will shun Eddie. Imagine confessing that a director CAN be wrong!

A QUESTION comes to me on a postcard: “Which do you prefer—that an admirer of your paper and a believer in its policy should buy it at a newsstand or subscribe for it by the year? Which helps you most?” Subscribe by the year, by all means. If the thousands of people who read newsstand copies of The Spectator really wish to do something to help it they should have their names enrolled on its list of paid yearly subscribers. I suppose there are three or four thousand people in Hollywood who intend sometime to subscribe, but who never get around to it. If they had any idea of the tremendous encouragement their subscriptions would be to me, they

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would send in their names. The method is simple. Call up HEmpstead 2801 and give your name and address. The paper starts going to you at once, and some time later you get a bill to which you can attach a check for five dollars. Along with a check from Mae Murray came a
cheering line: "So little to pay for so much!" If you feel
the same way about it, please use your phone.

* * *

A WORTHY ambition is a valuable asset for anyone. I
have an ambition. It is to be master of ceremonies
at a five-dollar Hollywood opening. When I came on
the stage sometime after midnight, when the endurance
of the audience had become pulpy, I would make the follow-
ing speech: "Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to introduce to
you Bill Smithers, who plays the heavy in the picture you
just have seen." I would make the same speech as many
times as there were people to introduce, and after the last
one had made his bow, I would make my closing speech as
follows: "That is all. Good night." Then, with the frenzied
cheers of the audience ringing in my ears, I would squeeze
my way out to the sidewalk and spend a squashed hour
waiting for my car, buoyed up, however, with the knowl-
dge that forever I would be considered by Hollywood as
the perfect master of ceremonies.

* * *

W HEN I viewed The Chaser, Harry Langdon’s current
release, I found it such a pitiful thing that I refrained
from reviewing it. Other screen writers were not so con-
siderate. I know of no other picture that has been con-
demned so generally. I hope Harry reads all the criticisms
and arrives at the conclusion that his last few pictures
have forced the public to form, that he knows nothing
whatever about film entertainment and that to save what
is left of his reputation he should put himself in the hands
of someone with such knowledge. The spectacle of Lang-
don insisting upon writing his own stories and directing
them is a sad one. There was a time when he had the
reputation for knowing something about acting. His
lamentable failure as the master of his own destiny is
creating the impression that he doesn’t know much about
anything.

* * *

W HILE waiting for a preview to start I viewed again
the closing sequences of Sorrell and Son. I was im-
pressed again by the masterly acting that H. B. Warner
does in the operating-room sequence. When given a chance
he always proves himself to be a superb actor. But he is
not given a chance very often. However, Harry Warner
is one of the scores of splendid artists in Hollywood who
will come into their own when sound devices are used gen-
erally, as they soon will be. I can imagine him and Hedda
Hopper playing opposite one another in a brilliant, sophis-
ticated comedy and if I were in the producing business I
would set about getting such a story.

* * *

M ANY times you see in pictures silly little things for
which there is no excuse whatever. In as good a pic-
ture as His Tiger Lady, the latest Menjou vehicle, we have
a scene showing the hand of a girl racing across a paper
upon which she writes a note. An insert of the note shows
vertical handwriting of a sort that could not have been
written in the manner in which we see the girl writing.
We might make it more plausible by showing in the insert
a scrawling hand that possibly might have been written in
a hurry.

* * *

AFTER delivery was made of the volumes ordered
in advance, I find I have half a dozen beautifully bound
books containing all The Spectators published during the
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* * *

W HEN Will Hays took over the morals of the motion
picture industry, great publicity was given the fact
that screen artists were going to be forced into a state of
respectability. Almost every important paper in the coun-
try reproduced in its entirety the morality clause that Hays
was credited with having inserted in all artists’ contracts.
May I inquire if there is a morality clause in the contract
that Hays himself has with his organization?

* * *

W HEN I reviewed Four Sons I commended a bit done
by a young miss whose name I discovered to be Kath-
arine McDonald. Since that time she has changed her
name, and the praise I bestowed on Katharine McDonald
now belongs to Kay Bryant, who impresses me as being
a clever youngster.

* * *

S OMEONE is going to make The Donovan Affair into a
picture. I presume Mae Murray is being considered for
the feminine lead.

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"The River Woman"

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"Father and Son"

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Supervised by Harold Shumate
THE Trail of '98 is a picture which no one should miss seeing. It provides some of the best motion picture entertainment I have seen lately. However, as a motion picture, it is a failure. There is not a single scene which has not been filmed before it. Clarence Brown, who directed, is not wholly to blame for that; because he had to choose what he wanted to make of Robert Service's story—a great spectacle or a great motion picture. In a picture like The Trail of '98, the two can not be blended. Brown chose to make a great spectacle, and he succeeded admirably. The great snow slide was splendidly done, and so was the wild ride through White Horse Rapids. Harry Carey wandering around as a human torch also made quite a spectacle. Brown managed to get the terrific struggle of the gold hunters against the elements on the screen, but at no time was there any sympathy for them. The picture didn't ring true, for some reason; so the principal actors of the entire cast gave performances which were good enough mechanically, but had no more feeling in them than blocks of ice. The sorrows and disappointments of the characters did not interest me in the least, and they only made the picture drag between the really big thrills. The Trail of '98 was something like Wings in that it had a tremendous theme which was well done, and only fell down when it came to doing just average moving pictures. The snow deserves a lot of credit for one scene, however. Two brothers quarrel over gold, and one shoots the other dead. The dead man, just prior to being shot, was standing at the bar with a poke of gold-dust in his hand. When he was shot, he fell just under the pole, and the gold-dust poured down on him and mingled with the blood flowing from the wound. Incidentally, the man died with his eyes open, a thing which made the scene doubly impressive. Unfortunately, that scene was run a bit too long, and the dead man had to wink his left eye; but a few feet cut from it would make that all right. This scene, aside from being a splendid piece of work, is good because it proves that Brown is among the rapidly growing number of directors who are beginning to get away from time-worn traditions and display a little independence in their work. However, immediately after demonstrating how progressive he could be, Brown uses some senseless old formulas. Before I forget it, there was one thing that bothered me. Ralph Forbes, after months in the tall timber hunting gold, would come back to civilization with his face clean shaven and his hair neatly cut. There may be some perfectly logical reason for his continued perfect grooming, but it seemed very peculiar to me.

Dolores Del Rio and Ralph Forbes are the two principals in The Trail of '98, and neither gave the performance which is to be expected from them. The mechanical part of their work was all right, although Forbes over-acted a bit, but there was no feeling back of it. None of their scenes carried any conviction with it. However, they were not alone in their insincerity, because the entire cast, with the exception of young Johnny Downs, appeared to believe that the whole thing was just acting. Johnny did one scene, where he was wading through an icy pond, which was more human than all the scenes of the others put together. For sheer brilliance of execution, George Cooper, as The Worm, deserves the highest praise. Cooper can act as well as anyone in the screen, and should be given bigger parts. Karl Dane and Tully Marshall did very good work, mechanically, and so did Harry Carey. Tenen Holtz and Emily Fitzroy were also good. Russell Simpson was quite satisfactory. Marion Davies, in spite of being saddled with telling about half the story in his titles, managed to write some very good ones.

EXCEPT for some rather amusing moments, contributed almost entirely by Miss Davies' imitations, The Patsy is a poor picture. Wise-cracking titles, the majority from the play, managed to contribute a chuckle or two; but, again, like the play, they were too forced. There was nothing particularly good about Miss Davies' impersonations being dragged in by the heels. There were a few places where they might have been used sensibly; but King Vidor, who directed The Patsy, passed them all up in favor of a place where there was no earthly reason for their presence. The whole thing was illogical and poorly connected. I never thought much of the play, The Patsy, as it was just a bunch of wise-cracks. Patter like that may sound all right on the stage, but titles are a very bad medium for it. As the dialogue was about the only thing of any merit about the play, there were times when the motion picture drugged interminably. Producers should try an original story now and then, instead of rehearsing stage productions mechanically. There was nothing the matter with the cast of The Patsy. Marian Davies, the star, gave a fine performance, but her work is always good. While she may not be a brilliant actress, she has a screen personality which rates as high as any of them. Marie Dressler, of course, is splendid, as is the man who played "Pop". I didn't get his name. Jane Winton, who is one of the best character women, gives a very good portrayal. Orville Caldwell and Lawrence Gray complete a very satisfactory cast.

ONE doesn't realize the necessity for subtlety in motion picture direction until he sees The Street of Sin. The story is laid in the London slums, and, of course, the sordid squalor of the surroundings has to be brought out. However, Mauritz Stiller, the director, does not put over the ugliness cleverly. He puts it right before the eyes, and makes no attempt to make it a little less disgusting. Subtlety is very important in a picture where realism is desired, because no audience wants to watch anything revolting. No one wants to go to a theatre and sit a lot of ugliness, since the majority of theatre-goers rely on the entertainment to take their minds off their troubles. Hinting at the disagreeable things, not showing them, is the way a picture like The Street of Sin should be made. There was nothing very gripping in the picture, although Emil Jannings and Fay Wray, who were the principals, gave splendid performances. At no time did the action grow tense or dramatic, but on the whole, it was fairly good entertainment. Olga Baclanova did some good work in a supporting part.

THE old plots are still the best, and I can prove it by citing the latest Richard Dix picture, Warming Up. It is an amusing little thing, and the story is that venerable oldtimer in which the hero wins an athletic contest at the last moment. Fred Newmeyer directed it, and he did a very good job; because there were fairly good and entertaining. Olga Baclanova did some good work in a supporting part.
THE FILM SPECTATOR

May 26, 1928

THE latest idea among directors seems to be to have the heroines of their stories at some time during the proceedings, wander around in their step-ins, or whatever they call them. While I have no objection for visualizing scantily clad young women disport themselves before the camera, I can’t see what earthly good it does. Let us suppose that the directors do it for the purpose of making the heroines better known to the audience. There is no doubt but that they succeed if that is their idea. However, knowing what kind of undergarments the heroine wears does not increase my interest in her any. Romance always receives a hard blow when the audience is permitted to enter the heroine’s bed-chamber. For there is nothing less romantic than the process of dressing. If the directors do it to show how pretty the girls look in undergarments, some of the sweetness of the girls’ characterization is lost. Lately, the reasons for several disrobing sequences have been the heroines’ desire to vindicate themselves before their lovers for accepting clothes from other men. Personally, if my sweetheart were to accept clothes from somebody else, she would not alone for it by throwing the garments in question at the man who gave them to her. That would only make it worse. So far, Clarence Badger and Clara Bow have the undressing championship safely clinched by their scene in Red Hair, but that is no assurance that some director won’t skin his heroine alive and claim the title.

THERE is no doubt that talking moving pictures are inevitable. Glorious Betsy is the first regular picture containing spoken dialogue that I have seen, and although the picture is pretty good anyway, it is the sound which makes it first class. Information which could not be conveyed through the medium of titles without seeming clumsily done, is put over splendidly when sound is used. After the sound sequences, the regular titles seemed flat and uninteresting.

Outside of the sound, Glorious Betsy is still a pretty good picture. Alan Crosland, who directed, had a good story and he put it on the screen well. There were some very beautiful scenes, but I think Crosland will have to share credit for them with his cameraman. The photography was great. However, there was nothing strikingly new or interesting about the picture outside of the sound.

Dolores Costello, who was starred in Glorious Betsy, did some splendid acting; and Charles MacArthur’s script was very good. When sound becomes general, she will be one of our biggest stars. Conrad Nagel, who has a splendid voice, gave a marvelous performance. He is another one who is going to rate some big parts when pictures all have Movietone or Vitaphone. Marc McDermott, whose work has always been a pleasure to see, makes it a pleasure to hear him in Glorious Betsy. Andre Segurola and Michael Vavitch gave brilliant performances which deserve favorable mention. The man who played Kappus did good work, also, but I didn’t get his name.

BERT Glennon, whose first directorial effort is The Perfect Crime, was presented with a rather hard problem by William Le Baron’s story. The hero of the piece was practically a madman, a detective to whom the hardest cases were but mental workouts. Eventually, he becomes disgusted with the feeble-mindedness of criminals and decides to commit the perfect crime himself. It is practically impossible to get the sympathy of the average audience enlisted for something it can not understand, and it can not understand the hair-line difference between a genius and insanity. However, Glennon managed to make this lunatic a sympathetic character, a feat which in itself deserves a great deal of credit, even if the rest of the picture were not good. There were many illogical things in the story, among them the detectives’ overlooking a broken door bolt which they scarcely could have missed. Another thing was the fact that any editor could have cleared up the case by simply showing that the victim had not been dead as long as was thought. In spite of all the faults of the story, the picture was good entertainment. Glennon did not use a single unnecessary close-up, a thing which makes the picture interesting. Had he shot it in the old, time-worn way, it would have dragged, because there was not much violent action in it. As it was, it never let down for a minute, although the cast deserves some credit for that. Clive Brook, who was the lead, was a disappointment. As a rule, his work is splendid, but this time he was too stiff and solemn. The let-down in his work was more than balanced, however, by the excellence of the rest of the cast. Irene Rich was very good; but the acting laurels go to Gladys McConnell, a newcomer who appears to have a large amount of ability, Tully Marshall and Ethel Wales, who are always very good, deserve credit for their clever performances; and Carroll Nye, who seems to make a specialty of playing unjustly accused young men, is quite adequate in a small part.

A PICTURE that I would recommend for a tired business man who wants to take out a girl is Detectives. Unless the trampling of the feet of those who are walking out on it disturbs him, he can sleep quite peacefully through it and still not miss anything. My first thought after seeing it was that it was one of those brain-storms which is made up as it is shot; but after due deliberation, I decided that a picture as bad as Detectives must have been premeditated. If they had improvised it, they scarcely could have prevented some good things getting in by mistake. As it was, everything of merit was excluded rigidly. Detectives, to be more explicit, is the latest Karl Dane-George K. Arthur atrocity and

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"The Man Who Laughs’ is truly a picture.

N. Y. Daily News

“...All in all, ‘The Man Who Laughs’ is real entertainment. It is perfectly played and excellently directed and should find itself as the tenant of the Central Theatre for many months to come.”

H. D. S.—New York Morning Telegraph

“It seemed to cast a spell upon the spectators from pit to roof at the Central Theatre. Structure and direction have made it the motion picture unusual, strange, weird, terrible, and beautiful. ‘The Man Who Laughs’ is one of the greatest audience pictures we ever have seen.”

Arthur James—Motion Pictures Today

"‘The Man Who Laughs’ is a fine picture which every one should see.”

N. Y. Daily Mirror

"‘The Man Who Laughs’ proves that there IS such a thing as a two-a-day movie that is worth every penny of the admission price.”

Katherine Zimmerman—N. Y. Eve. Telegram

“A striking photoplay. It reveals imaginative direction, superb acting, colorful pageantry, and an intelligent sense of drama. ‘The Man Who Laughs’ is most sumptuous production since ‘The Hunchback of Notre Dame’.”

John S. Cohen, Jr.—N. Y. Evening Sun

"‘The Man Who Laughs’ is commended to everyone as worth seeing.”

N. Y. Evening Graphic

"‘The Man Who Laughs’ is something worth your attention.”

N. Y. Evening Post

"‘The Man Who Laughs’ scored a triumph. It is a picture to delight the thoughtful—as indeed it has... rated the most important picture in many months.”

Norbert Lusk—N. Y. Column, L. A. Times

“The literary classes should consider this picture as a spiritual treat. It is a wonderful picture.”

Harrison’s Reports

"‘The Man Who Laughs’ is as pictorial as ‘The Hunchback’ and with a stronger heart appeal. There has seldom been offered a story in which there is a better blending of narrative, direction, acting, and stage setting. J. Grubb Alexander is responsible for the excellent handling of the Hugo classic, and Paul Leni has made a sumptuous production of an intimate and human story.”

Epes W. Sargent—Zit’s Theatrical Newspaper

Adaptation and Continuity
Written by

J. GRUBB ALEXANDER
THE FILM SPECTATOR

For a picture which makes no attempt to get away from the old hidebound traditions of screen craftsmanship, The Noose is pretty good. It is not, however, a picture which can be considered first class unless it shows evidences of a little independent thinking on the part of the director. John Francis Dillon, who directed The Noose, used old methods, but he deserves praise for the amount of feeling he can put into a scene. He had a splendid cast; and, as they were directed sympathetically, there were no weak scenes in the entire length of the picture. There was only one thing which I didn't understand, which proves that the story is within the reach of the simplest mind. The murderer is about to be hanged, and, after the governor, his wife, and the warden of the prison have displayed what seemed to me an undue amount of emotion over the execution, some one calls the governor's private wire and postpones the hanging because the murderer's mother is coming to see him. The governor's wife is really the mother of the murderer, and she does the calling, apparently. However, she doesn't know anything about it, and as Mr. Barthelmes, who was starred in The Noose, gave one of the really great performances of his career. He has been in so many mediocre pictures in the last year or so that his acting ability has been overlooked. It is a pleasure to see him back in the stuff his fine work deserves. Lina Basquette gave a sympathetic portrayal, and Alice Joyce's work deserves the highest praise.

Montague Love contributes one of his brilliant heavy characterizations, and Thelma Todd, who is one of my favorites, is satisfactory in a small part.

The story of The Noose was within the limits of good taste, and it is a pity that a more capable director should have been called upon to make of it nothing but a melodrama. It should have been made into a picture of suspense and mystery, and the result would have been quite an interesting piece of work. The Noose is a picture of the old type, and it is not likely to appeal to the modern audience. It is a picture of the old type, and it is not likely to appeal to the modern audience.

W HEN I wrote up One Mad Hour I said that it was typical of Elinor Glyn. After it had been printed, I realized that I had not made my meaning clear. I meant that it was typical of the way her work is put on the screen, not that it was typical of her real work. As everyone who has read her name Glyn's stories knows, very little of their true merit ever reaches the screen. Almost everything she does is mangled and unrecognized by the time it appears before the audience.

TALKING FILMS

My dear Mr. Beston:

I must say I fail to follow your arguments as expressed in the current Spectator, in the matter of talking films. You say that sound is a complement of pictures as they are today. But you fail to qualify the word "sound". If you mean such sounds as are incidental to the action of the picture, there is little reason to differ with your opinion.

Let us take a case in point where sound would actually help the picture. A common situation is where the heroine is fighting for her honor, while the hero is galloping to the rescue. Suppose, instead of frequent cut-backs, we hear the sound of the ever-approaching hooves. Here we would get the full benefit of the suspense, without stopping the action. Supposing also that the action was punctuated with the screams of the heroine, it would double the thrill.

The crash of a falling tree; the roar of the breaking waves, or of the flaming forest; the barking of a dog; all such sounds would add to the interest of the picture.

But, where are you going to draw the line? Do you propose to include dialogue to elucidate the action? The question is: are you going to subordinate the picture to the sound, or the sound to the picture?

To get retrospective action we have cut-backs. Why an improvement to have this retrospective action recounted in dialogue? Instead of visioning the actor's thoughts, should he give them in an "aside"? And if so, would it not seem a little incongruous?

I have yet to see a picture which I have failed to understand for lack of dialogue, though I have seen many with far too many titles, which only goes to prove that the stories were not pictures, and any amount of dialogue would never have made them such.

For instance, I have just seen Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, which is about half titles. As a picture, I consider it pifflie, and not a pointer to either the book or the stage play.

There are other disadvantages to the dialogue idea. The English language is not universal, and there is no way in which it can be changed, except by making the picture over again in another language. This limits the picture to English speaking countries, and I do not believe the producers will limit their market to that extent.

Now, as I have not yet seen a real talking picture, I am open to conviction, if the argument is sufficiently convincing. If you can find space, I would like you to define your position on the dialogue idea, with or without reservation. Also I would like to know whether there is any method to prevent extraneous sounds from reaching the sound film.

F. ELY PAGET.

Venice, Calif.

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Detectives
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by Chester M. Franklin; story and continuity by Robert Lord and Chester M. Franklin; titles by Robert Hopkins; wardrobe by David Cox; photographed by John Arnold; film editor, Frank Sullivan.


Drag Net
A Paramount picture. Directed by Josef von Sternberg; associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; story by Oliver H. P. Garrett; adaptation by Jules Furthman; screen play by Jules Furthman and Charles Furthman; photographed by Harold Rosson; editor-in-chief, Louis D. Lighton; assistant director, Robert Lee.


Don't Marry
A William Fox picture. Directed by Henry King; story by Bela Szenes; adapted by Sidney Lanfield and William Kernell; scenario by Randall H. Faye.

The cast: Lois Moran, Neil Hamilton, Henry Kolker, Claire McDowell, Lydia Dickson.

Give and Take
A Universal picture. Directed by William Beaudine; taken from the stage play written by Aaron Hoffman; adaptation and continuity by Harvey Thew; production supervisor, Julius Bernheim; cameraman, Charles Van Enger.

The cast: George Sidney, Jean Hersholt, George Lewis, Sharon Lynn, Charles Hill Mailes, Sam Hardy, Rhoda M. Cross.

Glorious Betsy
A Warner Bros. picture. Directed by Alan Crosland; assistant director, Gordon Hollingshead; story by Rida Johnson Young; scenario by Anthony Col deep; cameraman, Hal Mohr.

The cast: Dolores Costello, Conrad Nagel, John Miljan, Pasquale Amato, Andre Sogurola, Michael Vavitch, Paul Panzer, Clarissa Selwynne.

Golden Clown
Released by Pathé; produced by Nordisk Film Co. Directed by A. W. Sandberg; photographed by Christen Jergensen.

The cast: Gosta Ekman, Karina Bell, Maurice de Feraudy, Edmund Guest, Robert Schmidt, Eric Bertmer, Kate Fabian.

Noose, The
A First National Picture. Directed by John Francis Dillon; photographed by James Van Trees; adaptation and continuity by James T. O'Donohue; titles by Jarrett Graham; produced by Harry Hobart.


Patsy, The
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Picture. Directed by King Vidor; based on the play by Barry Connors; continuity by Agnes Christine Johnston; titles by Ralph Spence; settings by Cedric Gibbons; wardrobe by Gilbert Clark; photographed by John Seitz; film editor, Hugh Wynn.

The cast: Marion Davies, Orville Caldwell, Marie Dressler, Dell Henderson, Lawrence Gray, Jane Winton.

Perfect Crime
An FBO picture. Directed by Bert Glennon; story by William LeBaron; based on "The Big Bow Mystery" by Israel Zangwill; associate director, Charles Kerr; cameraman, James Howe.


Street of Sin
A Paramount picture. Directed by Mauritz Stiller; associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; story by Josef von Sternberg and Benjamin Glazer; scenario by Chandler Sprague; photographed by Victor Milner; assistant director, Bob Lee.


BALZER'S CONTEST
A contest that will interest writers and artists as well as amateurs is being held by Oscar Balzer's Hollywood Gift Shop between May 15th and June 15th. The purpose of the contest is to obtain a card known as the "Hollywood friendship card."

A $50.00 cash prize will be given to the one who designs and writes the greeting card selected as being the best "Hollywood friendship card." If the card design selected and the sentiment are submitted by different persons, $25.00 will be given to the artist and $25.00 to the writer.

The contest is open to all people residing or working within Los Angeles county, but all those wishing to enter must call at Oscar Balzer's Annex, 6220 Hollywood boulevard, and register as a contestant and secure the information and details necessary. The judges will be representatives from some of the civic organizations and local publications.

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April 30, 1928.

Mr. Alfred E. Green,
Fox Film Company,
850 Tenth Avenue,
New York City.

Dear Mr. Green:

I want to congratulate you on the excellent picture "Honor Bound". This organization is naturally interested in the picture as it plays up the abuses against which the Committee has been working for many years. It is also timely as there is legislation pending in Congress which will do away with certain of the abuses which grow out of private exploitation of prison labor. I should be glad to know how you became interested in the subject and where the suggestion came from; also whether you would feel that this picture could be followed by another taking up the present abuses in the north in contrast to these abuses existing in the south.

I should be glad to hear from you.

Sincerely yours,

Executive Director

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Future of sound, not present, is important

The Spectator and some of its readers

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THE PATSY
TRAIL OF '98
BIG KILLING
WHEEL OF FATE
MAGNIFICENT FLIRT
DANCING DAUGHTERS

WARMING UP
BRIGHT LIGHTS
WALKING BACK
DIVINE WOMAN
SMOKE BELLEW
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He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill.—Burke.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, JUNE 9, 1928

Too Much Importance Is Attached to Voices

The film industry always has shown hysterical tendencies. Five or six years ago it had one of its fits, and gave long-term contracts to every actor and director who came near a studio gate. I don't think it ever will recover from the result of that folly. Paramount, for instance, instead of exploiting its own name until the public began to accept the producer's trade-mark as a guarantee of the merit of a picture, inaugurated publicity campaigns for the famous players it had under contract, thus making the screen only a place for personally exploited people who had to be paid enormous salaries to remain with the organization that made them famous. If the big producers had exploited themselves and presented their players as of secondary importance, the business could have been conducted sanely from the first and the grotesque salaries of to-day would be unheard of. Apparently the industry is going to make another major mistake. I would gather from what I read and hear that producers are going to commit colossal folly of making a raid on the stage to secure artists to appear in oral pictures. They are going to look for voices. For the past dozen years producers have trained several thousand artists in the technic of screen acting; they know what these artists can do, and the artists are familiar with everything pertaining to the production of pictures. Among the thousands of screen actors and actresses in Hollywood are enough good voices to make all the oral pictures that will be turned out for the next ten years, during which time other voices can be trained. But the industry is showing a tendency to overlook the material at hand and put itself to enormous expense and trouble to secure material elsewhere. As a matter of fact, this voice business is overdone in Hollywood. It is not as important as we imagine. How many people on the stage have really good voices? Only a few. The only voice that has no place on the stage and will have none in pictures, is the decidedly disagreeable one. The other day I conducted a little experiment of my own. During the luncheon hour at the Masquers' club I spoke to as many screen actors as I could find. I heard perhaps fifty of them speak and I did not hear one voice that was unpleasant, nor one that would not be able to give a good account of itself in Movietone or Vitaphone. The whole thing about this sound

KNEES

By GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN

Dear Mr. Beaton:

Permit me to observe that there are knees and KNEES. In a way of speaking, there are dryads' knees and motion picture knees: knees that dawn upon you pleasantly, like a sunrise or the soul of a great picture, and knees, as Irvin S. Cobb remarked, "that come leaping upon you nudeley and, as it were, all at once, like a shucked oyster." The latter species may possess beauty, certainly, but they woefully lack charm. No one enjoys being hit in the eye—even by a beautiful knee. However, the eye can assimilate the knee easily if it be not too precipitate; but it is a sensitive organ, and beauty too blatant and sunlight too intense make it blink.

—G. F. M.

Came there down the sordid street,
Left-foot, right-foot, then repeat,
Such a winsome maiden you
Held your breath as near she drew.

O, words are futile to express
Some grace-notes of loveliness!
But as dryads peep from trees—
So peeped her knees.

Observe! The dainty skirt she wore—
So kind to charms, behind, before—
Stirred by some mischievous air,
Half revealed shy beauty there:
Silken knees they were—no dryad,
By a poet's dream attired,
Could excel the charm of these—
Silken knees.

And as rosebuds dew besprinkled
How they twinkled, twinkled, twinkled,
Revealing in each genuflection
Some sweet nuance of perfection.
How ingenuous and charming!
They, with naivete disarming,
Seemed to whisper, "love us, please?"—
Cherubim of beauty these—
Silken knees.
device proposition is the manner in which the voice is used to get the best result from the microphone. That is something that has to be learned by the stage actor just as it has to be learned by the screen actor who never spoke a line out loud in his life. Combing the Eastern theatres for people to make sound pictures is an idiotic performance, for the people thus secured must be taught, when they reach Hollywood, how to speak before the microphone and how to act before the camera; while we have here already thousands of people who have to be taught only how to talk, as they are trained in screen acting.

There are only a few simple rules to observe in speaking before a microphone. Heroes and others in casts who must reflect intellectual attainments that match their manly perfection, must not say “litera-ture”, “noo” for “new”, “dooty” for “duty”, or “soul” for “suit”. Care must be exercised to keep the hiss out of sibilants, and slurring must be avoided. Each word must be spoken distinctly, and there must be power behind its delivery, but not loudness. The actor who masters these, and a few other rules equally simple, will have no difficulty in carrying his part in an oral picture, provided his voice is not so disagreeable that it will irritate his hearers, which few voices are. Of course, the actor with a wonderful voice will have the edge on the actor with an ordinary one, but that does not mean that the latter is going to starve to death. All our present screen actors should learn how to talk, but there is no reason why the prospect should terrify them. It’s quite simple.

* * *

Imagination Necessary in Considering Sound Devices

WHILE there may be legitimate difference of opinion regarding the degree of perfection sound devices have achieved in providing screen entertainment, there can be no dispute over the success they have attained as a stimulant to conversation. As I circulate in picture circles I find that sound is the universal topic of conversation, with color rating next in importance. As yet I have not heard one logical argument against the practicability of the addition of sound to pictures. What surprises me is the tendency of apparently intelligent people to base their opinions of the future of sound on what already has been accomplished, and to refuse to view its present only as an indication of what its future will be.

Some of the New York critics laughed at Vitaphone because a few of the spoken lines in Tenderloin were silly. One of the drawbacks with which the screen has had to contend has been unintelligent and unsympathetic criticism, never more marked than in this ignorant and unfriendly reception of a picture that forever must stand out in the history of motion pictures as being the first to substitute spoken words for printed titles. That Vitaphone could reproduce words so clearly that their silliness became apparent was a triumph for the sound device. Equally as absurd as these New York criticisms are some of the arguments that I have heard in Hollywood. Sound devices are at that stage of their development when imagination must be applied to their consideration. What they have done thus far is important only as an indication of what they are destined to do. The head of one of the producing organizations told me recently that I was taking sound too seriously, that it is still ten years away, and he characterized as absurd my statement in The Spectator that within a year the present silent pictures would be old-fashioned. He said that at the rate at which sound reproducing appliances were being turned out it would take ten years to equip all the picture houses in the country. This executive either will change his mind in the near future or his organization will lag sadly behind those of his competitors who show more alertness in appreciating the new condition that has arisen. As a matter of fact, silent pictures are old-fashioned already. At the present time picture patrons are divided into two classes: those who have heard sound reproduced in pictures and those who have heard that it can be reproduced.

What I have heard in projection-rooms already colors my consideration of the silent pictures that I see. When I converse with a screen artist I find myself estimating the quality of his or her voice. It will be but a short time until the mental attitude of the public is the same. All the difficulties that sound devices are experiencing now will be eliminated speedily. To make them perfect is a trivial task compared with the tremendous one of their creation. Sound-to-day has made more strides towards perfection than pictures did during the first ten years of their existence. It will not take ten years to equip picture houses with sound-reproducing devices. Extraordinary speed is being made in standardizing them; their cost is being reduced rapidly, and the public is clamoring for them, three emergencies that industrial America will meet without difficulty. In any event, the only sensible thing for any producing organization to do is to view sound devices as something of the immediate future. Their general use will cause a revolution in picture-making, and preparing for the revolution is a wise precaution to take. But I do not expect the film industry to take such precaution. Never at any stage in his history has it revealed the slightest indication that it appreciates it has a tomorrow.

* * *

When Exhibitor Takes Hand in Production

LET us take as a text a paragraph from Louella Parsons’ column. She records the fact that Frank Newman, formerly a theatre manager and exhibitor, has joined the Columbia Pictures production staff. Mrs. Parsons seems to think that Newman’s appointment is a masterstroke for Harry Cohn, for the new production executive “certainly should know what the public wants.” I do not know Mr. Newman; I know nothing about his capabilities, personality or disposition, but speaking of him specifically in discussing a type, I would hazard a guess that he will develop into an infernal nuisance who will harm more Columbia pictures than he will help. He will approach production problems from the wrong angle. If Cohn lets him exercise the only knowledge of pictures that he possesses, Newman will not permit the inclusion in any picture of a single new idea. What he can not remember as having been in a successful picture once shown by him will not be to him good screen material. Frank Newman may be a charming fellow, with a rare taste in neckwear and a low handicap at golf, but he is the last man I would put on my production staff if I were making motion pictures. The screen has reached its present low artistic level by being swayed too much by the
exhibitor mind. Making pictures is an art. It is not a business. Selling pictures is a business, and until the picture is ready for sale, only those who understand the art should have contact with it. Harry Cohn will purchase a story written by a man who understands human emotions, and human psychology; who has a keen sense of humor, a delicate taste for romance and a sound knowledge of dramatic construction. The story will be purchased because it reflects these various attributes of the author. Any picture made from it should carry the reflection to the screen. Frank Newman—again referring to him as a type—possesses none of the qualifications of the author of the story, but will have a voice in saying how it should be transferred to the screen. All he brings to his task is his memory, and he will apply that objectively to every point that comes up. Memory is something that should play only a subjective part in the creation of any artistic product. To argue that because a picture with a burning house in it was not successful there never should be a burning house in any picture, is to betray a creative mentality of the lowest type, yet that sort of argument is the only one the exhibitor has to advance when he considers a production problem. Our Seventh Heavens, Four Sons, Patriots, score big successes because their directors were left alone to make them without reference to the history of the box-office. Most of our program pictures are poor things because they are fashioned after box-office ideas. Some of the directors making these pictures have brains enough to strike a new note in production, but their inspirations can not get past the solid wall of memory erected by the Frank Newmans and other showmen who have the queer notion that they know what the public wants. A man can be in the show business for a century and at the end of that time all he can tell you is how the public reacted to what was presented to it. He is no more an authority than is a year-old baby on how the public will receive a certain new idea. Pictures are beginning to bore the public because they are harping on the same old story and are presenting nothing new. Possibly on the Columbia staff there are people who can create new ideas that never were tried before, ideas that would be a refreshing change for the public, but which can not get beyond Frank Newman because he can’t remember having seen them used in some picture that made a lot of money back in St. Louis eight years ago. Showmen should come into pictures only after pictures are ready to be shown.

Mr. Rosenthal Hands Me a Very Large Job

MR. ROSENTHAL, manager of the Majestic Theatre, Bridgeport, Connecticut, writes me that while he reads with interest my reviews of pictures, he feels that the greatest good The Spectator can do the exhibitors of the country would be the direction of its energy at the wastefulness of production methods, in the hope that it might result in economies that would reduce the prices that exhibitors now pay for pictures. It’s a big job that Mr. Rosenthal gives The Spectator. Before a reduction in production costs can be effected there will have to be a sweeping change in the executive offices on all the lots. The only method of making pictures that the industry knows is an inefficient and wasteful one. There is no reason why as much economy and precision can not be applied to the manufacture of motion pictures as must be applied to the manufacture of planes if that industry is to survive; but the people who manufacture our pictures are not endowed with mentalities sufficiently robust to allow them to grasp that fact. They think they are in some mysterious business that is unlike all other businesses. Probably the entire industrial history of the country no other business has been for so long a time in the control of people so little qualified to control it. They have been at their jobs for about thirty years without acquiring any knowledge of the proper method of making pictures. They are satisfied with themselves so completely that it is highly improbable that any change for the better can have its origin within the industry. Sane business methods will have to be brought into the industry by sane business men at present unconnected with it, or now holding positions within it that do not carry enough influence to give impetus to reforms that they might institute. Producers really believe that the only way to make a six-reel picture is to shoot everything that anyone happens to think of, and then cut the whole thing down to six reels. To discard only two or three reels is pretty good shooting. When a director gets what is to be a seven-reel picture down to ten reels, he throws out his chest and walks around the lot to give the other directors a chance to admire him. Tell him that there is no reason why a seven-reel picture should be more than seven reels at any stage of its evolution, and the director will think you are crazy. Yet there is no more reason why ten reels should be shot and seven of them used in the completed picture, than there would be in building ten stories of a building from which to select seven that would determine the height of the structure when completed. But you can not teach that fact to the industry. As long as exhibitors will pay twice as much as they should for pictures, thus absorbing all the money that is wasted, there is no reason why reforms should be instituted. The other day I was asked by a director to view one of his pictures in a projection-room. I viewed it and liked it, as I wrote subsequently in The Spectator. A short time after I had left the projection room the director phoned me. He was disturbed. One whole reel, he told me, was omitted from the picture when I saw it. I told him that I did not think so, as the story seemed connected and consistent as I saw it. He assured me that I had missed a reel, and I visited the studio again and saw it. It was probably the most expensive reel in the picture, and it had so little story value that I had not missed it. And because I did not miss it, the picture has been released without it. That is all right, for the picture is better without it; but when

JOHN F. GOODRICH
SCENARIO EDITOR
COLUMBIA PICTURES
the exhibitor is approached to buy the film and is told how much it cost, the figure will contain the amount spent on the reel that was cut out. In other words, the exhibitor will have to pay as much for the reel he does not get as he will have to pay for those delivered to him. Exhibitors are paying many millions of dollars each year for the blunders made by motion picture executives. And they will continue to do it, for the executives control the industry and are not honest enough with it to sacrifice their fat salaries and step aside to make room for those who could serve it better.

Gagmen Put a Blight on “The Trail of ’98”

The most expensive thing Metro ever produced—its most wildly extravagant indulgence—are the laughs in The Trail of ’98. They will cost perhaps one million dollars, which is a guess at the difference between what the picture will make and what it would have made if Clarence Brown had been permitted to go ahead with his original intention of telling a stark and grim tragedy with a background of the frozen North. All the way through the picture there are shots which bear tribute to Brown’s capacity as a director. With the same sure hand that has made so many of his past pictures successful, he has brought out the drama in this one; and in The Trail, more than in any other picture he has made, he demonstrates what a good showman he is. It is showmanship that will put The Trail over. The snowslide and the boats in the rapids are acts that are put on at spots where the program is becoming tiresome. The rapids sequence is my champion thrill. It repays one for sitting through the entire picture. The Chilkoot Pass sequence reveals masterly direction, and in it the film reaches the peak of its epic quality. There is tragedy in the dragging footsteps as the long, thin line of wearyed humans battles nature in the upward climb. Brown brings out the drama of the steady, relentless advance. Men, exhausted, drop out, perhaps to die, but the line does not pause in its forward movement. Neither storm nor death delays the cruel march towards the end of the rainbow—but Metro’s comedy sense does. The line halts and the drama snaps while a flatiron takes the spot. In a half a dozen places in the picture the same crime is committed. There might be some excuse for interpolated comedy in a certain picture if the comedy were in itself funny, but The Trail is not that kind of picture, and the comedy which is injected in it is lamentable stuff that has neither sense nor wit to recommend it. New York has hailed The Trail for its thrills and has complained of its lack of story value. I have read only a couple of references to the stupid comedy, but if those critics who failed to attribute merit to the story had gone more deeply into the production than they ever give evidence of doing, they would have found that the distressing “comedy” is the one thing that keeps the picture from being great. Each time that we have worked up renewed interest in the drama that Clarence Brown was trying to relate to us, our intelligences are insulted and our spirits saddened by the results of Metro’s mistaken impression that a laugh is its own excuse. They say that this picture cost between one and two million dollars. It is an economic tragedy that this much money is put into the hands of those who know so little about expending it wisely. Everything was at hand to permit the making of a truly great picture. The story, as the director conceived it, was intensely dramatic, and it was essentially the kind of story that should have been spared the blighting ministrations of gagmen. The background of the story was gigantic, primitive, tragic; and its emotions were raw, elemental, human. Yet with all this out of which to make a picture, we get one that tires us. If no attempt had been made to inject laughs that did not come into the story naturally, and if the picture had opened on the trip north, instead of being scattered all over America, we would have in fact what we can find only in Metro advertising: a truly great picture. Going into the homes of Cooper, Dane, and others to show us where they came from, was a lot of silly business that meant nothing. The opening sequences make a great effort to interest us in the intimate stories of several people, and these intimate stories later are swallowed up in thrills or obliterated by Dane’s flatiron. But the thrills are real. The ride through the rapids is, in my opinion, the greatest thing of the sort ever put on the screen. None of the performances impressed me greatly. George Cooper was perhaps the most sincere.

Another Alaska Picture That Didn’t Cost as Much

After seeing The Trail of ’98 in the magnificent setting provided by Sid Grauman, I sat on an uncomfortable seat in a stuffy little projection room and viewed Smoke Bellew. This Jack London story has been made into a picture with the same locale as that of The Trail. I suppose that for every thirty dollars spent on the Metro picture, one was spent on the little independent production, yet the story of Smoke Bellew interested me more than did the story that was told me when I sat in the comfortable seat. I, E. Chadwick and David M. Thomas screened the London story, and, as is the way with the independents, they had just so much money to spend on a picture, and no more. They had to pay quite a sum for the story and what was left had to be spent on telling the story that they had purchased. They had neither money nor footage for much in the way of thrills, and the result is that they have given us a thoroughly interesting picture of the gold rush. We see in Smoke Bellew, as we do in The Trail, the long line of weary men plodding upwards to Chilkoot Pass. In the former picture a stock shot is used; in the latter a shot that cost Metro more money than it took to make the other picture. The chances are that the picture fan in Maryland will find the stock shot quite as interesting and enlightening as the original one, which makes us wonder if, after all, there is any sense in squandering such tremendous sums of money on pictures. It is the story that the public wants, and in most of our million-dollar productions the stories have been submerged by the trimmings that were purchased with the millions. This is the case with The Trail of ’98. Clarence Brown has proved himself a master at telling dramatic stories on the screen, and he could have told magnificently the story of the picture if Metro had not handed him a million dollars worth of trimmings to adorn it with. Scott Dunlap, who directed Smoke Bellew, had no trimmings to worry him, and no money with which to buy them, so he had to tell his story and grab what atmosphere he could
in course of the telling. Bellew has quite as much sweep to it as The Trail. In many places Dunlap suggests what Brown shows us, but it strikes me that one method is just as effective as the other. Bellew could have been made even a better picture than it is if Dunlap's direction had reflected more vigor and assurance. A story of the gold rush and the primitive emotions that governed men at that time should be told with a punch and robustness that match the environment. Bellew lacks vigor in some sequences, and the story slows up. But on the whole Dunlap's direction is to be commended. He displays a refreshing intelligence in his use of close-ups, and several tense scenes are shown entirely in deep medium shots that have in them the full figures of half a dozen or more characters. Conway Tearle is featured, this picture marking his return from Elba. His performance is satisfactory. Tearle is a good actor and if he could get over his habit of taking himself so fearfully seriously he would be a better one. The leading woman in Smoke Bellew is Barbara Bedford, unquestionably one of the finest actresses we have on the screen. She is a girl whom producers are overlooking. Time spent on making her a box-office asset would be spent well, for she is one of the few of our beautiful girls who will have a long life on the screen. Other parts that stand out in Bellew are those played by Mark Hamilton, Alphonse Ethier and J. P. Lockney. All three experienced trouper give excellent performances. No exhibitor need be backward about booking this picture.

Dick Barthelmess Proves That He Is a Fine Actor

DICK Barthelmess is a most excellent actor. If you ever have doubted it, wait until you see him in The Wheel of Fate, misnamed from Roulette. He plays a dual role, twin brothers. One brother he plays straight, and is the easy, graceful, forceful and convincing Dick that we always can look for in conventional parts. It is when he is the other brother that he does brilliant work. Memory may magnify things in its immediate foreground, and throw out of focus more distant things, and perhaps I am not doing justice to earlier triumphs, but I am of the opinion that Dick's performance of the unfortunate twin is the best work he ever has done on the screen. I can remember nothing with which he has matched it for the strength of its intellectual treatment. He succeeds admirably in putting over what the character is thinking. If Wheel of Fate had forgotten it was a motion picture it could have been made a splendid one. The obsession for distorting a picture to stretch it out to a length that is considered befitting the dignity of a star has robbed this production of the chance it had to be the best five-reeler of the past decade. It is a story with but one situation in it: a young man is prosecuted for murder by his twin brother, who thought him dead; neither knows that he is the other's twin, and never learns it. The youth is acquitted through the interest taken in him by his mother, who does not know he is her son, but who instills in her lawyer-son a feeling of sympathy for the poor, pathetic creature, whose life is at stake. It is a great situation, well written, splendidly directed and superbly acted by Barthelmess and Bodil Rosing, but it is all there is in the picture. To stretch it out, the first few reels drag interminably before the audience gets any idea what the thing is about. We see Dick as the fortunate brother, by long odds the less interesting one, and we grow impatient for the appearance of his twin, whom we know is alive. A motion picture should suggest something in its opening sequence that the audience can anticipate will develop interestingly, and care should be taken to keep the audience from forgetting its anticipations. What is going to happen need not be revealed, but that something is going to happen should not be lost sight of. In this First National picture the first sequence establishes the fact that both twins are alive, although one of them is thought by his family to be dead, but during the next two or three reels not the slightest hint is given that interesting developments are to follow. When, about half way through the picture, the story starts, it progresses splendidly, and becomes really great. It is a triumph for Barthelmess, but as such would be more impressive if in the character of the unfortunate brother he had come into the picture earlier. Bodil Rosing plays the mother in The Wheel of Fate. She is a fine artist and makes a considerable contribution to the general excellence of the picture. Margaret Livingstone, always an intelligent trouper—one of the most brilliant artists in the business, in fact—is thoroughly satisfactory in the part of a girl who snarls both brothers. Ann Schaefer and Warner Oland play smaller parts well. Al Santell has directed the picture in a way that does him credit and it justice. It is a difficult job to make interesting two reels that should not be in a picture, but Santell comes as close to it as anyone could. And when his story starts his direction is of a high order. The Wheel of Fate is a fine picture and Richard Barthelmess is a magnificent actor.

If Sue Carol Could Get Away From Doug MacLean

JUST when we had a right to feel that we had seen the last picture dealing with the jazz age, along comes De Mille and gives us the best one of the whole lot. Walking Back is the silly title of an exceedingly meritorious little picture. Rupert Julian directed, and I don't think he ever before turned out such a thoroughly intelligent job. Except for two flagrant instances of grouping his characters solely with regard for the camera and none for naturalness, Julian's direction is the chief feature of this entirely satisfactory production. The story is a treatise on Jazz, and in its end vindicates the youth of today. It is a healthy story, splendidly written for the screen and acted by a capable cast. Now and then I see a picture with the same quality that this one possesses: it is not going to be credited with being as good as it is. It opens with a series of lap dissolves that were conceived cleverly, photographed in a manner that makes them dramatic, and edited in a way that puts all their drama on the screen. They show the furious rate at which we live; and after them comes a series of scenes that lead us swiftly but smoothly from whirling wheels and frantic orchestras, to the intimate narrative that commands our attention thereafter. A great deal of the impressiveness of the theme development comes from the excellent titles; and farther along, when the young people begin to talk, the title-writer again comes to the front and makes a huge contribution to the picture. There are thrills galore, plenty of production, suspense, humor, romance, and paternal love. I can't remember any other
picture as short that contained so much real screen material. And it also contains Sue Carol. A couple of Spectators ago I paid my respects to this young person. I said she was going to get somewhere. Unless Douglas MacLean, who has her under contract, ruins her career by the unreasonableness of his demands for her services, Sue is going to be one of the greatest box-office bets in the business. She has a personality that fairly jumps at you from the screen, and she is making rapid progress in learning something about acting. MacLean has her under contract at a very small salary. Several producers have endeavored to buy the contract from him, but his demands are so ridiculous that no sensible producer would consider them for a moment. MacLean already has made a big profit by renting Sue to producers, and apparently he is not going to be satisfied with anything less than a fortune for himself, quite irrespective of the effect his demands have on the career of the young woman who is unfortunate enough to be a party to the contract. But I have wandered away from Walking Back. Julian was given a capable cast to work with. Richard Waring plays the lead opposite Sue, and does very nicely. Bob Edeson, Jane Keckley, Arthur Rankin, Ivan Lebedeff, and James Bradbury Sr., are among those whose acting carries the story along smoothly. We are given a glimpse of George Stone, that clever little fellow who gave such a notable performance of the sewer rat in Seventh Heaven. He is an artist whom we should see much oftener. Exhibitors should book Walking Back. It has everything in it that the public likes.

** Albert Conti Steps Into the Spotlight **

A MOST intriguing picture is The Magnificent Flirt, starring Florence Vidor and directed for Paramount by H. D’Abbadie D’Arrast. It is delightful all the way through, and is the best thing that Harry D’Arrast has given us. His work thus far has shown us that he is the only director who may some day take the field that Lubitsch seems permanently to have abandoned and give us a Marriage Circle or a Kiss Me Again. D’Arrast is young at the business yet, but he is making great strides to the front, and if Paramount has sense enough to leave him alone to express himself on the screen in his own way, he will give us some notable pictures. He invests his productions with a rich atmosphere that always reflects the best of taste, and in roles calling for sophistication and breeding he gives us artists who apparently are sophisticated and well bred. More than any other director, D’Arrast can make a social function look like one. If I were a producer I would not have a social gathering in a picture unless I had D’Arrast to direct it. The others make them stiff, cold and ridiculous. Paramount has given The Magnificent Flirt an artistic setting and the picture will have great appeal to the eye. It contains excellent performances and some delicious comedy, consequently it is bound to give general satisfaction. But with none of the above does it intrigue me. The thing about it that interests me most is that it itself is about practically nothing. It does almost everything that a story simply must not do. It starts a lot of things it never ends, and you know that sort of thing absolutely isn’t done. For instance: Albert Conti, in the first stages of falling in love with Florence Vidor, comes upon her from a direction that gives him a wrong idea of the formation of a group and makes it look as if Florence were necking with Matty Kemp, Conti’s nephew. Beyond getting soused with Ned Sparks, Conti gives no evidence of any concern over the necking episode and next morning meets Florence as if it had not happened. In another sequence Marietta Millner calls Conti out of a cafe and bitterly assails him at great length. Nothing comes of it, and we don’t see her again. And there isn’t a foot of the picture that I would cut out. It trips along so delightfully, with such good taste, and taking neither itself nor anything else seriously, that there is none of it that can be spared. It proves, what I have maintained many times, that the story is unimportant when you have a good cast and a good director. It took the screen a long time to discover Albert Conti, even though from time to time I tried to prod it by saying that he is an excellent actor. The Magnificent Flirt is his. He reveals himself as another Menjou, but with a sense of comedy more marked than that of Adolphe. In every scene he proves what judges of screen acting have known for a long time, that he is one of the most finished artists in Hollywood. The renaissance of screen art will come when it begins to use the acting talent it has available. Ned Sparks is going to make a great hit in this picture. He has nothing to do with anything in what story there is, but contributes some delicious comedy that will be a big factor in making the picture a success. Matty Kemp is a pleasing youngster, who carries the minor love story with that adorable youngster, Loretta Young. It is only the second time that I have seen Loretta on the screen, but I’m willing to make a wager on my guess that she is destined to be a success in pictures. There is something Maud-Adamsey about her, something tender, and sweet, and nice. If she can avoid vulgar parts she should become a real box-office asset. Having most ungallantly left the star of the piece to the last, I must say that she plays her part in this altogether pleasing picture in a manner that contributes greatly to its pleasing qualities. She has been given more opportunity in her last three or four pictures than she was given in her previous dozen, and has taken advantage of the opportunity to prove that she is a splendid actress when given the right part and the right direction.

** Can’t Get Away With a Fool for a Heroine **

The Divine Woman was one of the pictures so generally condemned by critics that I decided not to bother with it, notwithstanding the fact that it has such an important star as Greta Garbo. M.-G.-M. pictures have struck a slump, and criticizing them unfavorably is beginning to bore me. With the morale on the lot as it is, it is impossible for Metro to turn out pictures with uniform merit, and rather than keep pounding at them, I would prefer to lay off for a while and give the lot a chance to readjust itself. But I began to wonder about The Divine Woman. Supervised by Irving Thalberg, a reputed genius; the screen story written by Dorothy Farnum, unquestionably a brilliant young woman; directed by Victor Seastrom, certainly a man who should know his business, and with a star of the acting ability and intriguing personality of Greta Garbo—how could the pic-
ture be one that attracted so little attention? Such a combination of picture brains should produce nothing but masterpieces. I hunted out Divine Woman at a neighborhood house. I found that the various geniuses connected with its production had acquitted themselves with commendable brilliance, but that they had encountered an insurmountable obstacle when they did not take into account the weakness of human nature. They proceeded on the premise that a great love is its own justification for whatever happens as a result of it, and that audiences would so regard any sacrifice that Greta made in the name of her love for Lars Hanson. This premise is established logically and dramatically in a splendidly written scenario that was given intelligent direction, and advanced by worthy performances, but the picture is not proving an overwhelming success simply because human nature is not as lofty as Thalberg and his co-workers assumed it was when they built their story. To establish my point I must inflict upon you something that you must credit me with usually sparing you: a suggestion of the story. Greta, a young washerwoman, in love with Lars Hanson, a soldier, becomes a great actress. He becomes a deserter before her rise by lingering with her after he should have returned to his headquarters; he steals a dress which he presents to her. He goes to jail and she becomes the toast of a nation. He serves his sentence, confronts her, behaving like a sulky boor; she chucks up her career, becomes so poor that all her personal possessions are sold at auction; she finds him in a hospital, makes an utter ass of himself before her friends, marries her, and we fade out on the two of them deliriously happy on a farm. All this is done well, but the trouble is that it should not have been done at all. No one with a grain of common sense is going to take it seriously. When Greta becomes a great actress she gets as far from her washtub as is humanly possible; her thoughts no longer are clouded by soapsuds, nor is her vision bound by clotheslines. By no possibility could the actress love the man the washerwoman loved unless he rose with her to the height she reached. But he does not rise. He is the jailbird, and behaves like our conception of one. The successful motion picture is that in which the approval of the audience is gained for the actions of the hero and heroine or other sympathetic characters in the cast. No one in his right mind could approve Greta's action in sacrificing her career in the name of her love for a man whom, in her changed surroundings and different mode of living and thinking, she could not have continued to love. Greta makes a fool of herself, and no picture with a fool for a heroine can make much of a hit at a box-office. I can't understand how Metro ever got the notion that The Divine Woman could be successful.

* * *

Beery and Hatton in a Well Constructed Comedy

APPARENTLY Paramount found out what to do with Beery and Hatton just as it broke up the team. The two Paramount comedians have made their last appearance together in Big Killing, a comedy so well constructed that it should be subjected to the earnest scrutiny of the entire industry. When I reviewed Behind the Front—that was quite a long time ago—I said that no comedians, however clever, could build up any permanent box-office value by appearing in such piffle. Much to my astonishment, Paramount paid no attention to me, and kept on presenting these two rather clever actors in piffling pictures until my prediction was proven a true one, and the box-office value of the team dwindled until the decision was made to discontinue such productions. Prior to the final breaking up of the team, Beery and Hatton appeared in Partners in Crime, a new kind of comedy for them, but the kind that I have contended is the only kind that it is good business to produce. Big Killing is another of the same sort. It has a connected story. It has a really creditable dramatic performance by Mary Brian, and some commendable acting by Gardner James, Anders Randolf, Lane Chandler and Paul McAllister. The story is dramatic, virile and interesting. It is planted in the first reel, which contains no suggestion of a laugh, thus laying a foundation for whatever is to come. In the beginning of the second reel Chandler goes to town for ammunition, with which to carry on his family's end of a Kentucky feud. In town a carnival is in progress. Beery and Hatton are discovered as a couple of fake sharpshooting giving exhibitions at the carnival. They are persuaded by Chandler to accompany him back to the mountains. Thus we have the comedians coming into the story naturally, which makes anything they do part of the story. The comedy in what they do is enhanced because in addition to being funny on its own account it is interesting for its effect on what we are interested in chiefly: the story. A comedy constructed on this plan has appeal to intelligent people, a quality that the former Beery-Hatton pictures lacked. In the first reel of Big Killing the sympathy of the audience is created for the faction that the comedians subsequently join. The comedy sequences are defined as sharply as they were in the Behind the Front structure, but are made definite parts of the story, which glides into them, and emerges from them, as smoothly as if they were not there. At the end of one such sequence the two comedians hide behind a tree where the story leaves them and pursues its dramatic way. When the time arrives for more comedy, a fleeing feudist seeks the shelter of the tree behind which we last saw the comedians, which brings them back to the camera in a natural and logical manner. This treatment of the story permits quick transitions from hilarious comedy to real drama or sentimental passages.
without interrupting the smooth flow of the narrative. It is responsible for making Big Killing one of the most amusing and interesting comedies that I have seen this season. F. Richard Jones directed with intelligent appreciation of both the dramatic and comedy possibilities of his story. He has given us some very fine out-door scenes. In fact, the production throughout is a worthy one. I made a brief reference to Mary Brian. She plays a part of considerable dramatic strength and gives a performance that surprised me. Apparently she is an intelligent young woman who takes her career seriously and from whom we may expect something notable in the future. I hope the success that Big Killing will score will make Paramount consider the advisability of calling Raymond Hatton back and teaming him with Wally in more stories of the same sort.

Overlooking a Chance to Star Dick Dix’s Left Arm

By long odds the best baseball picture I ever saw is how I would size up Warming Up, the latest Richard Dix picture which will drift over the country this summer when the ball season is at its height. It is a good baseball picture because it is about baseball, and because, when the deciding game of the world’s series comes around and our hero wins it, as we knew he would, we see every ball pitched after the bases are filled and the villain comes to bat. Dix does the pitching and the wicked curve that he uncorks is going to be hailed enthusiastically by the fans of the land, both baseball and screen. The camera was stationed at Dick’s back and we see the ball travel from the pitcher’s box to the batter’s. Dix is one hero who needs no double when it comes to baseball. As I watched the progress of the crucial inning my hope grew that Paramount was going to avail itself of something at hand that would give the game a sensational turn that no other baseball picture ever would duplicate. One day at the beach I was watching some picture people at play and was surprised to see that Dick Dix could throw with equal facility with either arm. He is ambidextrous. In Warming Up he does all his pitching with his right arm. If, when the bases were filled, he had shown his disdain of the heavy by switching to his left arm, the baseball fans of the country would have been treated to something sensational. I can not understand how Paramount overlooked such an opportunity. Jean Arthur is the girl in the picture. She has a sweet and appealing screen personality. Wade Boteler gives an easy and convincing performance of the role of team manager. Philo McCullough is the hard-hitting heavy. I think his villainy should have been tempered somewhat. Some day the screen will have to outgrow its conventional heavy, and we might as well get the revolution under way. There are few people in real life so persistently objectionable as McCullough is made to be in this picture. Before leaving the cast I would like to pay homage to Oscar, who shines the shoes on the Paramount lot and at times shines himself as an actor. In Warming Up he does creditably several good bits. I am confident that if he were assigned to an ambitious part consistent with his complexion and physiognomy he would come through with flying colors. Fred Newmeyer directed Warming Up in a manner that gives it an authentic baseball atmosphere, and he tells his story briskly, but he commits a lot of little faults that directors should avoid, but which they repeat with a persistency that is surprising. A director is supposed to think, and a little thought would show any of them that when a ball player is injured and his teammates run to him, they do not line up on one side of him. They would surround him completely as he lay on the ground. In this picture the injured player is kept in the foreground, where the camera can get at him, and the others cluster behind him. When Dix and Jean Arthur first meet, they are shown in individual close-ups. The first meeting of the boy and girl, like their subsequent love scenes, never should be treated with individual close-ups. Close shots are permissible, but both of them should be in every one of them. In several other places in this picture Newmeyer shows a too great regard for the camera. When the team manager addresses his players, he stands with his back to them and faces the camera, an idiotic bit of direction. There is a child in the picture, and he is characterized as a little pest. Children, like dogs, are good screen material, but only when they are made attractive. I can not see that it helps a picture to include in it a child who is so objectionable that he irritates the audience, when the cause of the irritation has no story value.

We Pay Our Respects to Miss Marion Davies

Among the pictures that I avoid have been those in which Marion Davies starred. They are exploited so ridiculously in the Hearst papers, and Marion herself jumps at us so constantly from the pages of these papers, that I am irritated in advance by her pictures, a frame of mind not conducive to fair criticism. Anyway, I never view a picture which I know in advance I am going to condemn, and as I had never seen Marion give a performance that I thought was worthy of the prominence given her, about a year ago I started to stop going to see her pictures. But the other night The Patsy squatted on my doorstep, so to speak. It came to my nearest neighborhood theatre at a time when Mrs. Spectator and Donald wanted to go somewhere, and at a time when twenty-seven holes of golf had made me too tired to think up a reason for not accompanying them. Consequently I saw The Patsy. It quite persuades me that Marion should sue somebody. I have seen her in so many parts that she should not have played that I have doubted if there were any part that she could play, and along she comes in this picture and gives one of the finest performances of a refined comedy role that it has been my good fortune to see in a long time. I don’t think that I ever before noticed what a fine looking girl Marion is. And I never gave her credit for the sweetness and tenderness, the note of whimsy, the suggestion of pathos that she reveals in her characterization of the girl who has no personality. The amazing cleverness of her imitations of well-known screen artists was a revelation to me. Hereafter I will look for Marion’s pictures, and if she will sue somebody for giving her any other kind of role, I will appear as a witness for her. I can not say as much for The Patsy as I can for the star’s contribution to it. It is another good picture sacrificed to studio stolidity. A Marion Davies picture must run between six and seven reels; if it be a short story, it must be spun out; if it be too long, it must be
THE Film SPECTATOR

June 9, 1928

THE Tell-Tale Heart, one of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories, has come to the screen. Maurice Barber presents it, but it might have been presented by the author himself, if he were still in the flesh, for it has the stark realism of Poe's pen, his cold precision, his unrelenting exactitude. It is screen literature, as cruelly beautiful as the author wrote it. It uncovers another screen genius in the person of Charles F. Klein, who conceived the idea of filming the story, who adapted it to the screen, built the sets and directed the two reels. I know nothing about Klein, never heard of him before, but I conclude from this one exhibition of his work that he is a man whom pictures need. The story is a madman's recital of a murder he committed, and it is told as the madman tells it. Otto Mattiesen is the murderer, and he gives a truly magnificent performance, one of the most superb bits of super-dramatic acting that it has been my good fortune to see on the screen. The combined art of Klein and Mattiesen is so impressive that the picture is robbed of the horror and gruesomeness of the facts it deals with, although it offers no compromises with the original. Klein is as stern and unrelenting as Poe, but, like Poe, he is an artist, and there is joy for the viewer in the art he produces. Practically all the action takes place in one setting, which is distorted until it is almost weird, its mood matching admirably that of the story. Charles Darvas and Kurt de Surberg contribute intelligent performances as representatives of French law. As symbols of the law they move and speak in unison, cleverly bringing out the solidity and unimaginative routine of the legal machine. The Tell-Tale Heart should be a valuable addition to any program presented to an audience that contains a fair percentage of people of intelligence.

* * *

EVERY once in a while a little editorial comes to me in the mail. In most cases I have to rewrite them. Here is one that I pass on just as it came to me: "With a little improvement in my fortunes I look back over the rough road of a film writer's career, thus far traveled, and

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Film Editor
Titles

Since 1919 with Paramount
realize that the most dangerous pitfalls have been glowing promises from individuals whose positions of authority should be a guarantee of sincerity but are, instead, a cloak for would-be subtle political intrigue. There is a second class of 'promiser' in Hollywood, a class whose motives are not malicious but the effects are the same. These promises are made by the well meaning individuals of generous nature who would like to give work to everyone and lack the firmness of character to promise only what they can fulfill. The first class, the self-deluded politician, labors under the weird notion that he is building up a great name and following for himself by promising plums to everyone, always blaming someone else when the promise fails to materialize. Whatever the cause the effect is the same; one broken promise is as disappointing as another. You have championed the writer's case frequently and, I am sure, with beneficial results. I believe you could state this issue in such a way that their broken promises would begin to make them feel small and uncomfortable. Perhaps then this vicious practice would diminish if not disappear. You would reach the over-generous-promiser, if not the wholly insincere type."

LARS Hanson announces to Greta Garbo in The Divine Woman that unless he be back in barracks by a certain hour he will become a deserter. We see the hour established on a clock, and also the time, hours after, when he leaves her, being too weak to resist her love-making early enough to save himself from disgrace. Such a situation is poor screen material. It is impossible stuff out of which to build a hero. If the sympathy of the audience has been created for the character, his lingering with his sweetheart past the hour when he should leave her, and for no other reason than to be with her, disturbs the audience; and if so little sympathy has been created that the audience can view complacently the imminence of the character's disgrace, it indicates that the picture has committed the unpardonable crime of failing to interest the audience in its hero. The girl who urges her sweetheart to remain with her when she knows that it means his disgrace, can not gain the sympathy of an audience. It was not necessary to make Hanson a deserter, but if it were, it could have been done by having Greta called from her home shortly after his arrival, being detained for hours when she expected to be away only for a few minutes, and having Hanson dropping off to sleep and not waking until she returned. Both then could register their realization of his tragic position, which would point it up. As we have it in the picture, it appears as if deserting were one of the unimportant things that might happen to any soldier.

THERE are two love stories in The Magnificent Flirt. In the end Florence Vidor marries Albert Conti, and Loretta Young marries Matty Kemp. And there is not a kiss in the entire picture. Harry D'Arrast's productions are notable for the perfect taste of his direction. The manner in which it presents kisses is one of the most vulgar manifestations of the screen, and any picture directed with good taste can not contain them. There are some who will argue that those disgusting close-ups of kisses are good box-office material. I am prepared to concede the strength of this contention to anyone who can point out to me one instance in the history of the screen, or the stage, or any other art, when a permanent and popular success was achieved by anyone or anything inherently common or vulgar. The screen, owing to the presence of so many vulgar people in its personnel, proceeds on the theory that vulgar people like vulgarity. Even if it were so, there are not enough vulgar people to repay the expense of catering to them; but it is not so. Vulgar people do not like vulgarity. They laugh at it and applaud it when it comes to them, but as a steady diet they prefer something clean and sweet. Huge kisses are poor screen material because they make vulgar pictures that without them would offend no one's sense of good taste.

ONE of my contentions is that scenes showing meals in progress should be avoided whenever possible. Pictorially, eating is the most objectionable practice we indulge in, consequently pictures of it are the most unattractive views that the screen can present. In addition to this, it has a purely physical side, as was forced upon my meditations the other night. Directly after dinner I was dragged out by my youngsters to see a picture that they thought would please their fancies. I had dined not too greatly, but quite well, and up to a point when further indulgence would affront both my conscience and my stomach. In an opening sequence of the picture the main characters were shown partaking of a hearty meal. I
resented it. I refused to grant that people could dine so amply when I had no appetite. When the hero picked up a turkey leg and bit into it, I had to close my eyes, and when someone poured gravy over a mountain of mashed potatoes I nearly became ill. Whatever story value the scene possessed was lost upon me. People go to picture houses when they are not hungry, and it is only when you are hungry that you can watch complacently another person eat. Eating is poor screen material.

**

The comma is a big little punctuation mark. A title in The Magnificent Flirt reads: "He, at least, is amusing." I would judge from the action that accompanies this title that the commas give the wrong meaning to what the character wished to express. The commas made Florence Vidor say that all the other men were dull and that Ned Sparks was amusing. I think what was meant was that with all his obvious drawbacks, Ned had the saving grace of being amusing. In that case, the title should have read: "He at least is amusing."

**

When Dick Barthelmess, as the cultured and brilliant prosecuting attorney, faces the man on trial in The Wheel of Fate, he asks impressively this question: "Whom did you say your father was?" No doubt the title-writer was satisfied with this title, but educated people in audiences that view the picture no doubt would be better satisfied if the question showed a greater regard for grammar. It should read: "Who did you say your father was?"

**

Harry Carr writes in The Times: "The most astonishing thing that ever happened this year is the smashing hit of Mary Pickford in My Best Girl. It isn't just a success; it is a riot." If Harry wishes to avoid being astonished, he should read his Spectator more carefully. When I reviewed My Best Girl weeks before it was released I predicted for it the success that now astonishes him.

**

A Yawn has a lot of story value when it is used in the right way. In The Street of Sin a morning scene shows Olga Baclanova entering a room which she occupies with Emil Jannings. She indulges in a robust yawn. Instantly she is characterized as a woman who has pined her trade all night and now has reached home. Little things sometimes are big things in pictures.

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The Spectator And Some of Its Readers

ABOUT one-half of the circulation of The Spectator is in and around Hollywood. For these readers it is appropriate that I should discuss pictures technically. Such discussions are suitable also for the large number of subscribers among film people in England and Continental Europe. But there are two other large classes among Spectator readers: exhibitors and financial houses. They are not interested in the close-up curse. The former want to know how a given picture assays in entertainment value, and the bankers and stockholders in the big producing companies want to know how their money is being spent. It is a difficult job to satisfy these diversified demands. I proceed on the theory that unless I selected subjects that please me, I could not write in a manner that would please those who read what I write. I constantly am receiving letters from exhibitors urging me to cut out everything but reviews of pictures. And at the same time the circulation of The Spectator is growing rapidly in spite of the fact that no concerted effort ever has been made to gain circulation. This suggests that it would be unwise to change its policy. If I have any theory about the contents of The Spectator, it is that those who read it, occasionally may find something in it to increase their knowledge of pictures generally, thus equipping them to understand better what they read about them elsewhere. This is true particularly of exhibitors. If I can give them a better general idea of pictures, they can read more intelligently the reviews which other papers carry. Most of the exhibitors who write me urge me to make no change in the policy of The Spectator. They feel that a virile paper in Hollywood constantly advocating improvement in pictures is of greater service to their box- offices than a paper would be by containing reviews written only for exhibitors and eliminating all general discussion of pictures. I have assembled some paragraphs from letters received recently. Their publication will suggest to Hollywood how The Spectator is regarded elsewhere, and it will serve to introduce the outside readers to one another. I want those exhibitors who think that the paper should be run differently, to know that other exhibitors do not want it changed. And to all of them, and also to Hollywood, I serve notice that The Spectator is going to ramble along exactly as it has done thus far in its career. No effort will be made to please one class of readers at the expense of another class. Now we will hear from others:

A very interesting and valuable magazine for any exhibitor.—M. MAYER, Manager, Tower Theatre, St. Paul, Minn.

The Film Spectator is apparently popular in the reading-rooms, judging by its being in constant use.—J. H. McCARTHY, Librarian, Winnipeg Public Library.

I have thoroughly enjoyed reading your Film Spectator and look forward with interest to each new issue.—TERRY McDAENEL, Manager, National Theatre, Greensboro, N. C.

Here is one instance where cold facts are HOT. The question is, how do you get away with it?—HOMER GILL, Oshkosh Theatre, Oshkosh, Wis.

The Film Spectator is read with the greatest interest by almost everyone in the Stoll studies.—THOS. G. LEWIS, Publicity Director, Stoll Picture Productions, Ltd., London, England.

Your criticisms are not only thorough, but well rounded. While we appreciate that your articles must be supercritical, we do not feel that they are radical.—BALABAN & KATZ CORPORATION, Chicago.

Personally, I enjoy reading The Spectator. The reviews are splendidly written, and bits of English composition, they are a joy.—ROBERT W. BENDER, Manager, Columbia Theatre, Seattle, Wash.

I do enjoy The Film Spectator. I enjoy your reviews and also feel that you are a fine leavening influence in the picture industry. Keep up the good work.—J. RAY, Y. M. C. A., Hamilton, Ohio.

The Film Spectator is passed right along down the line to our employees who, I believe, read it with interest.—H. H. MALONEY, Managing Director, Loew's Kansas City Theatres.

In my trips throughout the country, I have found that your magazine is very highly thought of by exhibitors of all classes, and that they are very largely guided in their bookings of product by your reviews.—J. C. DAVIS, Zenith Pictures, Incorporated.

I consider The Spectator a very good paper for the exhibitor. You hit him straight from the shoulder and you call a spade a spade; you pick out the flaws and give us an idea of what a picture is worth, which helps a great deal.—SAM CARLTON, Owner and Manager Strand Theatre, Frankfort, Indiana.

The chief of our division of current periodicals informs us that The Film Spectator is used a great deal by our readers. The staff of that division feel that your periodical is very worth while and that it enjoys a very good reputation with our readers.—CHARLES J. SHAW, Executive Assistant, New York Public Library.

Your articles have been intelligent and constructive, and while fearless, have been within good taste. And how badly do we need in this business the publication of statements that we may depend upon as being truthful! We wish you most continued success.—H. E. HUFFMAN, The Aladdin Theatre Corp., Denver, Colo.

I want you to know that I sincerely appreciate the worthiness of your publication and that it has supplied me with a source of information extremely valuable to every exhibitor. I trust that yours will be a continued and long-lived success, for the industry is needful of the honest material you supply.—B. BERGER, Manager Berger Amusement Company, Grand Forks, N. D.

The head of our periodical division reports that The Film Spectator is used a good deal by readers and that she has found the reviews of motion pictures very helpful. Our publicity representative says that the reviews are very good, they are so "up-and-coming". It is an interesting and useful periodical.—MARILLA W. FREE-MAN, Librarian, Cleveland Public Library.

I assure you we enjoy The Spectator very much and really look forward to receiving it. A lot of the matter contained in it is enlightening and instructive as well as intensely interesting. The reviews of pictures we find very interesting and quite generally very correct. Occasionally of course, our viewpoint differs from yours.—WILLIAM E. KEATING, House Manager, Lyric Theatre, Minneapolis, Minn.

You are a rare critic, inasmuch as you not only tear down; you construct, you point out an ill and suggest a remedy. Keep that same fearless editorial attitude; review pictures as you are doing, giving us your frank opinion. You have the dramaturgic faculty and box-office sense combined with artistic common sense. Keep on as you are writing and your instructive little paper will grow and grow.—DAVID F. PERKINS, Manager, Merrimack Square Theatre, Lowell, Mass.
I want to say that I look forward with a great deal of interest to the various numbers of The Film Spectator. You are to be complimented on the publication you are putting out.—M. P. KELLY, Advertising Manager, Midwesco Theatres, Inc., Milwaukee, Wis.

There are so many angles on the picture industry that you bring out, that are not found in the ordinary trade journal. We realize the abuses that you are trying to rectify, and appreciate the fact that there is urgent need to encourage new ideas and the getting away from the stereotyped in production. No one is aware of this more than the exhibitor who notices that his patrons are losing interest and drifting away. We all have too much at stake not to try everything possible, so keep up the good work.—J. D. O'REAR, Manager, Wilmer & Vincent Theatres, Bethlehem, Pa.

Every issue of The Film Spectator is read carefully and enjoyed thoroughly. It is a pleasure to read a constructive criticism in frankness to the film industry and its product. Every issue thus far has been relayed to various friends interested in either motion picture criticism or exhibiting, to the end that your subscription list has profited thereby. My only suggestion for the improvement of your publication would be the possible shortening of reviews in order to increase the number of pictures covered in each issue—RAY WHITTAKER, General Manager, Shubert Kansas City Theatres.

We enjoy reading The Spectator very much, and agree with many of the reforms you are constantly advocating. Sometimes a criticism of yours on some particular picture does not coincide with our opinion, but your frankness and fearlessness are admirable, and as long as you keep free from entangling alliances The Spectator will be worth while. If you should happen to see Mr. Martin Del, will you please say to him, that whenever we see his name in the cast of a picture to be played at the Palace, we give it special mention in our newspaper advertisements and publicity.—HARRY SILVER, Palace Theatre, Hamilton, Ohio.

I wish to advise you that I have enjoyed The Film Spectator a great deal. It contains considerable food for thought. The only real handicap is the possible lack of time with the majority of theatre managers which would prevent them from reading it from cover to cover. Personally, I would suggest shorter paragraphs and somewhat more condensed reading. Make it short and snappy. Eliminate a lot of the unnecessary words. Give a little more thought to your reviews with intelligent criticism on the productions that you are reviewing and I am quite sure The Film Spectator will be much more acceptable to the average manager.—T. W. McKAY, Strand Theatre, Rutland, Vermont.

We have been receiving The Spectator and find that the reviews are very helpful as advance knowledge. Many of the features of the paper are attractive and we enjoy reading the various articles and note with interest the

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AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By Donald Beaton — The Spectator's 17-Year-Old Critic

SOUND in connection with the production of motion pictures has now become something to reckon with, and the day of the silent picture is about over. I dare say that there always will be soundless pictures, but they will always be in the minority, and will be made chiefly for people who like silence and for those who can’t hear. The other afternoon I sat in a projection-room at the Warner Brothers studio and witnessed the most amazing thing I ever have seen. “Witnessed” is not exactly the right word, as I heard as well as saw Bright Lights, which is the first motion picture made entirely with all spoken dialogue. Everything is Vitaphoned, even to the street noises and other incidental things. The tense drama in the sequence where a man is murdered attains a power which no titles ever written by any one could equal. The characters are no longer just shadows on a screen; they are living, breathing human beings; and their joys and sorrows naturally concern the heart of the audience. Hitherto, a scene which could make an audience cry has been considered unusually good; but sound is going to make such scenes common, although why people go to shows in order to cry themselves and their handkerchiefs sodden is a mystery to me. Humor won’t be so hard to put over when sound becomes general. I believe talking motion pictures will develop a different type of comedian from the one now creating laughs for the screen. Some of our present comedians probably will be in the new class, but it will be made up mostly of men who have to have sound to put across their stuff. Stage plays and novels will be put into motion pictures with much greater success, because sound will permit closer translations of the things which are responsible for the popularity of the shows and books. There is scarcely any limit to the possibilities of speaking pictures.

When Bright Lights is released, it will revolutionize the motion picture industry. Two more like it will create a demand for talking pictures which will be impossible to overlook. No person is going to be satisfied with flat, uninteresting titles when he can hear human voices which put over the same thing as the titles in a more adroit, more natural way. Neither is anyone going to be satisfied with half-breed things like The Lion and the Mouse, because they are even worse than no sound at all. After the dialogue, written titles are such a flop that the interest is lost. The Lion and the Mouse is not a very good picture, due chiefly to Lloyd Bentsen’s attempt to translate the custom of shooting nearly everything in close-ups. He also has a couple of what are supposed to be comedians wandering around, with no very definite purpose. The story is old; and only the spoken dialogue, which is good unless forty years in the show game prompts me to predict that inside of one year there will not be a first-class theatre showing silent pictures.—JAS. CUNingham, Golden State Film Co., Huntington Park, Calif.

One of the very many community activities that I have a part in as a representative of the library is in my membership in the Better Films Council of Jacksonville, where I am chairman of its committee on review. Because of that fact I have quite a close contact with most pictures, and I am glad to say that I consider this most valuable civic and educational publication that has any reference to motion pictures. I appreciate the fine points that you stress in your consideration of pictures, and because of the fact that many of your comments come to me in advance of the showing of pictures I find them extremely valuable. In addition to that I have frequently referred members of the council to many of which we are now receiving in the library.—JOSEPH F. MARION, Librarian, Jacksonville, Florida, Public Library.

RIGHT Lights had a perfectly good alibi if it had been a poor motion picture, because what it achieved in its plateau ofplatitudes is perhaps the most constructive thing a picture could do. It is a good picture, and will do a great deal to promote the public’s confidence in this new medium. It is likewise an excellent introduction to sound, and would be the perfect picture for the time which is being used to show films, if it weren’t for the fact that it is a poor motion picture. It has one or two good scenes, but the rest of it is a rather dull sequence of events which are not at all interesting. However, it is a good introduction to sound, and shows how it can be used to produce a picture which is not only entertaining, but also instructive. It is also a good introduction to the new medium, and shows how it can be used to produce a picture which is not only entertaining, but also instructive. It is also a good introduction to the new medium, and shows how it can be used to produce a picture which is not only entertaining, but also instructive.

After pictures glorifying football, baseball, basketball, and track have come and gone, Pathe-De Mille honors, in Walking Back, one of our greatest national sports. Rupert Julian was given the directorial assignment on this picture, and he did a very good job. He seemed to be in sympathy at all times with the modern young people he worked with, so naturally, he got them on the screen well. Julian has some very good ideas on direction which would put him among our biggest directors if he only could get a chance with bigger units. He got back to Walking Back, however. The picture opens with a lot of short shots of all the diversions of 1928. It is good stuff, and shows thought upon the part of Julian and Bertram Millhauser, the supervisor. As a rule, I don’t give supervisors credit for anything; but I understand that Millhauser is one of the few who can contribute something to the pictures under their guidance. The whole picture gave evidence of having been worked out carefully in advance, an appearance which very few pictures attain, in no matter how much time has been expended on them. There was one sequence which I didn’t care for particularly. The two rivals for the girl’s favor decide, by running a race, which one shall take her home. The hero of the picture wins by turning over his rival’s car, but the whole thing seemed rather silly. However, when one considers that Sue Carol is the girl in question, a wrecked car doesn’t seem much of a price
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to pay for the privilege of taking her home. Another thing about Walking Back which was poor was the amount of titles used. There were far too many. Julian, for no good reason, introduced his heroine with one of these underwear scenes which I detest so heartily. Beside these few blemishes, the picture was good entertaining. The cast of Walking Back was highly satisfactory. Richard Waring had the featured part, and his work was fine. He is a new one to me, but I think he will go quite a way on the screen. Sue Carol, had she been given a little more footage, would have stolen the picture. As it was, she made her performance stand out. Sue has one of the finest screen personalities I ever have seen, and she is progressing rapidly with her acting. One of these days she is going to be a big star. Robert Edeson gives her usual finished performance. Ivan Lebedeff, another new face to me, does a heavy characterization which deserves credit.

Our Dancing Daughters, although it takes considerable time to get under way, is a pretty good picture. Without a doubt, it is the best M-G-M. has made in some time; although that sounds like damning it with faint praise.” Its most outstanding faults were a superabundance of close-ups, and a set of titles which must have been punctuated by a man who left school as soon as he found out what a dash was. I hadn't realized how much better the picture was good entertainment until I saw those of Our Dancing Daughters, which were punctuated in the simple style of a couple of years ago. If I may be excused a terrible pun, the writer just dashed from one title to another. If I cracked that around the house, I'd probably lose my job; so I'll make my public listen to it. He won't mind, because a padded cell takes the fight out of anyone.

The thing which contributed most to the success of Our Dancing Daughters was the beautiful production which was given it. Every set was a pleasure to behold, and Harry Beaumont grouped his characters so as to get the most out of them, pictorially speaking. However, as soon as he had a beautiful scene, he would cut it up into close-ups which ruined the effect. An interesting thing about the sets was the fact that they were furnished in the modernistic style, which is more or less of a departure from the usual screen conventions.

The weak spot in Our Dancing Daughters was the story. The two girls in it threw themselves on the neck of the same young man, and he would have been feebleminded to marry either of them. One acted as though she were insane; the other pursued him so persistently that anybody with sense would have steered clear of her. The man was a sort of half-baked character any way, because he never seemed quite sure as to which one he loved. Eventually he found out where his affections lay; and from then on, the action moved more smoothly. All in all, Our Dancing Daughters was pretty good entertainment.

A newcomer to the screen, Anita Page, gives quite a remarkable performance in this picture. She has a tendency towards over-acting, but when she gets a little more experience, that will be overcome. Any way, over-acting is a sin only in the case of a veteran trooper who is old enough at the game to know better. As she had a very unsympathetic part in Our Dancing Daughters, I don't know whether or not Miss Page has a good screen personality; but I do know that she has plenty of acting ability. Joan Crawford reveals an ability for dramatic acting which I never believed she possessed. She has one trait which I approve of heartily, and that is the fact that she puts over her emotions with repression. John Mack Brown, who has a splendid personality, does good work. Edward Nugent, another newcomer, gives a very clever characterization. Dorothy Sebastian and Nils Asther are highly satisfactory.

Harry D'Arrast, who is our most brilliant comedy-drama director since Lubitsch deserted that field for something more serious, again makes a splendid picture in The Magnificent Flirt. It is something on the order of Serenade, although it has a muchfarrier story. The success of the picture lies in the superlative cleverness of D'Arrast; and, as he was credited with part of what story there was, I suppose he deserves the greatest amount of credit for its merit. He has these directorial touches down to a science, but he does not let them interfere with the story and its screen recital. There was only one thing in The Magnificent Flirt which I did not like particularly. D'Arrast opens the picture with a lot of composite and semi-futuristic shots of Paris at sun-up which are very beautiful and striking, but they look as though he was trying to impress his audience with his own cleverness. He didn't have to resort to trick shots for that, because after about a reel that was plain enough. There was one scene in a bedroom which contained some of the best comedy I ever have seen. Only D'Arrast could direct a scene like that and get away with it, because some of the action bordered on slapstick. A little less finesse in the direction would have ruined it entirely.

When The Magnificent Flirt is released, Albert Conti is going to be sitting on top of the world. His characterization in this picture is one of the finest bits of acting turned out from our shore. Only D'Arrast could direct a scene like that and get away with it, because some of the action bordered on slapstick. A little less finesse in the direction would have ruined it entirely.

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THE FILM SPECTATOR
Page Nineteen

RO冷AND V. LEE
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The Wheel of Chance was a Fanny Hurst story; and while I did not read it, I imagine that it has been put on the screen much as it was written. At least none of the power was missing; and as a result, the picture is destined to be a success. A good picture is the natural result of a good story. Al Santell has one habit which gets on my nerves, since they haven't returned to normal yet after the strain of sitting through The Divine Woman. He clutters up the screen with too many non-essentials. Barthelmess plays two parts in The Wheel of Fate, a respectable young lawyer and a dirty roughneck. As the lawyer he wears a diamond ring which is much in evidence, and up until the final fade-out, I was looking for the significance of the ring to be established. Nothing ever was done about it, and it only managed to make things confused. Little things like that were the picture's only faults.

Barthelmess, as I have said, does splendid work in The Wheel of Fate. He is a truly great artist. Margaret Livingston does very well also, a habit of hers. She is one of the few good feminine heavies. Bodil Rosing gives a very good performance. Warner Oland and Lina Basquette are quite satisfactory in smaller parts.

Paramount again makes a bumm sequel to a great picture in The Drag Net. Underworld is the great picture which is copied, and there is no reason why the second picture shouldn't be just as good. It has the same director, the same principals, and the same writers; but it is not a good picture. Joseph von Sternberg, who directed, managed to leave out all the realism which made Underworld such a success and substituted a lot of artificial motion picture stuff. There was only one place where the action attained the tense drama of its predecessor, and that was the sequence where the gangsters shot up police headquarters with a machine gun. Among other faults,

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5 South Wabash, Chicago
The Drag Net had a hero who should have been dead about
the third reel instead of living merrily on for seven.
George Bancroft was the hero, and he was supposed to
be the honest two-gun detective on the force.
He went into
crowd full of gangsters, shot two of them, turned his back
several times on the assemblage, and walked out, unhurt.
Gangsters as tough as they were supposed to be would
have filled him so full of lead that it would have taken
a truck to remove the body. Another silly thing was the
way Bancroft and Evelyn Brent engaged in terrific quar-
elles whenever they happened to meet. Bill Powell is a
gangster who never misses his man, yet he shoots at both
Bancroft and Miss Brent and only damages them slightly.
The high point of artificiality in The Drag Net is reached
when the gangsters have a banquet, during which Powell,
in a bored sort of way, kills a man. Every set used in the
picture was cluttered up with the bodies of men who had
offed Bancroft and Powell.
Bancroft, who kills men by the score with delightful
abandon, accidentally shoots a fellow policeman. He is
exonerated of all blame, but he is so overcome with re-
nerse that he resigns and takes to drink. That was
absurd for two reasons: First, as hard-boiled a killer as he
was supposed to be wouldn’t have been upset by a death
which wasn’t his fault; and second, he was doing such
good work in his drive against the underworld that he
would never have been allowed to quit. Anyway, a man
who drowns his troubles in liquor is too weak to be a hero.
The Drag Net is another picture where the cast gives
good portrayals, but does not put any feeling in them.
Bancroft gives a performance, as does Evelyn
Brent. Those two are always good, but in this picture
their work contained little feeling. William Powell does
brilliant work as the heavy. Fred Kohler and Leslie
Fenton are good, also.

Reviewed In This Number

BIG KILLING—
A Paramount picture. B. P. Schulberg, associate pro-
ducer; directed by F. Richard Jones; story by Grover
Jones; screen play by Gilbert Pratt and Grover Jones;
photographed by Alfred Gilks; editor-in-chief, B. F.
Zeldman; assistant director, Archie Hill.
The cast: Wallace Beery, Raymond Hatton, Mary
Brown, John Gardner, Andris Rand-
dolph, Paul McAllister, James Mason, Ralph Yearsley,
Ethan Laidlaw, Leo Willis, Buck Moulton, Robert
Kortman, Walter James, Roscoe Ward.

BRIGHT LIGHTS—
A Warner Bros. picture. Directed by Bryan Foy;
written by Murray Roth and Hugh Herbert;
photographed by Ed Du Par.
The cast: Helene Costello, Cullen Landis, Mary Carr,
Wheeler Oakman, Gladys Brockwell, Robert Elliott,
Eugene Pallette, Tom Dugan, Tom McGuire, Walter
Percival, Guy D’Ennery, Jere Delaney.

DIVINE WOMAN—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by Victor
Seastrom; treatment by Gladys Unger; based on her
play, Starlight; scenario by Dorothy Farnum; titles by
John Colton; settings by Cedric Gibbons and Arnold
Gillespie; wardrobe by Gilbert Clark; photographed by
Oliver Marsh; film editor, Conrad A. Nervig.
The cast: Greta Garbo, Lars Hanson, Lowell Sher-
man, Polly Moran, Dorothy Cumming, John Mack
Brown, Cesare Gravina, Paulette Duval, Jean De Bria.

DRAG NET—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Josef von Stern-
berg; associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; story by
Oliver H. P. Garrett; adaptation by Jules Furthmann;
screen play by Jules Furthmann and Charles Furth-
mann; photographed by Harold Rosson; editor-in-
chief, Louis D. Lighton; assistant director, Robert
Lee.
The cast: George Bancroft, Evelyn Brent, William
Powell, Fred Kohler, Leslie Fenton, Allan Garcia,
Harry Semela, George Irving, Alfred Allen.

LION AND THE MOUSE, THE—
A Warner Bros. picture. Directed by Lloyd Bacon;
from the story by Charles Klein; scenario by Robert
Lewin; assistant director, Frank Shaw; cameraman,
Norbert Brodin.
The cast: May McAvoy, Lionel Barrymore, Alec
Francis, William Collier Jr., Emmett Corrigan, Jack
Ackroyd.

MAGNIFICENT FLIRT—
A Paramount picture. Associate producer, B. P.
Schulberg; directed by H. D’Abbadie D’Arrast; screen
play by H. D’Abbadie D’Arrast and Jean de Limur;
suggested by “Maman” by Germain and Moncousin;
photographed by Henry Gerrard; production super-
visor, B. P. Fineman; assistant director, Art Jacob-
son; titles by Herman Mankiewicz.
The cast: Florence Vidor, Matty Kemp, Albert
Conti, Loretta Young, Marietta Millner, Tom Ricketts,
Hazel Keener.

OUR DANCING DAUGHTERS—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by Harry
Benedum; story and scenario by Josephine Lovett;
titles by Marlan Ainslee and Ruth Cummings;
settings by Cedric Gibbons; wardrobe by David Cox;
assistant director, Harold S. Buequet; photographed by
George Barnes; film editor, William Hamilton. A Cosmopoli-
tan production.
The cast: Joan Crawford, John Mack Brown, Dor-
othy Sebastian, Anita Page, Kathryn Williams, Nils
Asther, Edward Nugent, Dorothy Cumming, Huntly
Gordon, Evelyn Hall, San de Grasse.

PATSY, THE—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Picture. Directed by King
Vidor; based on the play by Barry Conners; continuity
by Agnes Christine Johnston; titles by Ralph Spence;
settings by Cedric Gibbons; wardrobe by Gilbert
Clark; photographed by John Seitz; film editor, Hugh
Wynn.
The cast: Marion Davies, Orville Caldwell, Marie
Dressler, Dell Henderson, Lawrence Gray, Jane Win-
ton.

SMOKE BELLEW—
An I. E. Chadwick picture. Produced by The Big
Picture Corporation; directed by Scott Dunlap; super-
vised by David Thomas; photographed by J. O. Taylor;
technical director, Earl Sibley.
The cast: Conway Tearle, Barbara Bedford, Alphonz
Ethier, Mark Hamilton, William Scott, J. P. Lockney,
Alaska Jack.

TELL-TALE HEART, THE—
Unreleased. Directed by Charles F. Klein; from the
story by Edgar Allen Poe; continuity, titles, trick
photography and all sets designed by Charles F.
Klein; cameraman, Leo Sharmoy.
The cast: Will Herberg, Charles Darvas, Kurt de
Surberg, Otto Matiesen.

TRAIL OF ’98, THE—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by Clarence
Brown; from the story by Robert W. Service; adapta-
tion by Benjamin Glazer; continuity by Benjamin
Glazer and Waldemar Young; titles by Joe Farnham;
settings by Cedric Gibbons and Merrill Pyc; wardrobe
by Lucia Coulter; assistant director, Charles Dorian;
photographed by John Seitz; film editor, George
Holly.
The cast: Dolores Del Rio, Ralph Forbes, Karl Dane,
Harry Carey, Tully Marshall, George Cooper, Russell
Simpson, Emily Fitzroy, Tenen Holtz, Cesare Gravina,
Doris Lloyd, E. Alyn Warren, John Down, Ray Hallar,
Ray Gallagher.

WALKING BACK—
A Pathe-De Mille picture. Directed by Rupert Julian;
associate producer, Bertram Millhauser; from the
story, A Ride in the Country by George Kibbe Turner;
scenario by Monte Katterjohn; cameraman, John Mes-
call; assistant director, Fred C. Tyler; film editor, Claude Berkeley; costumes by Adrian; unit production manager, John Rohlf.

The cast: Sue Carol, Richard Waring, Ivan Lebedeff, George Irving, Jane Keckley, Billy Sullivan, George Stone.

WARMING UP—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Fred Newmeyer; associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; story by Sam Mintz; adaptation and scenario by Ray Harris; editor-in-chief, J. G. Bachmann; photographed by Edward Cronjager; assistant director, Ivan Thomas.

MORE NOTES ON PICTURES
By WALTER KRON

If I were a big producer, there would be in my employment a specialist in the detection of charlatans. In this way I would endeavor to eliminate the latter from the films which I produced. I would have on my staff at least two directors as pure experimenters, whom I would allow to follow their fancy in production, with no regard for the box-office. If they were not too wasteful and if they could show results within one year, they would be retained. To the one who had really unearthed something, his product would be on display to the other directors. If, on the other hand, with his freedom and latitude, a director remained a rubber stamp, I would throw him back in with his commercial brothers and replace him with a discovered aspirant.

I understand that some of the more prominent studios do retain directors free from taint, who frequently turn out commercial winners. These semi-commercial directors who have to maintain big houses and uniformed servants, besides catering to the gutting candidates of society columns, cannot be blamed entirely.

But to manufacture wares of moronic appeal comes easy to most directors, as they are incapable of doing otherwise.

The film impresario has pushed his showmanship beyond all decency. The shrewd man “a la Barnum” with the democratic way necessary to the type, puts his films over in a bare of trumpets, lights, fire wagons, and police machines. These men are very skilled manipulators of the mob. The brazen qualities of these men are expressed by their gaudy architecture and decorating. Take the Chinese Theatre of Hollywood, for example. The immortal hand-and-footprints of our divine artists are now cast for all time in concrete paving, where the gullible mob is from points east, west, north, and south may view these imprints with awe, and then write home to Garden Prairie about it.

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WHEEL OF FATE, THE—
A First National Picture. Directed by Alfred Santell; produced by Henry Hobart; cameraman, Ernest Haller; titles by Garrett Graham; adaptation and continuity by Gerald Duffy.


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It Is Time to Give Three Cheers to Warner Brothers

WHEN the Warner Brothers two and one-half years ago began to experiment with the application of sound to motion pictures they started something that was to make them benefactors of the human race and life-savers to that portion of it engaged in the production of screen entertainment. However Vitaphone appeals to individual aesthetic tastes, there is no doubt of the tremendous hit it has made at the box-office. The Jazz Singer seems to be on its way to gross as much as The Big Parade. This means that sound is doing to a trite and commonplace story what the world and great human appeal did to the Vidor masterpiece. Tenderloin, another picture of no great intrinsic merit, attracted considerable attention because it has spoken lines in it; the sound sequences it contained were responsible largely for making Glorious Betsy an instant hit. The Lion and the Mouse is proving a box-office magnet because half of it is done in sound, and Bright Lights, a commonplace story with little appeal to the intelligence, is going to be a sensational success because for its seven reels the talking stops only during the intervals when narrative titles are thrown on the screen. Measured in time, it was but a brief step from the first timid venture in sound in Jazz Singer to the bold seven reels of talking in Bright Lights, but measured in terms of advancement, it is the most gigantic step forward ever made by pictures. With uncanny prescience, which at the time was regarded by their competitors as something to laugh at, the Warners pioneered in sound—and to-day those who laughed are scrambling aboard the band wagon so fast that they have no breath left with which to discuss anything else. Before another producing organization is in a position to introduce one spoken line in a motion picture, Warners have given us a full length feature entirely in sound. Bright Lights is not a great motion picture, but it is the most notable ever made. A score of years hence I will boast to my grandchildren that I saw the first oral picture ever produced, and I will tell them of my visit to a projection-room with Albert and Jack Warner, and Darryl Zanuck, Bryan Foy and a number of the other intelligent and enthusiastic young fellows in the Vitaphone squad, and seeing and hearing a film offering that will loom larger than any other in the history of the screen. Bright Lights—shot as The Roaring Forties—is fascinating entertainment, for all its triteness, and is the mechanical culmination of the enterprise, perseverance and faith of Warner Brothers, who are now playing with confidence a tune to which all the rest of the industry is dancing distractedly. Even the most conservative, backward and unimaginative producer now admits that sound is here. It is perfect enough already to provide excellent entertainment, but not even its enterprising sponsors, Warner Brothers, are sure what is going to happen to it. I have spent many hours in Warner and Fox projection-rooms viewing sound pictures and have arrived at the conclusion that what remains to be done to make the reproduction perfect is trivial compared with what has been done already. There would be a tremendous demand for oral pictures if the process of reproducing sound were never carried nearer perfection than it has attained now. Like all other innova-

THE WANTON

By GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN

Dear Mr. Beaton:

It seems to me that, figuratively, the moving picture organization is a wanton; and that the writers, scenarioists, etc., ever on the alert to win her smile, are poor fish upon whose gullibility she fattens. "Have you a match?" says she (subtle approach). "Have you a smoke?" (your time and ideas). "And do you know the way across the lovely hills of pleasure?" Oh, most certainly. "And have you a wife?" (medium of expression). "Behold! Am I not fair?" O daffodils and trills! You revel for a brief hour in The Elysian Fields. "I'm sorry," says she, "but I see another prospect."

G. F. M.

"Have you a match?" the maiden said.
How ingenuous was she!
No subterfuge or coy reserve,
But frank good-fellowship and verve,
A terse epitome of nerve—
She spoke right up to me.

"Have you a smoke?" the maiden said,
"And do you know the way
Across the hills where daffodils
Are all about, and wild bird's trills,
And other joys for him who wills?"
Now what, pray, could I say?

"Have you a wife?" the maiden said,
"Or are you lonesome, too?"
Two sparrows twittered amorous words,
The soft wind sighed, the wanton flowers
With ravishments beguiled the hours.
Now what, pray, could I do?

"O, love is all the world," she said,
"Observe! Am I not fair?"
The sunlight through a leafy branch
With artistry of love enhanced
Each lineament, each charm. My heart...
To you I say Beware!
tions that have played their part in advancing screen art, this one had its origin outside the smug industry. Only Warner Brothers had gumption enough to realize its future, to extend it a welcome and to risk their very being as a producing organization on the soundness of their judgment. From time to time I have criticized the firm for its manner of conducting its business, and I have seen little merit in most of its pictures, but I am ready to pay it homage now for its leadership in the greatest step forward that screen art has taken.

* * *

First All-Sound Picture Immense Stride Forward

From the moment I saw Will Hays step forward on the Egyptian screen two years ago and heard the reproduction of a speech he had made in New York, I never lost my faith in the inevitability of all-sound pictures. I went on record in The Spectator at the time. I knew nothing about the process then, and knew no more about it now, but that the screen would fail to embrace such an available ally was something I could not admit. When I saw Bright Lights I realized that my faith was justified. It is an underworld story with nothing new in it, but it is fascinating screen entertainment because each member of its long cast is alive. I heard their voices as they moved through the various scenes, and as there are no silent sequences in the picture, the characters never become shadows. Bryan Foy directed it, thus gaining a permanent place in screen history as the first director to give us an all-sound production. His task was simplified by the fact that continuous talking reduced the necessity for action. In the opening sequence two characters stand in the middle of a room and carry on a long conversation, every word of which is interesting for its promise of later developments as the story progresses. The feature of the picture that interested me most was the striking manner in which it supported my argument advanced in the last Spectator that Hollywood was attaching too much importance to voices. The cast of Bright Lights is not a notable one, and its members were not chosen on account of the quality of their voices. As it was the first venture in an oral picture, Warner Brothers could not know that it was going to be successful, consequently not too great a sum of money was risked. It was cast as any unpretentious program picture would be cast. The important talking parts are taken by Helen Costello, Cullen Landis, Mary Carr, Wheeler Oakman, Gladys Brockwell, Robert Elliott, Eugene Pallette, Tom Dugan, Tom McGuire, Walter P رجال, Guy D’Ennery, and Jere Delaney. In addition to them, talking is done by policemen, newsboys, taxi drivers, doormen and many others. And there is not one voice that fails to put over every word it utters. Altogether I suppose we hear twenty voices, and even if I had not been told that no great care was exercised in their selection, I would have known that such was the case, for had it been difficult to secure satisfactory voices among the general run of artists and actors, it would have taken weeks to pick those that were used. The fact is that Warners were making an experiment, and for their purpose any voices would do. That they did not happen to use one unsatisfactory one is due to the fact that any ordinary voice is adaptable to reproduction. Those artists who enact parts which carry a presumption of education and culture must speak like educated and cultured people, but the character actors have no such restrictions. The newsboy crying his wares may have dropped his final g’s. I did not notice. The voice of Bob Elliott, the peerless detective of Broadway, came to me with all the intriguing drawl that it carried across the footlights. And he was just as real to me as he was on the stage. In the largest picture house he will be more real to the person in the back row of the gallery than he possibly could be to anyone that far from him in any house in which Broadway was played, for the stage has no such medium as a close shot to bring an actor closer. When sound devices are perfected and their use thoroughly understood, dramatic entertainment will be more vivid to the entire audience than it ever has been when presented on a stage. Oral pictures will have many advantages over the stage, and I can not think of one advantage that the stage possesses that will remain something peculiarly its own.

* * *

Audiences Will Be Spared Reproduction of Sound Effects

The Warner Brothers pictures to which sound has been applied offer the industry an opportunity to form some idea of what the future holds. The Jazz Singer will gross millions. There is nothing in the story or in Jolson’s acting to account for the success of the picture. Its popularity is due entirely to Jolson’s singing. Tenderloin has not enough talking in it to help us form an estimate of the future of sound. I have not seen it, but the reviews I have read are not particularly enthusiastic regarding its excellence as entertainment, consequently we can attribute what success it is having to the amount of talking it has in it. The Lion and the Mouse is going to gross several times what it would if it were silent. The story is interesting, but not unusually so. As the first picture to contain several long sequences in sound it is notable for marking a long forward step for screen art. It will have great box-office value as a novelty, and is interesting enough as screen entertainment to repay those who view it. Glorious Betsy is distinguished for the quality of its production, acting and direction, but its interpolated bits of sound will be the feature that will gain for it word-of-mouth advertising. Bright Lights, the poorest picture of the lot, will be a tremendous financial success. It is more than a novelty. It is epochal; perhaps the most momentous individual thing that has happened to pictures. No exhibitor with reproducing equipment in his house can afford to ignore it. A score of years hence it can be reissued and will attract attention as the first production entirely in sound. No one who has any intelligent interest in the screen can miss Bright Lights and still claim to be abreast of screen progress. As a demonstration of the applicability of sound to pictures it is a brilliant success, and it would be an unkind reviewer who would attempt to dim its scientific luster by expatiating upon its conventional story treatment. It is a monument to the enterprise and foresight of Warner Brothers, and one does not chip holes in monuments. Bright Lights is an answer to those who predict that sound will be used sparingly in pictures. As far as anyone will go to minimize the importance of sound to the screen is to predict that its use will be confined to repro-
ducing effects: the whirr of wheels, the exhaust of automobiles, steam whistles, etc. They contend that it never will be used generally to reproduce speeches. I believe that when sound settles down it will be found that the reverse of these predictions will be true. I so far disagree with these prophets as to predict that after the novelty wears off we will have all the talking done in sound and none of the effects. One of the great problems with which civilization has to contend is the elimination of unnecessary noises. In the past score of years we have made extraordinary progress in adding to the comforts and luxuries of the human race—but we still have street cars dragging horrible dins between sidewalks crowded with people and along lanes between buildings filled with people doing work in stores and offices. Out into our otherwise quiet residential districts the same cars drag the same dins until it is a wonder that any of us possess unfraught nerves. And street cars are but one item in noise producing atrocities that must be subjugated before we can claim to be civilized wholly. Heretofore picture houses have offered a retreat from noises that infest us elsewhere. To predict that the public will pay to hear noises dragged into these retreats is to take an exaggerated view of the tolerance of humanity. The picture of the future, as I see it, will leave to the imagination that which can be imagined and will present in sound only what can not be imagined at all, exactly what the characters on the screen are saying. Some effects should be used, such as the ringing of a telephone bell, the sound of a buzzer, the occasional honk of a horn, but when a fire engine plunges down a screen street, the audience is going to derive satisfaction from the fact that it can see the monster without hearing the awful noise it makes. If I were a producer I soon would be known as one whose pictures contained no unnecessary racket.

Writers Will Be Ones to Get the Big Money

HOLLYWOOD accepts sound as something that has arrived to stay, and interests itself now in speculation regarding what effect its general adoption will have on those engaged in making pictures. While it must remain a matter of speculation until the new order has established its own routine, there are some things about it that we may take for granted now. There is more or less uneasiness among actors who are under the impression that only those with stage-trained voices will command the sizable salaries when there is sound in all pictures. Producers themselves seem inclined to share this view and the more foolish among them are looking to the stage for a new supply of picture talent. There are as many poor voices among a given number of actors as there are among the same number of taxi drivers. The only difference is that actors have learned to use the voices they have. Screen actors can learn to use their- waves as rapidly as their individual mental capacities will permit. Under the new order there will be no place in pictures for the wholly unintelligent actor or actress. That is a boon that sound will confer on screen art. But the percentage of those lacking brains enough to get by in sound pictures is small, for the difference between the star and the extra is one of mentality, and as wide a range of mentalities always will be used. The general run of screen actors need not disturb themselves too greatly about the prospect of finding no more work, but they must not overlook the fact that the new order requires more intelligence than the old. There are some who contend that our present crop of actors is going to be supplanted by a new crop garnered on the stages of New York and London, predicated the prediction on the supposition that the sound picture is going to require better acting. There are limits to the revolution that sound devices will cause. About one picture out of twenty made now has any acting in it, and I fail to see why we should expect producers to

UNIMPORTANT IF TRUE

By K. C. B.

SOME years ago.

BEFORE either of us.

MOVED to Hollywood.

I WAS in the office.

OF SAMUEL Goldwyn.

IN NEW York City.

AND SAM said to me.

WE WENT to lunch.

AND I said all right.

AND WE rushed down stairs.

IN this elevator.

AND out through the door.

ONTO Forty-second.

AND UP to the corner.

OF FIFTH avenue.

AND whatever Sam does.

IT LOOKS like a walk.

BUT IT really isn't.

IT'S A sort of a float.

IN WHICH the body.

WEAVES in and out.

AND DRAGS the legs.

PERMITTING the feet.

TO TOUCH the pavement.

JUST often enough.

TO MAKE it appear.

HE IS using them.

AND SAM was floating.

AND I was running.

AND I said to him.

"IF IT'S your idea.

"TO RACE for the lunch.

"I'D SOONER you'd walk.

"AND LET me buy it.

"AND AFTER lunch.

"WE'LL GO up to the park.

"WHERE there isn't a crowd.

"AND I'LL race you there."

BUT HE didn't hear me.

AND HURRIED on.

AND JUST as I yelled.

"TELL ME where we're going.

"AND SAVE me a seat."

HE WENT into a glide.

AND A sharp left turn.

RIGHT into Sherry's.

AND I followed him.

AND THEN, the last.

AND THE only time.

I ATE with Sam.

AND NOW he's asked me.

OUT to his studio.

AND I'VE bought me a pair.

OF RUNNING shoes.

AND RUNNING trunks.

AND IF I never do.

ANOTHER thing.

I'LL RUN that bird.

ALL OVER that lot.

TILL HE can't even float.

I THANK you.
so far revolutionize the business as to provide acting in all pictures. We always will have our small percentage of pictures that contain notable performances, but the great majority will be, as the great majority are now, straight narratives told by people who walk through parts and who really think they are acting. We have now plenty of former stage artists thoroughly trained in the technic of screen acting, and I fail to see any reason why producers should bring to Hollywood a flock of present stage artists who know nothing whatever about screen acting. The spread of sound will affect directors and writers more than it will actors. One thing that impressed me as I viewed Bright Lights was the number of scenes in which the characters scarcely moved at all, making their lines hold the attention of the audience as action had to be made to do in the silent pictures. Such scenes require practically no direction, and as they do not call for any particular display of acting, it follows that they are the work of writers, for they consist almost solely of a recital of words written by the author of the screen story. Directors always will increase the effect of the author’s words by supplying action to accompany them, but they gradually will cease to occupy the prominent position in the industry that is theirs at the present time. Those who follow the stage intelligently are interested more in who writes a play than they are in who directs it. The name of the director is important only to stage people, not to the people who support the stage. It is different with motion pictures. The fact that De Mille or Lubitsch directs a picture is what is stressed in its exploitation. The film industry has functioned for thirty years without establishing with the public the name of one author of motion picture stories. This condition will change. Within a few years who wrote a screen story will be a matter of great importance to the public, just as it now is a matter of importance when O’Neill writes a play. The greatest individual change that will be made by the general use of sound will be the promotion of the writer to a place of major importance in the industry. Ultimately he will be the highest salaried person in the industry.

* * *

Will Have to Ram Benefits Down the Producers’ Throats

WHILE pictures are undergoing a technical revolution it is an appropriate time for those who work in them to give consideration to the question of the improvement of their working conditions. If this disturbed era be allowed to pass without necessary reforms being effected, the crazy hours which now prevail in the industry will become a permanent feature of screen work, and all the other harassing conditions that interfere with the efforts of actors, writers, and directors will be fastened on the industry for all time. Producers are organized. They have their association presided over by the discredited Hays, and they have the Academy of which they are a twenty per cent. part with a hundred per cent. influence. Those who work for the producers have no organizations that function beneficially to their members in their relations with their employers. The workers should be organized, not in a spirit of antagonism to the producers, but for the purpose of being placed in a position to demand certain reforms that will benefit the producers quite as much as they will make life more tolerable for the workers. Any thing that helps the writer and the actor must of necessity help the producer. Take reasonable working hours. All other industries have learned by experience that eight hours is the maximum time that a man can work in one day at maximum efficiency. Those who control the screen industry honestly believe it is like no other. This belief is the product of their egotism. They regard themselves as supermen and they refuse to believe that the tasks that they perform are like those which all other executives in all other industries perform every day. To acknowledge that the film industry could operate on working hours similar to those that prevail in those other industries would be their confession that their business is not a mysterious one that could be conducted only by the massive brains that they possess. In view of this producer complex being impenetrable by common sense, actors will continue to make the same fools of themselves that they are making now by accepting a salary for a week’s work and permitting enough hours to be crowded into the week to constitute two ordinary weeks’ work. Not all studios indulge in this practice of stealing time from artists, but enough of them do it to make it one of the many grievances which actors are suffering and which they will continue to suffer until they form a strong organization whose representatives can sit down with the producers’ representatives and talk things over. One of the first things for such an actors’ organization to do would be to prohibit any of its members from being on the set more than eight hours in any one day. Suggest that to any producer and he will prepare a blueprint demonstrating to you that an eight-hour day would ruin the business, make the production of pictures impossible, give extras Kleig eyes and directors flat feet, and bring on a war in the Balkans. All these things the producer would prove conclusively. He proved it conclusively when there was some talk a year ago about an eight-hour day. My very good friend, Mike Levee, abetted by the wise nodes of others, proved conclusively to a committee of actors that if an eight-hour day were forced on the industry it would be but a short time until actors were hired by the hour and paid only when they were in front of the camera. It was so easy that I’m quite sure Mike got no fun out of it. Apparently it did not occur to this committee that an actors’ organization could stipulate that no call could be for less than a day’s work. An eight-hour day ultimately will have to be forced on the industry. The pressure behind it will be economic wisdom, but the producers never will recognize its strength as an argument. They will resist the reform, and in two years will erect a monument

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to the man who forces it upon them. Not until the motion picture industry is run sanely will it make its maximum profits, and sane hours will mark the first step towards sanity. The producers will profit enormously from the adoption of an eight-hour day, but tell it to one of them and he will laugh at you—"the loud laugh that bespeaks a vacant mind."

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**We Still Will Have Our Silent Productions**

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**Metro Produces Splendid Picture in the South Seas**

Nothing finer than White Shadows in the South Seas ever has come to the screen. It is a Metro picture, directed by W. S. Van Dyke and featuring Monte Blue. Frederick O'Brien's charming book of the same name was the inspiration for the screen story. All the charm of the book is put on the screen. It is a soothing picture that makes one lazy, and instills a desire to dwell on a South Sea island and pick a living off a tree. We see stately palms waving their branches, languidly yielding to a lazy breeze; crescent beaches turning back rolls of foam which the sea sends to them; quiet pools which reflect the riot of foliage that droops over their rims; brown gods of grace who glide through crystal-clear water in search of pearl oysters. We go into the homes of the natives and see how they live, how they eat and work and play—all things that we visualized when we read O'Brien, but which now come to us to alter our imaginings to square with facts. It is a photographic idyll of surpassing beauty, a poem which nature wrote and which the camera caught. And with it all we have a story, gripping, dramatic, that saddens us, for it shows how white men—the White Shadows—grasping, debasing, went down there, destroyed the poetry in the name of commerce, and for a life gay, sweet, and innocent, traded a "civilization" that was sodden, immoral and corrupt. It was a splendid thing for Metro to do—the making of this picture—and splendidly has it done it. In it cinematic art touches one of its greatest heights. It was a big thing to do to send a company all the way to the South Seas, a venture in screen commercialism to make a great example of screen art, and so magnificently has the venture succeeded in its artistic quest that it will prove to be a commercial triumph. White Shadows in the South Seas will be one of the outstanding financial successes of
film history, and as such should encourage Mr. Mayer to send forth more expeditions of the sort, and other producers to consider the advisability of emulating him. The picture will be a success, not because of its scenic beauty, not as a lesson in geography, not by virtue of its sociological value, but because it is a regular motion picture that makes us interested in people who move through it. It was wise of Metro to stress the story. Reduced to its essentials, it is nothing but story, the embellishments being things it picks up as it goes along. The viewer who is not intrigued by its pictorial splendor will follow with interest its romance and its drama. The viewer who can see nothing interesting in the life of the natives, will see much to interest him in the acting of Monte Blue. Monte gives a superb performance, one that is sincere and powerful. It is a characterization of many different phases, and he is brilliant in all of them. I have seen nothing finer on the screen in a long time. This picture will bring to the front a young woman who is destined to become a great favorite. She is Raquel Torres, a Mexican I believe, whom Hunt Stromberg discovered somewhere and gave her her opportunity. She is splendif. She has a spiritual quality that makes her screen personality charming. It is the same quality that Janet Gaynor has in such abundance, and Loretta Young, and a few others, the quality that suggests sweetness and goodness, and instills in the viewer confidence in a girl's integrity and intelligence. Robert Anderson very capably plays the part of a young woman, and there are many satisfactory performances given by natives. Van Dyke's direction is masterly. The story, splendidly written, brings out graphically the misfortune that befell the South Sea Islanders when they were "civilized" by traders. I wish it had gone farther and shown the evil done by meddling missionaries, the unconscious accomplices of greed and alcohol in destroying a life a thousand times purer than the one that set forth to purify it.

* * *

Colleen Moore's Air Epic Is a Mighty Fine Picture

By long odds a greater picture than Wings is Lilac Time, Colleen Moore's contribution to the air epics of the screen. It is greater than the Paramount picture because it is equally thrilling and, in addition, has what Wings lacks, a connected, coherent and dramatic story from which it does not depart for as much as one foot of film. Lilac Time might be taken as a model for pictures that are planned as supers. From the opening scene until the last it seems to concern itself only with telling its story. As it lets nothing interfere with the telling, the story moves swiftly along its logical course and holds our interest in it as a story. The same story set in any other environment would hold our interest. That is the test that any story should pass before it is screened. If it does not have enough inherent strength to keep us interested when it is told in a shanty, it lacks strength enough to warrant it being told in a palace. Lilac Time has strength enough to warrant it being told in any setting. But it is told in France, and it is war time when young fellows take their seats in planes and grin as they fly towards death; when foes meet above clouds and have it out up there until one combatant falls through a cloud, and the other wipes his wounds and looks for another fight; when romance remains alive though nations pass away. Lilac Time is a romance possessing all the terrific trimmings that war could adorn it with. I saw it before it had some of the trimmings that will be added prior to its release. It was strictly silent when I viewed it, but when it is released it will have talking sequences and sound effects that should improve it immensely, for it is a picture that will lend itself admirably to the application of sound. But it is great, even as a silent picture. Colleen never before has appeared in anything with such dramatic and pictorial sweep. And she never gave a better performance. She is in the story logically by reason of being a French girl at whose farm aviators are stationed. At no place does the story strain itself to keep going. It is quite unlike the story of Wings which commits suicide when it takes Clara Bow to France. George Fitzmaurice directed Lilac Time. The last previous picture of his that I viewed—Rose of Monterey—was so beautiful that it was not true, and I had grown to look upon Fitz as a director who had no peer in spreading beauty on the screen, even if he had to sacrifice drama to get it. I take it back. Fitzmaurice has done a magnificent job with his direction of Lilac Time. At no time does he sacrifice drama to beauty, but in several sequences he mixes the two, giving us scenes of exquisite beauty and dramatic strength. In some shots showing a road crowded with people who are evacuating a village, Fitzmaurice uses a row of eucalyptus trees as a gorgeous frame for the action. The shots above the clouds are not as impressively beautiful as those in Wings, but George did not have as much latitude in framing them. A director on the ground can not control very well the work of actors on the other side of a cloud. I am surprised, though, that a director with such a highly developed artistic sense as Fitzmaurice possesses, should give us in close-ups a love scene set among lilac bushes. He had everything at hand to combine into a love scene of surpassing beauty and tenderness, but he throws all of it away and gives us the kind of shots that the public is tiring of. There is another scene that is weakened greatly by close-up treatment. Gary Cooper is leaving on a flight that means almost certain death, and is saying farewell to Colleen, whom he loves. The leave-taking is shown in an exceedingly stupid closeup. It should have been a medium shot, with the line of planes showing dimly in the background, thereby retaining as part of the scene the grim thought back of it. Gary Cooper gives a splendid performance in Lilac Time. He is more human and likable than I have seen him in most of his pictures. Eugenie Besserer is fine as Colleen's mother, and several others in a long cast distinguish themselves. The picture is one that I recommend without reservation to all exhibitor readers of The Spectator.

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Salaams to the Messrs. Milestone and Wolheim

The Racket is notable for two things: the direction of Lewis Milestone and the acting of Louis Wolheim. Of less importance, except to the gentleman himself, is the fact that it brings Tom Meighan back with a bang. The story revolves around the character that Tom plays, keeping him in countenance as star of the picture, but not allowing him to give an arresting performance that
stands out like the picturesque gang leader of Louis Wolheim. The Racket is exactly the kind of picture that Meighan needs to restore his value at the box-office. It is a good picture and is going to be a great success, consequently it will revive interest in Meighan at a time when he needed something to save his screen life. He lost the prestige that used to be his, through asserting his conviction that he knew all about pictures; he will regain it by doing exactly as apparently he did in the case of The Racket: forgetting his own part and being anxious to appear in the best possible picture. And Lewis Milestone has given him a mighty fine piece of screen entertainment. A few months ago I listed Milestone among the young directors from whom pictures of importance might be expected. I had seen only two films that he had directed, but I could see in them enough merit to give me confidence in his future. The Racket justifies the confidence. Milestone is a good director because he is endowed richly with common sense. I once wrote that good direction merely was applied common sense. When a character walks into one of Milestone's scenes, he does not turn to face the camera, as practically all the rest of the directors would make him do. When an ambulance dashes up to take away a woman who has been injured on the street, Milestone does not cut a lane through the curious onlookers to enable the camera to catch her, as all the other directors do. All we see in the Milestone scene are the back of the ambulance and the backs of a large number of people crowding around it, which is exactly what we see on the street every time an ambulance is called. No added story value is derived from a scene showing ambulance attendants picking up the injured woman. In a night sequence gangmen are stationed on the roofs of buildings overlooking a street which the audience is sure is going to be the scene of a battle. Ordinarily we would have a number of quick cuts showing us each of the lurking gunmen, and we would have to guess at their positions in relation to one another. As far as we could tell from the succession of individual cuts, the roofs might be attached to buildings miles apart. Milestone first shows us the street, and then swings his camera from one roof to another, not stopping it until he has given us a complete and comprehensive grasp of the whole situation. When he sends his characters out of rooms, they go out without stopping at the door to turn and smirk at the camera. I have mentioned only a few of the things, small in themselves, that Milestone does to this picture to make it an unusually good one. Not one of those things will be noticed by the average audience but they will be responsible for the average audience liking the picture. And each of them is something that any director with common sense should do. Among the performances of the year that will stand out will be that of Wolheim in this picture. The man is an artist. He can express as much with his back as most actors can with their faces. To an uncanny extent he makes his physical actions part of his characterization. His walk is eloquent, and his attitude when he is standing has meaning. Marie Prevost is the girl of the picture, and gives a very satisfactory performance, as do also Skeets Gallagher, Lee Moran, George Stone, Sam de Grasse, John Darrow and some others whom I do not know. The Racket brings Tom Meighan back to us, which will please all of us, and shows us that Lewis Milestone stands quite near the top of our list of competent directors.

Metro Gives Us Quite a Nice Little Picture

Our Dancing Daughters, directed for M-G-M by Harry Beaumont, has something in the way of a theme. It establishes the fact that all our daughters who stay out all night, drink cocktails and paint their lips are not really bad. Many of them, the picture shows, are sweet youngsters who merely are full of the joy of living and give expression to it in a way that the world often misinterprets. It is a nice looking picture, filled with beautiful girls and handsome boys, all smartly dressed and appearing as if they belonged in the places which we see them. Another asset of Dancing Daughters is Joan Crawford. Joan is coming along rapidly and when Metro begins to feature her brain instead of her body, I think we will find ourselves with another capable dramatic actress on hand. Also in this picture is Anita Page, whom I never saw before. I feel now that I know her quite intimately as she had practically nothing on when I first met her. The first view we get of her is one that shows the depths to which motion picture producers will sink to provide what they consider good box-office stuff. She is shown in her bedroom in a state of dishabille that had nothing whatever to do with the story. The shot was inserted solely to cater to the degenerate taste of those who like to gaze on the almost undressed form of a young girl. It is a disgusting habit that all the studios have. I believe we are going to hear from Anita as an actress. She has a big part in this picture and gives a performance that promises much for her future. She seems to have the necessary ability and when experience has rounded off the rough spots she should become a favorite. From the time the camera opens on the legs of Joan Crawford until she is shown in a final embrace with John Mack Brown, the story interest centers around her, but satisfactory contributions to the entertainment value of the picture are made by Dorothy Sebastian, Kathlyn Wil-
Major Credit Goes to Miss Beryl Mercer

ONE thing I can't understand about most of the metropolitan picture reviewers is the unanimity with which they jump on pictures that have some human interest in them. "Hokum!" they cry, and they refuse to tolerate the hokum no matter how well it is done. Personally I believe that hokum is the best screen material we have. I love it. The fact that no picture with good hokum in it ever fails at the box-office indicates that a whole lot of people agree with me. As a matter of fact, I think it requires more brains to direct hokum than it does to handle scenes free from it. The director who can wave the flag in some new way that brings a lump to the throat is doing something bigger than the director does who interests us in something we never saw before. Ted Sloman deserves the greatest credit for making We Americans such a good picture. He had to make it out of old stuff, and he makes us like it. He uses close-ups only where they are needed, and shows us some striking groups that bring out the drama in scenes better by the arrangement of the characters than could be done by showing us large close-ups of facial expressions. But I am not going to give Sloman all the credit for the success of We Americans, nor will I give the credit to the hokum in it. If we subject this picture to a searching analysis I think we will discover that it is made by Beryl Mercer. She plays the wife of George Sidney and the mother of Patsy Ruth Miller and George Lewis; there are many other notable names in the cast, but this little bit of a woman moves through the picture as its dominant force. She's all hokum—just a human, sweet little mother who always can be counted on to remain cool and kind and compassionate no matter what happens. Her reaction when she learns that her son was killed in France is a fine bit of acting. I understand this is Miss Mercer's first picture. She has ability and a screen personality that should make her a tremendous success. I think that if I could see Theodore Roberts and her playing man and wife I would be content, no matter how punk the rest of the picture was. All the members of the long We Americans cast do well. Al Cohn made good jobs of the adaptation and continuity, but was faced with the usual difficulty of having to write seven reels out of about five reels of action, the result being that the story takes some time to get under way. Al Cohn is a lazy devil when it comes to filling his advertising space in The Spectator, but as a writer of nice sentiment, and feelings, and honest emotions, and checks to pay for his advertising space, he is one of the most satisfactory screen authors in Hollywood. Ted Sloman indulges in that major vulgarity: a huge close-up of a kiss, something that never, under any circumstances, is justified. It never has story value, and always is the height of poor taste. A kiss on the screen should suggest the sentiment that surrounds it in real life. The parties to it usually seek privacy, something that always should be suggested when we see it in a picture. The weakness of most of our directors is that they have no souls. They should concern themselves more than they do with the spirit of a scene. They give all their attention to the physical side of it and none to the thought hack of it. The greatest contributions to
screen art are made by the directors who give their cameramen thoughts to photograph instead of actions. In her close-ups in We Americans Pat Miller's lips are made up too heavily. They photograph black. Surely that is something that should be as apparent to those viewing the rushes as it is later to the audience. We see the same thing in many pictures, and it is an exhibition of carelessness for which there is no excuse. And while discussing Pat I would like to protest against her hair being plastered down on her pate. She is a beautiful girl, but her beauty does not register in this picture. When girls play character parts they can take liberties with their appearances and make them a part of the characterizations, but when they play straight leads they should be careful to preserve the features that made them popular in such parts and which their friends will be disappointed to find missing. Pat's fluffy hair always has been one of her charms, and she should not trifile with it.

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Bill Seiter Does a Good One for Colleen Moore

ONE feature you always can look for in a Colleen Moore picture is a cast without a weak spot in it. This young woman is one star who seems to enjoy extending herself to keep someone else from galloping off with one of her pictures. In Happiness Ahead, directed by William A. Seiter, she carries her fearlessness past the point of having a good cast; she gives the supporting players all the acting, and contributes little except her personality, until the picture reaches its last couple of hundred feet. But so potent is her personality that we do not lose sight of her when the story excludes her from active participation in what is going on. On the whole, Happiness Ahead is a thoroughly satisfactory picture that will hold all Colleen's old friends and perhaps make her a few new ones. It picks her up as a high school girl, and she retains her naiveté and girlish sweetness even after she marries Edmund Lowe and moves with him to a big city. Prior to meeting her Lowe was a crook, and his sins find him out after his marriage. It is when she learns that her husband is in jail that Colleen grows up, and thenceforth the picture is hers. In the closing sequence she does some dramatic acting that will send the audience home with her good work as its most definite impression of the picture. This production is the first that Bill Seiter directed since leaving Universal. In his more expansive surroundings he apparently worked to advantage. His introduction of Colleen is refreshing. We see four school girls going down the street arm-in-arm. Their backs are to the camera. A truck shot follows them until one after the other leaves the group, and when only one is left she turns around and we find it is Colleen. Thus she comes into the picture naturally and only when she should. The only technical flaw I can find in Happiness Ahead is the ridiculous use of close-ups. I was on the point of taking Bill to task for it when I recalled that all Colleen's pictures contain the same weakness, and she has had many directors. Is it possible that she, or her husband-manager, has the crazy notion that a star is helped by close-ups? The only thing that will help any star is a good picture; too many close-ups prevent a picture from being good, consequently unnecessary close-ups harm a star. Colleen is established so well now that we can visualize her quite well without the assistance of huge reproductions of her features. One scene is ruined by close-ups. Colleen and Lowe have their first love scene in beautiful surroundings, an exceedingly brief long shot revealing the setting as ideal for the purpose. Instead of holding the camera on the entire setting and making it part of the scene which could have been tender, beautiful, and romantic, we are treated to a series of close-ups, concluding with a huge one of a kiss, which make the whole scene common, vulgar and disgusting. However, the whole picture strikes a healthy note. Two staling artists play Colleen's parents, Edythe Chapman and Charles Sellon. Robert Elliott, the detective of Broadway, seems to be doomed to play in pictures roles similar to the one that attracted Hollywood's attention to him. In Happiness Ahead he is exactly as I saw him on the stage and in two other pictures that I have viewed lately. He should endeavor to get some different sort of role before producers get the idea that he is just a one-role man. That idea has ruined many a good actor in Hollywood. "At least put a line in each review telling us if you think the picture worth booking," writes a New Orleans exhibitor. Very well. Happiness Ahead certainly is worth booking. It is good entertainment, and it has one of the most popular stars now before the public. The things in it which I criticize will not lessen its drawing power.

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Tom Terriss Gives Us a Few Refreshing Departures

CLOTHES Make the Woman would have attracted great attention if it had been turned out by one of the big studios, to the products of which the doors of the big houses swing open automatically. It is a Tiffany-Stahl picture and it is much better than ninety per cent. of the program productions that the bigger fel-

Howard Bretherton
Current Release
"Caught In The Fog"
Warner Bros. Feature

Columbia Buys Directors

WHEN Harry Cohn, the producing genius of Columbia Pictures Corp., wanted to be assured of the success of his first two pretentious pictures for the 1928-1929 program he did not merely buy names, he had to have directors who have and can deliver—IRVIN WILLAT was one of the directors chosen.

—Harry Lichtig.
lows are making. The direction of Tom Terriss is intelligent. He apparently is enough of a showman to know that one formula for picture making can not go on forever, no matter how perfect the formula may be, and he introduces a little variety by giving us a sweet and tender romance without a kiss in it, and he does not show us one unnecessary close-up. In every scene in which the boy and girl come together they are not separated by the camera. Terriss seemingly realizes that two parties are necessary to a romance, and when his picture is concerning itself with its romantic phases we are not allowed to lose sight of either party to it. Such reasoning should be obvious to the most elemental mind, and when the minds of all supervisors and directors grow strong enough to be classed as elemental, no doubt we will have more departures from the conventional methods of shooting pictures. But Tom Terriss, director, is not responsible for all the novelty that distinguishes Clothes from the majority of pictures. Tom Terris, author, makes a great contribution to it. He writes for the first time into a motion picture a story of a romance that develops during the making of a motion picture. The locale of the story is frankly the Tiffany-Stahl lot, and love scenes are played on sets built for sterner purposes. I can not make a complete check of my memory every time I write a review of a picture, but off hand I can recall no other production in which motion picture studio scenes are handled as intelligently as Terriss handles them. No effort is made to distort anything. We see the inside of a studio exactly as it is, and we see it functioning as if it were totally unaware that it was being photographed. There is an air of sincerity about all the scenes that will make them believable anywhere. The picture opens with a gripping sequence dealing with one of the most pathetic moments in history: the assassination of the Russian royal family. For me, it is not good screen material. I rather enjoy crying in a theatre as Seventh Heaven made me cry, but I do not like being depressed; and I have known so many fine Russians both here and abroad that the political significance of the Russian tragedy is submerged by the feeling of sadness any reference to it engenders in me. Perhaps if Terriss had directed it less impressively, thus making it necessary for me to criticize him for doing it, I would have looked upon it more favorably as screen material. Liberty is taken with history when the author saves the life of Princess Anastasia and brings her to Hollywood to work in pictures. The role is played by Eve Southern, whose performance in Wild Geese evoked my warmest praise. I am not quite sure what she does in Clothes, for her eyelashes drew all my attention. They had so much sticky makeup on them that they fairly flapped. A handsome young chap who sat in the projection-room with me assured me that Miss Southern had put no extensions on the lashes with which nature had endowed her so extravagantly, which puts the blame for her distracting appearance on the fact that she went to the unnecessary trouble of starting where a generous nature had left off. I hope that in her future pictures she will restrain herself. Walter Pidgeon makes a manly hero, and Adolph Millar a convincing motion picture director. Evelyn Selbie, a fine character actress whom the big producers are overlooking, has a small part. I have seen her give some splendid perform-

ances that entitle her to more frequent appearances before the camera. George Stone, another capable artist who apparently is not kept busy, makes a considerable contribution to the picture, and we also get a few glimpses of the beautiful Corliss Palmer, who I believe would get somewhere if she were given the opportunity. There are many others who do their bits towards making Clothes Make the Woman thoroughly acceptable. I commend it to all exhibitors from Roxy down.

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**Trying to Interest Us in Something Uninteresting**

The Actress was underway when I sank into a loge at the Westlake, and I don't know how much of it I missed. The tempo of the sequence that began as I arrived was so slow that it was irritating, then as I recalled the story I presumed that Sidney Franklin, the director, had opened the picture at a brisker rate and in the country home sequence had slowed down to emphasize the difference between the Bohemian life and that of genteel England in the mid-nineteenth century, the period with which Pinero's play deals. Quality Street goes back farther, but when he directed it Franklin had the same problem on his hands that he found in The Actress: that of putting on the screen something inherently uninteresting, and which became more uninteresting in ratio with the degree of faithfulness with which it was presented. Quality Street was directed beautifully, but it bored me because it dealt with perhaps the silliest era in the development of man. For about fifteen minutes while viewing a picture I can enjoy good direction, but I wish to spend the time in excess of that in becoming interested in the story and the performances. In both these stories of a past English life Sid Franklin commits the crime of doing them too well. A martinet grandfather such as that por-

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**FRED STANLEY**

(In collaboration with James Gruen)

Original Story

"NONE BUT THE BRAVE"

Now in Production at FOX

Winifred Dunn is contributing to the support of the Spectator in the hope that Welford Beaton, the Spectator's papa, will eventually contribute to the support of the writer by recognizing him-and-her in his reviews.
trayed so capably by O. P. Heggie, is so out of tune with the present mode of thinking that I doubt if he ever could be made suitable screen material. Any motion picture sequence is weak when the action in it is predicated on something which the audience thinks is in itself ridiculous. Heggie resents Norma Shearer's sneezes while he is playing whist, and registers his disapproval ponderously, frigidly, and slowly. That the sneeze of a person sitting across a room should break up a whist game is silly, and I can not see that it has any value in a motion picture, no matter how well it is done. That it follows the play closely is no excuse for it, for the play was written primarily for English audiences at a time when the mind of the public was in tune more with the period with which the play deals than it is now. A glimpse at the old-fashioned life is interesting, and Sid Franklin can present it more delightfully than any other director has shown evidence of being able to do, but about one reel of it is enough. Everything about the production reflects credit on M-G-M. The production is artistic and beautiful, and the star was surrounded by a splendid cast. Norma herself never previously pleased me quite as much as she did in this picture, and I'm quite sure that never before did she look so well. Ralph Forbes was the perfect mate for her. I believe he really is a comedian, as I notice that he always is more convincing in the lighter phases of his characterizations. I was glad to see Cyril Chadwick again. He is a splendid artist who should be seen more frequently. Another person whom I was glad to see was Owen Moore. I don't believe that producers are cashing in on half the box-office value that the Moore boys have. Gwen Lee, who never gives a poor performance, does some clever work in The Actress. The titles are punctuated with that delightful disregard for educational mandates that the Metro studio affects. There is a hint of the future at the end of the picture—a sequence done in color, a beautiful touch that shows that there was no reason why the whole thing was not shot in color, as all pictures will be in a year or two. Nothing is surer. The only people who don't know it are those who in a year will be making the colored pictures.

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Esther and Gary Spend
Time on a Desert Island

WHEN Gregory La Cava was making a picture out of Half a Bride he was faced with the intriguing problem of making it interesting in spite of the fact that most of the story is told with Esther Ralston and Gary Cooper together on an otherwise uninhabited island. A storm carries them to the island and they remain there for three or four months. The island sequences have only the two characters in them, one crude interior and rather bleak exteriors, but the director was not hampered by the scarcity of material, for these sequences are the most interesting in the picture, being more logical and better acted and directed than those before and after the island episode. The fact that a pretty girl and an eligible youth are forced to live together on an island devoid of all modern comforts is in itself romantic, but it takes good direction and acting to make it interesting on the screen. As the picture opens we discover Esther in bed after a particularly large night. There is someone under the clothes with her, and she has no idea who it is, and until she pulled down the covers and revealed Mary Doran, quite a nice looking girl with an engaging screen personality, I was harboring the awful thought that perhaps it was Gary, which would have opened the picture with a terrific scandal. Through titles spoken by Mary we learn that Esther was accused of the gills when she got home the night before. I do not believe that it is wise to cast any girl star in such a part, and particularly one with the screen personality of Esther Ralston. There is an air of sweetness about her, a suggestion of staunchness, of true-blue girlhood that make it impossible for us to take seriously any scene that tries to make us believe that she ever went on a bat. The picture got a bad start with me because the opening sequence carried no conviction. Accepting the situation, however, I have no quarrel with the manner in which Esther gets away with it. I always like her on the screen, and her performance in this picture is among the best of hers that I have seen. Cooper is appealing to me more every time I see him. He reflects on the screen the same qualities that have made Lindbergh a world character, the qualities of sterling worth, modesty, and dependability. A weakness of the story of Half a Bride is that it assumes that an effect is excuse enough for its cause. The aim of one sequence is to get Esther in jail for a night. She swerves her car to avoid hitting a dog, bumps another car not particularly roughly, and goes to jail for the night. I wonder where Paramount expects to

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find an audience dull enough to consider such a sequence of events plausible. It is an astonishing thing to find in an otherwise sensible and logical picture. The close-up curse afflicts the picture. La Cava had a scene which apparently he did not know how to handle, consequently he resorted to the close-up, that unfailling haven for baffled directors. Two people are seated side-by-side on a couch, drinking. We are treated to a succession of individual close-ups of them just drinking. I wish some one would tell me why it is done. And we have one of those disgusting close-ups of a kiss, something that we find in nearly all pictures, and which shows us, more than any other thing, how vulgar the producer mass mind is. However, we have to thank Half A Bride for not having Esther's hair marcelled all the time she is on the desert island. And we have to thank it also for being a bright and entertaining picture, in spite of the few frailties that I have pointed out. Esther Ralston pictures have a definite market which can absorb this one and do no damage to a box-office. I recommend it to exhibitors.

* * *

ROBERT Welch, who holds some important executive position with Universal, was quoted in the papers a month or so ago to the effect that Arthur Lake was put in a series of one-reel comedies to cure a fit of temperament that he gave evidence of having contracted. When Welch made that statement he knew that he was lying. Lake is a nice, modest boy, absolutely lacking in the quality that Welch attributes to him. He refused to renew a contract with Universal fourteen months before the expiration of the one under which he now is working. He felt that several pictures to be released might increase his box-office standing. Universal felt the same way about it, and wished all the benefit of such increase to accrue to it, and none to him. He was subjected to every sort of bulldozing that the studio could conceive, a threat to keep him in one-reel comedies until his contract expired being one of the devices that Universal used as an argument. Lake stood pat on his right to conclude one business arrangement before entering upon another. He did it pleasantly and without any show of temperament. If Welch had adhered to the truth in making his public statement, he would have said that Arthur was being punished for standing on his rights, and that he was accepting his punishment gracefully and without a display of the rancor he would be justified in feeling and making apparent. Ordinary fair play does not come within Universal's conception of business ethics. Because it could not browbeat Lake into submission it resorts to an effort to ruin his career, and then lies about him in the public press. It's a strange way to run a business.

* * *

GENERALLY when I view a motion picture I peer at it intently and find things in it to make catty remarks about. I laugh at funny things, but I do it sternly and judicially, and keep my eye peeled for faults the directors commit. When the picture ends I have notes in a little book, and I go home and sit in my backyard, hard by the hollyboughes and near the swing that is under the peach tree, and my two dogs and two cats gather around me while I write profoundly, elaborating the notes in my little book. Donald and I went into a projection-room and viewed Steamboat Bill Jr. I never made a blessed note, although I had my little book open under the red desklight. I don't know how Chuck Reisner directed it, whether he had senseless close-ups that should make me mad or huge kisses that offend me. I don't know the name of the nice looking girl who played opposite Buster Keaton. All I know is that Donald and I laughed or giggled all the time the picture was running, and that it kept me so amused that I forgot my little book. I am satisfied that Reisner must have made a good job of the direction, for I am pretty sure that I would have noticed any serious lapses. I know that Buster and Ernest Torrence gave mighty fine performances and that Tom McGuire was quite satisfactory. The important thing, however, is that I laughed all the way through it and forgot that it was my business to search for flaws in it. As the purpose of a comedy is to make us forget business and have a good laugh, I must put Steamboat Bill Jr. down as perhaps the best comedy of the year thus far. Exhibitors should go after it.

* * *

WHEN talking pictures become universal the close-up curse will be less evident. I have contended persistently that it is idiotic to show the moving lips of an actor alone on the screen talking to some one whom a medium shot has shown standing close to him. It will seem more idiotic when we hear what the lone actor is

---

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saying. In both The Lion and the Mouse and Bright Lights individual close-ups of people, whose voices we can hear, are shown, a habit which I am sure talking pictures will not form, for the absurdity of it is too readily apparent. But I am not inclined to be meticulous in criticizing these Warner Brothers pictures, or am I inclined to search for technical flaws in them. They were experiments which the Warners are to be commended for making, and the fact that they were made at all is of much more importance than any faults that were committed in the making. I hope, however, that the new era in pictures will not borrow all the absurdities of the old. A screenful of head jabbering at nothing is an absurdity that we might be spared.

* * *

BÓB Edeson in Walking Back is shown living in a pretentious home. He has a maid, an automobile and a bootlegger, yet a title reveals that his salary is sixty dollars a week. The dullest person in an audience would know that he could not keep up such an establishment on such a salary. It was not necessary to state the amount. Before any specific statement is made in a title care should be taken to show that it is in keeping with what the audience can learn from the sets and action.

* * *

O NE of the interesting minor features of oral pictures is that you will lose nothing when the man in front of you stands up and puts on his overcoat. You may miss seeing an expressionless close-up or a view of a detective chewing a cigar, but you won't miss any of the story as that is something you can hear.

* * *

T HE individual feature of pictures that will be enriched most when sound is used universally is the love scene. Voices will put life into them, and allow screen sweethearts to put tenderness, sweetness and romance into these moments of pictures that have the widest appeal.

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By DONALD BEATON — The Spectator's 17-Year-Old Critic

W HITE Shadows in the South Seas, taken from Frederick James O'Brien's book of the same name, has been put on the motion picture screen by M.-G.-M.; and it is one of the best pictures produced yet this year. Moana, a picture produced some time ago, was something on the same order as White Shadows, although the latter is a vastly superior motion picture. Moana had no story to speak of. It was merely a part of the life of a young Islander. White Shadows has a very definite story which enables the Polynesians to demonstrate what marvelous natural-born actors they are. The two principals, Monte Blue and Raquel Torres, and the heavy, whose name I didn't get, are the only white people of importance in the cast. The whole picture is shot on the authentic locations mentioned in O'Brien's book, and it is one of the most remarkable films ever made. It was directed by a man named Van Dyke, who deserves a great deal of praise for having sense enough to defy motion picture conventions in order to get a true version of South Sea life. The picture was probably longer than the average, but it was so engrossing that it seemed short. The sequences picturing the perils of the pearl divers, the gathering of food for the feast, and the feast and dance itself were very interesting. There also was a great scene where Monte Blue brings the chief's son back to life. That scene more than any other, proved what marvelous actors the natives were. They put just as much feeling and power into it as any bunch of trained performers could. Van Dyke made some beautiful shots, since the scenery lent itself perfectly to his artistry. The main trouble with the White Shadows was that it wasn't shot in colors, which would have made it perfect. As it was, the scenes were merely studies in grey. Van Dyke killed his hero and ended the picture unhappily, yet I'm willing to wager that it will be one of the biggest box-office successes of the year. The ending was logical, and logic appeals to the great majority of people.

White Shadows in the South Seas stars Monte Blue, who gives a superb performance. He is the one man in
the business to play the part, so he is naturally splendid. His work deserves only the highest praise. Monte, however, is established as a fine performer. The big acting discovery of the picture is Raquel Torres, a girl who in addition to striking beauty has a capacity for clever acting which should make her a tremendous success. She has the same wistful appeal as Janet Gaynor, and as I have said, she has a lot of ability along the acting line. She is going to be a sensation if she is handled correctly.

Half a Bride, in spite of its title, is a pretty good picture. Gregory La Cava directed it, and Esther Ralston was starred in it. They both did good work, and the story was well done; so they naturally made a good job of it. La Cava’s direction gave evidence of a sense of humor at all times, although Half a Bride was not just a comedy. It had its more dramatic moments, and they were well done, except for the fact that La Cava persists in breaking up his scenes into close-ups. Miss Ralston and Gary Cooper, who played opposite her, did some very good work. Cooper is becoming a better actor all the time. The thing about Half a Bride which made it so good was the fact that it was sensibly done. The girl spent three months on a desert island, living in the most primitive circumstances. The average director would have had her beautifully marcelled and made-up, but La Cava made her look as though she were roughing it. There were little things all the way through it which were well done. All in all, Half a Bride (what an awful name!) is very good entertainment.

Some people may like Westerns, and I suppose The Vanishing Pioneer was a pretty good one. It bored me stiff, because it was all about water rights, and I wouldn’t know a water right if I met it in the street. Jack Holt was the hero, and he owned a lot of water rights which Bill Powell and Fred Kohler were trying to steal from him. It seems that a big town suddenly ran out of water and was expecting an epidemic or something or other. Don’t ask me why a big city suddenly runs out of water. I don’t know, although I suppose it was due to sickness or something among the water rights. Bill Powell was commissioned to buy some more from Holt and his friends. Bill couldn’t be nice about it and drive down the main drag shouting, “Rags, bottles, water rights.” No, he sneered himself a faceful of sneers and took Fred Kohler into partnership and started out to fleece the ranchers. Most of them could have stood a little fleecing, because they had beards which would have driven an honest beaver addict into hysteria. Well, Bill and Kohler managed to gyp quite a few of the ranchers out of their water rights. They didn’t get away with it, though. In between periods of chasing his dog and making love to Sally Blane (which must be a very pleasant occupation), Jack Holt contributed the information that he would cut the heart out of any man who stole his land. You’d be surprised how angry this made Powell and Kohler. They charged him with murder and let him escape, so they could drill a few holes in his manly figure.

It was sure lucky for him that he was the hero; because if he hadn’t been, he would have been shot dead several times in the subsequent chases. Finally Powell’s hirings went and seized the dam, and the ranchers gave them a very interesting little battle. In the meantime, Holt called on Bill for the pleasant purpose of cutting his heart out unless Bill gave him the inerminating deed, which was a tribute more to Powell's genius as a forger than to his honesty. Holt very neatly cut off Bill’s shirt and coat; and pressing his knife into his enemy’s stomach, demanded the deed. Powell, who had some further use for his entrails, gave it to him. Everything turned out all right, of course. Bill tried to escape and not being the hero, got shot. Holt very nobly agreed to sacrifice everything and sell his land for only three times the market value. John Waters directed this, and Zane Grey wrote it.

P. S.—What’s a water right?

Carl Laemmle Junior and Paul Fejos deserve credit for having courage enough to make a motion picture out of a story like Lonesome. It is a simple little thing with only two people in the cast and probably will be a financial failure, as it is not the type of picture

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to appeal very strongly to the average audience. There were a lot of titles, although it could have got along quite well without any. Tom Reed wrote them, and he did a good job, although they were unnecessary. After taking such a chance on the public's intelligence by producing Lonesome, they should have given it credit for sense enough to understand the picture without the aid of titles. The main trouble with Lonesome is that Barbara Kent, who played the girl, is not yet a good enough trouper to carry half of an entire picture upon her shoulders. She failed to establish any sympathy for herself, so that nobody minded much when she became separated from the man she loved. That part should have been given to a girl with more experience. Glenn Tryon, as the man in the case, gave a splendid performance. He always has been a clever comedian, but he demonstrates in this that he can handle dramatic parts, also. Before I go on and mention the good points of the picture, there was something I didn't quite understand. The girl and the boy, both dying of lonesomeness, live in the same boarding house and never meet. That's peculiar. Paul Fejos directed Lonesome and Laemmle supervised, and they both did very well. There was nothing overdrawn or impossible in the picture. The characters were well done and true to life. Just when one begins to wonder how the factory hand can afford to spend so much money on the amusements, there is a shot which reveals that he is running out of money. Incidentally, the love scene on the beach after the crowd has left is splendid. The lighting of that scene was excellent, although the lighting of the whole thing deserves credit. Lonesome is a pretty good piece of work.

EVERY time I see so many poor pictures from one studio that I decide they never will do anything good again, along they come with a bunch of good ones. A year or two ago I had come to the conclusion that Fox would never make a good picture again. Then they made Seventh Heaven. M-G-M struck me the same way. Then they made Our Dancing Daughters and White Shadows in the South Seas. Up until I saw Lilac Time and Happiness Ahead, I thought First National was hopeless. Happiness Ahead stars Colleen Moore, with Edmund Lowe playing opposite her. Both of them are above the average in acting ability, and with a good story and some clever direction by William Seiter, Happiness Ahead becomes a very good picture. It is different from the usual run of Colleen Moore pictures in that it looks as though some one with some sense had been responsible for it. It is not a comedy, and it becomes quite dramatic at times. Lowe and Miss Moore work very well together; and when the picture reaches the dramatic scenes, they manage to infuse them with a lot of power. Seiter's direction was

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very good, and revealed a genius for drawing characters which I did not know he possessed. There was one scene where the girl was about to leave home after her wedding. Seiter made her just as silly as all girls are under those circumstances. However, the fact that he was good in the lighter moments did not keep Seiter from doing well in the heavier scenes. All in all, Happiness Ahead is pretty good entertainment. Lilian Tashman gives a good performance. Charles Sellon and Edythe Chapman are good, also.

SOUND and color would have made Lilac Time one of the finest motion pictures ever produced, because it was good, even without them. Lilacs, of course, figured prominently in the story, but they were shown on the screen in a dull, uninteresting grey. There are several beautiful garden scenes, also done in a nice, sombre battle-ships color. The roaring engines and machine guns of the airplanes are silent, although I suppose those will have sound later. Lilac Time manages to overcome those disadvantages to a certain degree, for it is a very good picture. George Fitzmaurice directed, and did some very fine work. First National, with Alexander Korda and Fitzmaurice, seems to have a corner on the directors who can paint beautiful pictures on the screen, so it ought to give them a decent break and shoot pictures in colors. As is customary with him, Fitzmaurice makes Lilac Time a succession of beautiful shots; but he also puts power and force into his direction, a quality he hasn’t displayed very strongly before. The air stuff in Lilac Time is splendid, coming closer to Wings than any other picture has so far. The air battles are great, particularly the one between Gary Cooper and the German ace. Strangely to relate, Cooper, although he was the hero of the piece, did not win the fight. It was more or less of a draw. There was nothing particularly new about the story of Lilac Time; since it is the same, practically, as all the war stories since The Big Parade, only airplanes are used. Colleen Moore was starred in Lilac Time; and, as usual, she gave a superb performance. Gary Cooper, who played opposite her, did better work in this than he has in anything so far. For the first time, he gave evidence of a sense of humor, without which no screen hero can be expected to wholly win the sympathy of the audience. The young flyers, although there were too many to keep track of, were good. The rest of the cast, which included Burr MacIntosh, Katherine McGuire, Owen Moore, George Cooper, and Arthur Lake, was quite satisfactory.

THE Actress is quite satisfactory as a motion picture. It isn’t either very good or very bad. One’s interest is mildly excited during its unreeling, but the interest never becomes very much aroused. Sidney Franklin directed The Actress, and I have yet to see one of Franklin’s pictures which I have not enjoyed. He has a faculty for putting beautiful production into his stuff, and this picture is no exception to the general rule. There is one sequence in color which is beautiful. Color adds so much to motion pictures that I can not see how producers keep on ignoring it, because it is as inevitable as sound. After enough color education, audiences are not going to be satisfied with dull grays. However, I must get back to The Actress. Franklin has ideas about direction which I think are fine. He always puts his camera in a logical place, something few directors do. A group of his characters are sitting around a fireplace, enjoying the heat. The average director would have shot them with just the glow of the fire on their faces. Their feet would have been stretched out for no apparent reason, since the fire would not be in the range of the camera. Franklin shoots through the flames in the grate. That’s good stuff.

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Time after time he does that, so naturally he has no weird, distorted groupings. Norma Shearer is starred in The Actress, and she gives quite a satisfactory performance. Ralph Forbes is adequate. O. P. Heggie does splendid work, and so does Owen Moore. Cyril Chadwick is fine, as usual. The rest of the cast, Lee Moran and Gwen Lee, is quite good.

While Dressed to Kill was very entertaining, well directed, and well acted, I wasn't impressed a great deal by it. There is no doubt but that it is the best crime picture since Underworld, the first and still the best of the whole string of films glorifying the great American gumman. However, the drama didn't reach any great intensity at any time. The picture owes most of its credit to the fact that none of the characters did anything which seemed unreal. They acted as though they were human. Irving Cummings, who directed, deserves plenty of credit for that one thing, even if he did use too many close-ups and didn't group his characters unnaturally so the camera could see clearly. When two people are in a dramatic scene, the effect of each statement on both of them should be seen. The natural way of doing that is to arrange them so they will both be in the shot. The unnatural, clumsy way of doing it is to cut up the scene into close-ups. The interesting thing about Dressed to Kill is that it is the best performance of Mary Astor. Her work before, while satisfactory, has never even hinted at the power and dramatic ability which she displays in this picture. With this bit of work she has earned the right to bigger acting parts. Edmund Lowe does splendid work, of course. Ben Bard makes a satisfactory heavy. The rest of the cast is entirely adequate.

For a long time I have been trying to make up my mind to report Edward Everett Horton to the S. P. C. A. He has been guilty of an atrocious piece of cruelty to animals. Our adjoining back yards on Sunset Boulevard are inhabited by many large and famished flies. The flies in our back yard are quite plump and happy, since Dad and I do most of our writing out in back. Mr. Horton never sits in his yard, so his flies are always nearly starved. I'm telling this so that when you go to see his play, The Queen's Husband, your heart will be hardened against him. If it isn't, he is bound to win your sympathy, for he gives one of his finest performances in this comedy-drama. Incidentally, The Queen's Husband is the best play he has put on yet, and everyone should see it.

Reviewed In This Number

Bright Lights—

A Warner Bros. picture. Directed by Bryan Foy; written by Murray Roth and Hugh Herbert; photographed by Ed Du Par.


The Patriot

A Lubitsch Production

Adaptation and Scenario

by

HANS KRALY

THE FILM SPECTATOR

Page Nineteen

John Waters

Director

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CLOTHES MAKE THE WOMAN—
A Tiffany-Stahl picture. Directed by Tom Terris; photographed by Chester Lyons; dressings by George Sawley; art director, Harvey Libbert; edited by Desmond O'Brien; titled by Lesley Mason.

DRESSED TO KILL—
A William Fox picture. Directed by Irving Cummings; story by William M. Conselman; scenario by Howard Estabrook; photographed by Conrad Wells; film editor, Frank Hall; supervised by William M. Conselman; titles by Malcolm Stuart Boylan.

HALF A BRIDE—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Gregory La Cava; associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; story by Arthur Stringer; screen play by Doris Anderson and Percy Heath; photographed by Victor Milner; production supervisor, B. P. Fineman; assistant director, Russell Mathews.
The cast: Esther Ralston, Gary Cooper, William J. Worthington, Freeman Wood, Mary Doran, Guy Oliver, Ray Gallagher.

HAPPINESS AHEAD—
A First National Picture. Directed by William A. Seiter; original story by Edmund Goulding; scenario by Benjamin Glazer; cameraman, Sidney Hickox; titles by George Marion Jr.

LION AND THE MOUSE, THE—
A Warner Bros. picture. Directed by Lloyd Bacon; from the story by Charles Klein; scenario by Robert Lord; assistant director, Frank Shaw; cameraman, Norbert Brodin.
The cast: May McAvoy, Lionel Barrymore, Alec Francis, William Collier Jr., Emmett Corrigan, Jack Ackroyd.

LILAC TIME—
A First National picture. Directed by George Fitzmaurice; based on the play by Jane Cowl and Jane Murfin; scenario by Carey Wilson; adaptation by Willis Goldbeck; film editor, Al Hall; art director, Horace Jackson; aerial photographer, Alvin Knechtel; cameraman, Sidney Hickox; assistant director, Cullen B. Tate; titles by George Marion Jr.
The cast: Colleen Moore, Gary Cooper, Burr McIntosh, George Cooper, Cleve Moore, Kathryn McGuire, Eugenie Besserer, Dan Mason, Emile Chautard, Jack Stone, Edward Dillon, Richard Grace, Stuart Knox, Harlan Hilton, Richard Jarvis, Jack Pender, Dan Dowling.

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LONESOME—
A Universal picture. Directed by Paul Fejos; author, Bert Page; adaptation by Edward T. Lowe; continuity by Edward T. Lowe; photographed by Gilbert Warrenton; titles by Tom Reed; film editor, Frank Atkinson; art director, Charles D. Hall; production supervisor, Carl Laemmle Jr.
The cast: Glenn Tryon, Barbara Kent, Fay Halderness, Eddie Phillips, Gustav Tartos, Fred Esmonde.

OUR DANCING DAUGHTERS—
The cast: Joan Crawford, John Mack Brown, Dorothy Sebastian, Anita Page, Kathryn Williams, Nils Asther, Edward Nugent, Dorothy Cumming, Huntly Gordon, Evelyn Hall, Sam de Grasse.

RACKET, THE—
Produced by The Caddo Company and released by Paramount. Presented by Howard R. Hughes; directed by Lewis Milestone; scenario by Del Andrews; photographed by Tom Girdler and Dewey Wriggley; edited by Eddie Adams; art director, Julian Fleming; titles by Tom Miranda; assistant director, Nate Watt.
The cast: Thomas Meighan, Marie Prevost, Louis Wolheim, Henry Sedley, Sam de Grasse, Lee Moran, Lucien Prival, Pat Collins, George Stone, Skeets Gallagher, John Darrow, Dan Wolheim.

STEAMBOAT BILL JR.—
A United Artists Picture. Directed by Charles F. Reisner; story by Carl Harbaugh; photographed by Dev Jennings and Bert Haines; technical director, Fred Gabourie; assistant director, Sandy Roth.
The cast: Ernest Torrence, Tom Lewis, Tom McGuire, Marion Byron, Buster Keaton.

THE ACTRESS—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by Sidney Franklin; from the play, Trelawney of the Wells, by Sir Arthur Wing Pinero; screen play by Albert Lewin and Richard Schayer; titles by Joe Farnham; settings by Cedric Gibbons; wardrobe by Gilbert Clark; assistant director, Hugh Boswell; photographed by William Daniels; film editor, Conrad A. Nervig.

VANISHING PIONEER, THE—
A Paramount picture. Directed by John Waters; associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; adapted by John Goodrich and Ray Harris; screen play by J. Walter Ruben; photographed by C. Edgar Schoenbaum; editor-in-chief, B. F. Zeidman; assistant director, George Crook.
The cast: Jack Holt, Sally Blane, William Powell, Fred Kohler, Guy Oliver, Roscoe Karns, Tim Holt, Lillian West, Marcia Manon.

WE AMERICANS—
A Universal picture. Directed by Edward Sloman; from the stage play by Milton Herbert Gropper and Mark Seigel; adaptation and scenario by Al Cohn; production supervisor, Carl Laemmle Jr.; cameraman, Jackson Rose; titles by Walter Anthony.
The cast: George Sidney, Patsy Ruth Miller, George Lewis, Eddie Phillips, Beryl Mercer, John Boles, Albert Gran, Michael Visaroff, Daisy Belmore, Rosita Marstini, Kathryn Williams, Edward Martin, Josephine Dunn, Andy De Vine, Flora Bramley, Jacob Bleifer.

WHITE SHADOWS IN THE SOUTH SEAS—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. From the story by Frederick O'Brien; adapted by Ray Doyle; continuity by Jack Cunningham; directed by W. S. Van Dyke; titles by John Colton; edited by Ben Lewis; photographed by Clyde De Vinne, George Nogle and Bob Roberts. A Cosmopolitan production.
The cast: Monte Blue, Raquel Torres, Robert Anderson.

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<td>DR. EDMOND PAUKER</td>
<td>1639 Broadway, New York representing LAJOS BIRO</td>
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<td>LAJOS BIRO</td>
<td>Author of Hotel Imperial, The Yellow Lily, The Last Command, etc., The Way of All Flesh (adaptation), In the Night Watch (adaptation and continuity, now in preparation)</td>
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<td>JOHN F. GOODRICH</td>
<td>Scenario Editor, Columbia Pictures</td>
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To the Editor:
On reading a scenario, we take it for granted that we have visualized the story as it is meant to be; but do we? For argument's sake, let us say that ten persons have read the same script. They all have undoubtedly learned what the story is about; but every one has formed an entirely different mental picture depending upon his or her own fancy, which may tend to minimize certain incidents or aggravate others according to personal reactions, impressions and experiences.

It is obvious then, that much would be accomplished if a device which would assist an author in conveying the same mental pictures to all of the readers of his script were known.

The following idea may solve this problem to a large extent, but in order to make it comprehensible, here is an analogous illustration: If we were to attend a lecture where the speaker would tell us about his travels in Africa, each of us would tend to form a mental picture according with our own fancy, some of us visualizing the natives as fat and as jolly as those in the Katzenjerman cartoons; while others would have them as ferocious man-eaters, and so on. But suppose that he illustrated his story with slides; every pair of eyes would see the same thing, and as a result, the whole audience would form identical mental pictures as those shown on the screen. Of course, there would remain the tendency slightly to disbelieve what we see. But as a whole, our mental pictures would be the same as the rest of the audience. An impossible thing to accomplish by merely reading or hearing a story.

Let us say that we apply this idea to a motion picture script, so when the scenes are shot, we have a process, including the actors, have the same mental conception of the story, and thus avoid individual interpretation.

First: Have every scene in the script made into a drawing. As each scene tells something of value to the story, that something must be concentrated into the drawing.

These drawings would not only give us a clearer idea as to how the finished picture is expected to look, so that we may all work in unison to obtain this end, but it offers still greater advantages, for instance: with the drawings, we will be able to tell whether it would be necessary to shoot all of the scenes that the script calls for by simply stacking the drawings in sequence as in a deck of cards, and eliminating from the deck those drawn that are superfluous and of little value in telling the story.

Then, by passing the remaining drawings to some one who hasn't read the script, we may judge from this last person whether he can follow the story without confusion. And if he does, we know then, that the drawings—which really are scenes that were left out—are unnecessary to the picture. This subtracting and adding of drawings may be kept up until everyone is satisfied that only the drawings which remain in the deck are the scenes that should be in the picture. Thus avoiding in time the expense of shooting useless scenes, which would be the equivalent of "cutting the picture before it is made".

These drawings would also make excellent mediums from which one may judge and approximately estimate the footage for each scene, thus keeping the picture within the bounds of exhibition length throughout production.

It would be necessary to make drawings for every scene, but there is another method which accomplishes the same purpose and specially fits up-to-date stories, and this is still photographs. As all of the studios have sets already built, with the aid of a still photographer, an assistant director may take a script and choose a cast from the extra ranks, more or less selecting types which resemble the principals that are to interpret the story in celluloid, and thus prepared, he may photograph every scene into the same as the drawings. If mobs are required, he can go to a company who may happen to be shooting a similar mob, and by cheating he may obtain the effect desired, which after all would only be a matter of expense, and in some cases a combination of the two may prove more desirable.

We do not have to go far to see how this idea may work, a peep into a slot machine showing little stories in which several still photographs may dispel what otherwise would appear entertaining as to their practicability.

EDWARD LE VEQUE.

MOUNTAIN GRANDEUR

Along the Rugged Sierra, Nevada,
Bishop, California.

My dear Beaton:
Our country has so much in varied scenes to offer, the chances need only be what the heart desires. There are towns and cities that give one pause to try to fathom why they should be there; there are spots that make one wonder why they are neglected; there are, here and there, others like a vision of earthly paradise, that should, with all that nature freely offers, be a paradise for living and level-headed enterprise, but are instead, because of civilized greed, a something far removed from paradise. For instance, in the little valley, the rugged and majestic mountains, snow-capped at times, close at hand and not so far away the desert with its Valley of Death. A strengthening beauty in the mountains; a soothing charm from the desert. Forests of grandeur and service and fresh, running water from the rain and melted snow of the mountain tops, the little drops of life that quicken the valley into verdant loveliness and life-sustaining products. Fertile soil and running water in plenty to grow and build a paradise, but cursed, ravaged and despoiled by the selfish greed of a city three hundred miles away.

The greed for gold is the curse of humanity. It is murderous and short-sighted. The dirty dollar of the present and "after us the deluge". That would be so very nice and such a satisfaction if it were always true, but often, perhaps more so than otherwise, the deluge comes before the shroud, and murderous greed may prosper in this life no man can "jump the life to come".

A money mind is circumscribed by fear of losing something which is nothing and love of gold is the cowardliest cur that was ever whelped by greed.

There is, perhaps, no enterprise or industry in the world that offers safer investment with surer dividends than the motion picture. It is not a four per cent. savings nor a five per cent. bond. It is a gamble, and the same with all enterprise and all industry, but it figures a percentage to win the equal to or greater than any other enterprise or industry. It is new, its development is unlimited and the whole world is its market. It has been, and it is, and it will be the greatest of all enterprises, and it has been, and it is, and it will be the greatest of all industries.

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SPECTATOR

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Page Twenty-three
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reason, weigh and consider. A step further in the way of sense and reason should tell that same invested capital that at this time, and for some time to come, the motion picture is a very important and perhaps the greatest, to help insure the safety and security of its wealth.

Propaganda has been played to excess and has little advantage because the public has learned to discern it and pass it by. The old, old method of the siren song, propaganda, has failed in its purpose to continue security. Enlightenment is the safest security and the motion picture is one happy medium.

If that particular invested capital which is dominant in the affairs of the country and exerts a controlling influence is timid and afraid of the motion picture as an investment there should be something to give it courage in the reasoning that if a trader whose instinctive bent is to turn a suit of clothes, his suit coat can make a profit in the production of motion pictures, certainly an executive trained to build a smoothing organization and to produce at the lowest cost consistent with the highest quality, certainly an executive should be able to show more profit in a motion picture than the trader.

It is a proper time to discard the old nonsense, featured from time to time, that only those who have a sense of art can do it, as, certainly, temperamental imagination and extravagance can win success and profit in the theatre and now in the motion picture. A circus, similar in its purpose to the theatre and to the motion picture, is an enterprise in art and exhibition, but, different from the motion picture, it is backed and operated by hard-headed, hard-boiled business and is one of the smoothest-running organizations that was ever established, operating at the lowest cost consistent with getting the work done right.

It would seem that the dominant capital of the nation should be able to see money profit in motion pictures, together with opportunity to serve their own kind and benefit their country.

JAMES BRANT.

GETTING BACK

My dear Mr. Beaton:
May I give a wail of anguish, followed by a chorus of joy? I am very fond of reading your criticism and up to date have taken it quite seriously, so it upset my equilibrium to have you spend a whole column of excellent writing upon a wrong premise.

In your criticism of Easy Come, Easy Go you state that the conductor is only put in to furnish Richard Dix with a change. To quote exactly, "He gets a hurry up call and leaves the washroom in his shirt sleeves. This is the last we see of him".

Now, as a matter of fact, we see him several times after that. The emergency that calls him forth is the sudden stopping of the train at a non-stop station. He turns and speaks two quite important titles to the men in the smoking compartment. He then, as you say, dashes out. A few shots later we see him coming out, breathless, on the rear platform and meeting the detective who shows a most important telegram informing him that there are bank robbers on the train.

We then get a shot of the conductor assisting the detective to line up the passengers. For a moment we stay with the lovers, then the conductor comes into the shot and orders them to their seats . . . a bit of action which is most important for our story. Previous to the washroom business we used him in two quite necessary shots. Really, Mr. Beaton, unless we made him either the heavy or the character lead, I don't see how we could have used him much more . . . do you?

As a matter of fact, the conductor was already an extremely necessary part of the cast when we had the idea for using his coat. Prior to this, we had planned quite a different bit of business in that spot. I wouldn't explode this way if I didn't hate to see something go into print which is so absolutely unjust . . . especially in your paper!

Now for the chortle! Your remarks about Something Always Happens and the way the story begins, squarely instead of "easing in" for a reel or so, delighted my soul. I've been making futile efforts to write that sort of story for several years, and Paramount is the only place I've found where they don't want their hero and heroine's pedigree through three generations. . . . You noticed, didn't you, that we also used the "crash in" method in Easy Come, Easy Go?

FLORENCE RYerson.

THE OTHER SIDE

My dear Mr. Beaton:
When I read Upton Sinclair's Profits of Religion some years ago I was tremendously impressed by it. When I read his Brass Check and saw him distort facts of which I had first-hand knowledge, my confidence in all of his deductions was shaken.

I have read practically every number of The Film Spectator. Sometimes I have thought that you twisted facts slightly to suit your ends. But not until the issue of March 3, did I see an instance which would lead me to question you.

You know newspapers thoroughly. Do you honestly believe that The Times would deliberately attempt to harm the business of a consistently big advertiser like the Carthay Circle Theatre because a possible one-time advertiser like John Ford refused it a contract for $250 worth of space, or because two or three or four members of his company refused it such contracts?

Notice that I am not arguing Ed Schallert's intellectual honesty. Like you, I have had enough experience around newspapers to know that even an honest man sometimes has to choose between his income, his future and the wishes of his publisher.

Schallert's review sounded sincere to me. I have not seen the picture, but I have talked with several people whose opinions I respect, including one critic who praised the picture, who agreed with Schallert.

Personally, I don't believe that damning criticism interferes with the making of good pictures nearly as much as indiscriminate and gushing praise. I wanted to see what sort of performance Gloria Swanson and
Lionel Barrymore had given in Sadie Thompson. If critics had damned the picture I would have been surprised and delighted. Instead I was disappointed in the picture, though satisfied with the performances I went to see.

In this week's Film Spectator I find another, lesser, instance of what appears to be insincerity. You are fighting the cause of the actor against the producer, so you declare Universal a leech (I am not at all sensitive, but I do shrink at the word you used) for making a profit on his services. But do you honestly think that any producer employs any actor for any other reason than to make a profit on his services? If it can not make a profit by using him in a picture and can make it by leasing those services, is not the producer as legitimate, even though it be a bit more harrowing to the actor? Universal risked, at a guess, $150,000 on its belief that Hersholt would make money for it. If it had risked that amount on its belief that a picture of real estate would increase in value you would not object to any profit it might make, would you?

Please do not infer from what I have written that I believe that Universal, or any producer, or The Times, is not properly subject to other censure that you have lavished upon them.

Sincerely,
C. S. Dunning.

(I quarreled with Universal because it accepted pay for Hersholt's services while he was laid off without salary. Mr. Dunning overlooks that. —W. B.)

THE HIGH PRICED CONTINUITY WRITERS
By MADELEINE MATZEN

YOU see strange legends printed about them—these writers of Hollywood who are drawing down, each month, salaries far in excess of those who are artists in other lines. The continuity writer as a rule receives more for his continuity than the writer of the original story—unless, of course, the writer of the story happens to have a well-known name. Just why this happens is a mystery—why the continuity writers are supposed to be a very cultured, much-traveled group of people—Students of Psychology—and to have at their finger-tips great knowledge of that strange technique—photoplay. But many of them have never been abroad and know only California, Chicago and New York.

When the motion picture was in its "infancy" some twelve years ago the writing of continuity was a tremendous undertaking. People in the industry were just beginning to realize the possibilities of the screen. They were all explorers and the language of a photoplay continuity was a new language. The writers (connected with the industry) were just beginning to learn the A, B, C of it. Those who knew how to write continuity considered themselves very important. They were important, and the outsider regarded them with awe. Writing continuity in those days was a feat—just as flying five miles in an aeroplane was considered a feat some years ago.

But since then the children of America have been growing up, their main entertainment has been the motion picture. Who was it that said we were a movie-fed nation? Well, we are! Haul out the old statistics and prove it! The child of the pre-movie days regarded life from quite a different angle; his thought processes were different. But the child who is a frequent movie-goer begins to look at life and the happenings around him from the angle of the camera.

** * * *

How often have you heard a high school youngster exclaim: "Gee, that would make a swell motion picture!"—just after he has read or heard of some particularly dramatic happening? Trained by constant attendance at the picture theatre the young mind is growing quick to perceive drama when he meets it. The comic-strip tells us that young men and women should be flagpole squatters. Maybe! Maybe! But we are also raising our children to be photoplay and continuity writers.

What the trained writer of twelve years or more ago laboriously sweated over and figured out in continuity form most young men who grew up with the movies (using the screen's evolutionary efforts for their main entertainment) know instinctively today.

The hocus-pocus, the mysterious mystery of writing for the screen is no longer a mystery. Many young men and women are becoming familiar with the screen value of material as the old-time and now exorbitantly overpaid continuity writer.

To be sure they do not know the fine ins and outs of screen technique, but a year or two of training could teach them what it has taken the old-time screen writers years to learn. Why? Because we have been feeding the coming generation on movies.

** * * *

Why should we train young writers when we have plenty of old, well-trained ones to take care of the work? Because the new writer has a fresh and an unbiased point of view. He is not saturated by politics—or, perhaps I should say, not so busy playing politics that he has no time left in which to concentrate upon his work. The new writer has new ideas and, God knows, new ideas in stories and continuities are as rare as the proverbial hen's tooth.

What is going to happen? There will be scores of new young writers clamoring at the studio gates, willing to work for very little for the chance to prove themselves. And they are far better equipped to prove themselves than some of the highly paid names of to-day. Why? Because they were movie-fed children. What is bred in the bone is apt to be stronger and more lasting than what is learned with difficulty through experience. The instinct for screen expression is bred in the new writers—all some of them need is a chance.

This will mean that the old-timers will have to scratch hard to maintain a pace and a quality and originality superior to those who are crowding in—if these old-timers hope to keep their jobs.

** * * *

Most of the old-time writers are well fixed financially—they can afford to retire gracefully, but not one of them will retire gratefully. They stoop to all sorts of petty tricks to keep the old pot boiling and these tricks are the pitfalls into which the new writer is apt to be caught.

For example—last year several of the bigger studios engaged new writers. In all the industry I believe about forty new ones were tried out (though I cannot vouch for the accuracy of this total). In many cases this meant a year's contract at anywhere from fifty to one hundred dollars a week.

The new writers were so enthusiastic, so grateful to the producers, that they literally "burst their souls" writing for them. They poured out all their ideas, their dreams, their stories, their talents into the scenario department. They were praised and goaded on. At the end of the year most of them were dismissed—and hardly one of them received screen credit for any work that he had done.
The Haldeman-Julius Monthly is Printing "THE TRUTH ABOUT AMERICAN LIFE"

The MOVIES

Why Writers Hate Hollywood, by Don Gordon (June).
Our Mad Movie Magnates, by George Pample (June).
Will Hays: Ignorant and Dishonest, by Louis Adamic (August).
The Bedlam That Is Hollywood, by Don Gordon (August).

(Other articles presenting the facts about the film industry will appear from time to time as part of the magazine's policy to print the truth about American life in all its phases.)

CALIFORNIA

We Meet Dr. Brown, M. D., C. M., F. R. C. S. E. (in San Rafael), by Maynard Shipley (July).
Another Moral Rampage ("The Captive" in Los Angeles), by Charlotte Dantzic (July).
Upton Sinclair answers Jim Tully's ungrateful article in the American Mercury in the August Haldeman-Julius Monthly.
Many famous writers are mentioned.

SOME OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS

JULY

The Crime of Church Liberalism, by Eric Heath.
The Magic in Those Ultraviolet Rays! by T. Swann Harding.
Dean Ingé: An Honest Churchman, by Louis Adamic.
Some Reasons for Dishonesty in Advertising, by a Newspaper Publicity Director.
Evolution of an Agnostic, by John Mason.
The Candidates, by E. Haldeman-Julius.
The Decline and Fall of Poker, by Sanford Jarrell.
Shall We Go to the Gutter for Sex Knowledge? by Isaac Goldberg.
The New Sacco-Vanzetti Evidence (part of a series begun in May; a post-mortem review), by W. P. Norwin.
The Shame of Fort Scott, Kansas, by Mairet Haldeman-Julius.
And other truth-telling articles.

AUGUST

Jim Tully: A Study in Ingratitude (Answering Tully's "American Mercury" article), by Upton Sinclair.
Immoralities in Public Offices, by W. G. Clagston.
Will Hays: Ignorant and Dishonest, by Louis Adamic.
The Real Thomas A. Edison, by A. L. Shands.
The Next War, by Sanford Jarrell.
What Fundamentalists Believe and Preach, by L. M. Birckhead.
Henry Field: A New God in the Middle West, by M. E. Stanley.
Public Criticism of Sacco and Vanzetti, by W. P. Norwin.
A Dinner With Billy Sunday, by Wm. Bedford.
Putting Punch in Your Personality, by Ballard Brown.
A Soldier's Return, by G. V. Morris.
One of God's Families, by Don Lewis.
No Tears for Babbitt, by David Warren Ryder.
What Preachers Believe, by E. W. Hutter.
The Memphis Commercial-Appeal, by Pierre Martinus.
And other sham-smashing articles.

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Name...........................................................................................................................................
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My dear LeRoy-

The long awaited premier of "Harold Teen" happened yesterday at the Oriental, one of our leading loop theatres and I was there for the first performance.

I had anticipated a fine picture through the good notices given the film, but what I saw exceeded all expectations. It was simply GREAT Mervyn. I can't tell you of the emotions I went through as I sat there and saw the creatures of my own imagination in flesh and blood on the screen, and so true to my own ideas. There was not a flaw in the cast, not one and Arthur Lake was immense. Had you scoured the world over you could not have found a more true type.

Out of practically nothing you concocted a worthwhile comedy, clean and fast moving. I venture to say there will never be another comic strip feature film to equal it. No one, I imagine, is better qualified to pass on the trueness of the types than I- and I cannot say more than they were perfect.

If nothing else- the film is an improvement on my cartoon and will give me a mark to shoot at. I predict a fine future for you as director, Mervyn. I expect soon to have an original drawing to you in colors.

- Good WORK MERVYN!

NOW DIRECTING

Colleen Moore in "Oh Kay"

A John McCormick First~ National Production~
Producers commit another idiotic act

Bewildered exhibitor getting a lot of poor advice

Stagnant minds leave their mark on pictures

Nothing alarming in the foreign situation

FAZIL
POWER
CLEOPATRA
THE BARKER
VIRGIN QUEEN
HIT OF THE SHOW
LADIES OF THE MOB

SPEEDY
THE COP
THE RACKET
LIFE'S LIKE THAT
STEAMBOAT BILL JR.
TELLING THE WORLD
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Announcing

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THE FAMOUS

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GRANDS AND REPRODUCING GRAND PIANOS

E.A. BOWEN
MUSIC COMPANY
5326 Wilshire Boulevard  ORegon 5206
ROMANCING

By GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN

This is gonna be a motion picture pome. What I mean is it'll be about motion pictures without havin' to add a post script, or a "prologue", as the picture people say, to explain what it's all about. The picture part will come in natural. It won't be drug in by a leg like comedy-relief just a get a laugh and keep you from forgettin' it's a movie you're lookin' at. You may even forget it's a pome, for if your mind goes galivantin' off on a little adventure of its own, like it does sometimes in pictures, it won't hit you in the eye with a close-up. "Hell!" you say, "that ain't my girl at all." Why you couldn't make love to a girl like that if she was tied—you bein' just from the sticks and maybe needin' a shave. She ought to be in a glass case, for the label on her reads "hands off." When she was away back in the distance you could sort of imagine the freckles on her nose and her hair done up careless like and a look in her eyes—well, anyway, you know what I mean—if you've ever felt that way, a sort of upliftin' feelin' like you was somethin' more than just part of the scenery. Well, that's the way with this pome. It aims to sort of suggest the idea and leave you to make the poetry to suit yourself, and not do nothin' to spoil the romance. The girl you're thinkin' about maybe wouldn't take a prize in a bathin' suit, but when you've been imaginin' yourself as the hero riskin' your life and endurin' hardships all for her it shorly does disillusion you to find out she ain't the girl you thought she was.

Now for the pome.

"One crowded hour of glorious life is worth a world without a name."

Close-up, close-up, close-up,

Cuddle up, Sweet.

For a sentimental close-up

We've got the screen beat.

Your lips are crimson berries,

There's powder on my coat,

Still, this sentimental close-up

Don't get my goat.

"One crowded hour", Sweetheart...

The joys that lovers know...

And every sequence meaning,

O, I love you so!

Then come, the Dark Archangel

My sinful soul to shrive:

For life is not mere living,

But feeling all alive.

In glamorous romancing,

Alone with you,

Where fortune showers favors,

And dreams come true—

O, I'm a handsome hero;

You are a hero-een,

And all the world's our oyster—

Upon the silver screen.

all the advice, consequently you need not be worried about its practicability when you proffer it. I am going where there are no motion pictures, and where the trees differ from ours, where the breeze comes laden with the virile perfume of the north, and where my brook will be a turbulent thing of vast importance to itself, leaping from

Spectator Circulation

We receive many requests from prospective advertisers for information regarding the circulation of The Film Spectator. We have one hundred per cent. circulation among the most prominent picture people in Hollywood, Beverly Hills, and adjacent territory. There are more financial institutions and public libraries among the paid subscribers to The Spectator than we believe there are among the subscribers to any other screen paper published in America. The Spectator is the most widely quoted screen paper published anywhere. Only one American publication has a greater paid exhibitor circulation than The Spectator. In the local field The Spectator has a greater bona fide paid circulation than the combined circulation of the Filmograph and the Film Mercury.

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A Holiday—and a Brook

During these two summer months there is going to be a little less of my stuff in The Spectator, and in two issues I will have nothing whatever. I'm going away somewhere to look at a brook. I don't know whether to blame the calendar or my labors, but I'm getting tired. Perhaps a fishing rod which hangs on the wall of my bedroom, has something to do with it. Anyway, I'm going, even though I could not advance one good reason why I should. The first of the two Spectators that will be issued while I am looking at the brook will be edited by my brother, K. C. B., and the second will be edited by Tom Miranda. God, alone, knows what kind of issues they will be. The K. C. B. issue will be a Contributors' Number, for which a lot of kind people have written articles. Tom will preside over an Advice Number, in which will be published brief messages from several hundred screen people telling me how to run The Spectator for the following year. In this connection, I would urge all those who have not done so yet, to get their messages of advice into the mail at once. You can get a lot of fun out of this number if you provide it. Undoubtedly I will ignore
cliffs and rushing over rocks in frenzied haste to get somewhere, only to spread out placidly and loiter in a pool which brings the sky to its depths and stretches tree branches above it to give us a pool's-eye view of heaven. And I'm going to sit by that damn pool, smoke my pipe, and fish.

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Producers Should Engage Someone to Think for Them

The film industry can be wrong more smugly and more complacently than any other industry on earth. Most of our producers are not perfect types for a creative art, but one would think that after being years in the business they would have at least a slight idea of the kind of business it is. I don't know of one major problem that has arisen in film history that the producers have disposed of promptly, wisely and finally, something that in other industries competent executives are doing every day. Producers are bungling this sound business as they have bungled everything else. The prize bit of insanity is Paramount's action in opening its Long Island studio for the making of sound pictures, on the supposition that it is going to draw its talent from the New York stage. Various trade papers have discussed solemnly the prospect of production going East again, as "the principal supply of talent for sound pictures is in New York," as one paper puts it. The film industry should hire someone to do its thinking for it. It probably could pay such person one million dollars a year and make money on the transaction. A little thought would lead to the conclusion that all that the screen is borrowing from the stage is sound. It is not borrowing stage technique, nor is it selling out to, or being absorbed by, the stage. The only connection between the stage and the screen will be the fact that actors whom the stage has trained to use their voices properly, will have a slight advantage over those who have received no such training. If an actor becomes famous through his work on the stage, picture audiences would be curious to see him and would patronize a film in which he appeared, but I do not think he would draw quite as much at the box-office as a man who became famous through winning a championship prize-fight. What the public always will look for in pictures will be screen artists—people thoroughly trained in how to act in front of the camera. Those with the best voices and a knowledge of how to use them will have the edge on the others who are not so fortunate, but the man with the superlative voice, but without screen training, will get nowhere. The supply of talent for talking pictures is in Hollywood, not in New York. We still will have motion pictures which will continue to use everything that they have developed. All that has happened is that they have reached out and embraced something that happens to be common to thunder, brass bands, and the stage: sound. They will take sound to themselves and fashion it to suit their requirements. Sound will alter screen technique, but it will not borrow technique from the stage. Film acting will continue to be a pantomimic art. Those stage directors who are congratulating themselves that their day in pictures has come are doomed to disappointment. A man who before sound was introduced lacked the experience to direct a motion picture, will not be able to direct one now that sound has come. It will take him just as long to learn the business now as it would have taken him before pictures began to talk. And actors whose only recommendation is that they know how to talk, will be as much at sea in talking pictures as they would be in silent ones. After Paramount has squandered a few hundred thousand dollars on a contrary assumption, it will close its Long Island studios and will return to Hollywood where picture people make pictures. Sound will cause a readjustment, but the readjustment will be kept within the film industry as it is constituted now. The film industry has a peculiar faculty for becoming stampeded, but its present brainstorm, like so many it has had in the past, will not be long in duration, and pictures will return to that degree of sanity that has characterized them in the past. I see no reason why actors and directors should worry about the situation. Those who will be affected principally will be screen writers.

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Telling Exhibitor Where the Hell He Is Heading

Some weeks ago a man who found himself going broke as an exhibitor of motion pictures purchased a lot of space in the Eastern film trade papers and asked in large type the question, "Where the hell am I heading?" He analyzed the exhibiting business as he found it and confessed that the situation stumped him, hence his appeal to the wide, wide world for advice and comfort. Very promptly he received much advice, but of a sort that I do not think would give him any considerable degree of comfort. Advertising departments run by people who lack resourceful minds, advised the bewildered exhibitor to buy their pictures as a cure for his ills, advice that loses some of its value by virtue of the fact that the ills were caused in the first place by the very pictures that their makers now offer as a remedy. In one issue of the Film Daily Joseph M. Schenck and E. W. Hammons occupied two-page spaces in which they pronounced advice. As an expression of sympathy, the purchase of so much expensive space was a generous gesture, but I do not believe that the amount of constructive advice in either advertisement justified the expenditure that it necessitated. My friend Joe slapped the exhibitor on the back and whispered soothing words in his ear, but all the constructive advice he offered was to eliminate presentations and show only pictures. It is too bad that producers, as a body, lack a sense of humor. If they were endowed with that valuable attribute they could get an immense amount of fun out of surveying their own actions. They are the people whose blundering incapacity got the advertising exhibitor into his mess, yet they come to his rescue with oracular and patronizing pomposity that ignores completely the reason for the condition that the exhibitor complains of. The slump that is eating up the financial resources of the exhibitors throughout the country had its origin in the studios of Hollywood. Because pictures are made in an insane way exhibitors have to pay twice as much for them as they should; and because they are made very poorly the public is paying only half what it should to view them. It would take all this Spectator, and the greater part of the next, even to touch on the specific ills that make pictures expensive and rob them of quality.
I will mention only one thing that suggests itself to me as one of the chief reasons why the exhibitor doesn’t know where the hell he’s heading. Not more than one in forty seven-reel motion pictures have plot enough to justify them being more than five reels in length. At least two, and sometimes three, reels are added to them solely to bung the exhibitor into the belief that he is getting a big picture. The result is that the picture drags when it is shown in his house, and it takes so much of his regular show time to project it that he has no room for a diversified program that would give his patrons two hours of high class entertainment, even though the feature picture had its weaknesses. If producers wished to be true to the stories and on the square with the exhibitors, they would keep their five-reel pictures within five reels. This would enable the exhibitor to obtain better pictures for less money; it would provide better programs, and it would stem the present drift of the public away from their support of the film industry. Since pictures started it is a question whether the producer or the exhibitor has been the greater fool. The former is injuring his business by not being honest with the latter, and the latter is cutting his own throat because he swallows all the bunk that has been handed him since pictures came into being. The trouble has its origin in the fact that neither the producer nor the exhibitor knows what a motion picture is, but is so sure he does know that he refuses to learn.

Shouldn’t Worry About the Foreign Situation

U NNECESSARY concern, I believe, is being expended on the status of the foreign market for motion pictures. European countries seem to be proceeding on the assumption that pictures that will satisfy their people can be legislated into being. A country that can not make acceptable pictures when no quota law is in effect can not make them after such a law is enacted. The American film industry is proceeding wisely in doing what it can to block the passage of restrictive legislation, but it should not take it too much to heart when its efforts prove unsuccessful. For a time quota laws will limit the foreign market, but no permanent injury will be done if American producers concentrate on making the best possible pictures. If they always had given their chief attention to the quality of their product, there would be no quota laws. The chief trouble with our producers is that commercialism enters into their activities at too early a stage. They sell a picture before it is made, and consider the making of it as of less importance than selling it. As I pointed out in a recent issue, making a picture is an art and selling it is a business. Business should start where art leaves off. Producers reverse this order and try to make art square with business, which produces poor art and which is bad business. No art has achieved its potentialities by thinking in terms of business. The only way to make art a commercial success, which is the chief mission of the film industry, is to concentrate on the art, and forget commerce. Concentrating on the art would result in leaving artists unhindered, and only unhindered artists can produce products that will be most successful commercially. Producers hire artists and presume to teach them art, with the result that they have no friends among those who make their pictures, those who buy them, and those who view them. The objection of exhibitors to block-booking is the outgrowth of their dissatisfaction with what they have to buy. If they were satisfied with what they are getting, they would find no fault with the manner in which they get it. Producers are harrassed abroad by quota laws and at home by official charges of unfairness. They are not capable mentally of grasping the fact that all their commercial misfortunes are caused by the inferiority of the art they have to sell. In seeking to cure their ills they are not attacking them at their source. It is in their studios that they can conquer the markets of the world.
not in the markets themselves. If the producer mind functioned efficiently it would appreciate this, it would arrive at the conclusion that only an inferior article can cause dissatisfaction in a market, and that any obstacle raised by such inferior article could be lowered by a superior one. The producers will argue that in the countries passing quota laws the quality of American pictures is not an issue; that the agitation is an economic and social one, and that no charge has been made that our pictures are inferior works of art. On the surface the argument sounds plausible, but it is wrong fundamentally. American pictures captured the markets of the world because they made friends for themselves. We do not quarrel with our friends; we allow them liberties. When we have grown tired of them we resent their continuance of the liberties we previously viewed indulgently. Although the liberties themselves contributed nothing to our dissatisfaction, withdrawing them is the method we adopt to show that dissatisfaction exists. Foreign countries have grown tired of American pictures and have decided to go into the film business for themselves, a movement which had its inception in Hollywood where the poor pictures that made Europe tired came from. The American industry has no ills that good pictures will not cure, and we will get good pictures when picture brains are allowed some latitude. At present an author is hired to write a story, and producers and supervisors rewrite it; a skilled man is hired to direct it, and the same incompetents re-direct it. Only in rare instances do picture brains reach the screen without distortion, and those rare instances are outstanding pictures. When producers give picture brains latitude they will recapture the markets of the world.

Mr. Charles Francis Coe, and, Incidentally, "Fazil"

WHEN I viewed Fazil it was its opening night at the Carthay Circle, and immediately following the final fade-out a gentleman whose voice is none too robust came out and told us what a remarkable fellow Charles Francis Coe is; and then out came Mr. Coe himself and corroborated what the other chap had said. It was getting on to midnight, and a large audience had sat through a not too-stimulating picture, but Mr. Coe proceeded to tell us how we had enjoyed the picture, to give us his views on the future of sound, and to apologize for going back to New York and leaving us flat just when he was getting used to us. He was so pathetic about his leave-taking, and revealed so poignantly his realization of all that it meant to Hollywood in the way of sorrow and gloom, that I could not stand all of it. I left when he was at his best, and on the way out tried to find someone who could tell me who Mr. Coe is, who selected him as master-of-ceremonies, and why he presumed that along about midnight we were interested in his views on sound and himself. The incident of Mr. Coe disturbs me as I begin to comment on the evening. The startling suddenness with which we were switched from the picture to Mr. Coe may have been a manifestation of this midnight-master-of-ceremonies business reaching the peak of its insanity, or it may be that he is as important as his speech implied. With the spirit of true Southern California hospitality strong within us, we will assume the latter, and humbly will beg Mr. Coe's indulgence while we make a few re-

marks about the picture that came on before his act. He may remember it—a motion picture, I mean, with Charlie Farrell and Greta Nissen in it, and directed by Howard Hawks. Although the gentleman who introduced Mr. Coe, and Mr. Coe himself, seemed to think that the picture was of no importance whatever, I found it quite the most interesting item on the evening's program, although it does not measure up to the standard set by the Carthay Circle and will have the shortest run that any picture has had at this most attractive and comfortable house. Fazil is rich in that quality that Fox pictures have been distinguished for of late—beautifully composed pictures shot sympathetically by master cameramen. The production is in every way adequate. The sound effects assist the picture greatly, particularly in the Venice sequence in which the generous Movietone bestows upon John T. Murray a fine voice which adds immeasurably to the romance of the scenes and enhances considerably the fine performance that Murray gives in a small part. I found Venice much more attractive in this picture than I found it when a large and unprepossessing gondolier conducted me along its rather smelly canals. Charlie Farrell's performance did more to convince me that he is a real actor than did other parts which he has acted admiringly. As an Arabian prince he found himself in a strange atmosphere in which he could not play himself and could not depend upon his boyish charm and sincerity to make himself convincing.

We might expect these handicaps to be reflected in his performance, but such was not the case, Farrell carrying the part with an assurance that would be a credit to a much more experienced actor. The performance of Greta Nissen surprised me with its depth of understanding, its lights and shades, and consistency. I was not aware that the young woman was such a capable actress. It is too bad that a girl so talented persists in the practice of eccentricities of temperament that make her such a nuisance that producers are reluctant to engage her. Fazil's weakness is that it is a cold and almost scientific exposition of the thesis that an Occidental girl should not marry an Oriental man. As an exposition, Hawks has handled it splendidly, but it is a subject in which we are not interested, and when a director is given a story about something uninteresting, he has a very hard job ahead. That Hawks did so well is to his credit.

Products of More or Less Stagnant Minds

A SCENE in White Shadows in the South Seas shows Monte Blue distraught because white men were coming to pollute the paradise that he had found.

In a fine bit of acting Monte hurls imprecatory at the ship in the distance. He implores it to stay away, to go back where it belongs and to leave him and his native friends in peace. Blue rises to dramatic heights and makes the scene a powerful one. What he exclaims as he raises his hands to heaven is reproduced on the screen this way: "Stay away, you ships—stay in your cursed world—leave us in peace." That is not what Monte said, for a man does not talk that way when he is under great strain. What he said was: "Stay away, you ships! Stay in your cursed world! Leave us in peace!" On the Metro lot, and on other lots where more or less stagnant mentalities dominate production, punctuation is looked upon as
an affection, as something that a spoken title might wear as a frill, but without which it could get along very well. I don't suppose that such mentalities can be reached by an argument, but I would venture to point out to them that it is the punctuation in a spoken title, and not the words, that shows exactly what the speaker said. There is a vast deal of difference in meaning between—"stay in your cursed world—" and "stay in your cursed world!" In recording speeches punctuation is not optional. A man utters a question mark when he concludes a sentence with a rising inflection, making it just as necessary in order that we can get his meaning to put down the question mark as it is to present the words to us. When Monte Blue made his speech in the Metro picture he punctuated it properly, for spoken language always is punctuated perfectly, and in recording it, Metro had no option. Of course we know why the punctuation of the titles in this picture, in Our Dancing Daughters and in other M.-G.-M. productions I have seen recently, so flagrantly disregarded all literary rules. Those in charge of production on the lot simply do not know. They lack education themselves and resent it in others. Their disdain of punctuation is a pose to mask their ignorance of its significance. I do not contend that only college graduates should be in pictures. I have never spent an hour in a class-room since I graduated from the grammar school, for there was no money in the family to send me farther, consequently I hardly can look down upon all those who have had much more schooling than I had, but I do condemn those who have forgotten what they learned at school and have learned nothing new since they left it. Also I condemn studio executives for not hiring competent people to do what they themselves can not do. If I were in Irving Thalberg's place I would not bother my head about punctuation. I would allow my stenographer to punctuate my dictation, and to advise me on the punctuation of titles I would hire someone who knew something about it. Next to Metro, Universal is the greatest offender in presenting the screen as a lowbrow art, but all studios are afflicted more or less with the same complex. Paramount makes fewer mistakes than any other producer. Until The Spectator began to yell about punctuation, Paramount was the greatest offender. My interest in the matter springs from the fact that I am jealous of screen art, that I want to see it put its best foot forward when it goes out to meet the public. But I won't have to worry about punctuation much longer. Sound devices will present spoken language properly. The new order will eliminate those title writers, so numerous now, who are too ignorant to show with punctuation marks exactly how a

THE FILM SPECTATOR

Now We Have Clara as a Nice Little Crook

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e are getting so many crook pictures that they soon will reach their saturation point. Underworld started the vogue, and many inferior imitations are killing it. The screen merely is repeating itself. It always has ridden a good horse to death. Only a notable picture starts a vogue for others of the same sort, and it is because none of those that come later have any notable qualities that the public tires of them. We always have had crook pictures, but it took one with the raw and virile qualities of Underworld to attract attention to them as a class and to get the imitators at work. Most of the imitations have been so poor that the public is getting fed up on crook dramas of any sort. Paramount followed Underworld with Drag Net, a very poor imitation of it, and now gives us Ladies of the Mob, an excellent picture that should do well at any box-office if it has not come too late in the procession. William A. Wellman directed it, and Clara Bow is the star. Wellman's direction is flawless throughout. The picture opens with a terse statement in a title: "A man was about to be killed." It is followed by a series of pan shots and dissolves which show in a graphic and gripping manner the preparations for the execution of a criminal. No titles are used and as there are no photographic breaks in the entire sequence, the drama in it flows along on a steady course, accumulating tension as it proceeds. Bodil Rosing, the wife of the man who is executed, contributes some splendid acting. At the end of the sequence she dedicates her life to revenging the death of her husband, and the story moves ahead eighteen years to show Clara Bow, as Bodil's daughter, leading a life that makes the guardians of the law her natural enemies. All the stages of a bank robbery are shown, the treatment following that which made the opening sequence gripping. I don't think I ever saw a sequence on the screen that sustains its drama as the bank robbery does. A couple of months ago I asked Bill Howard why the camera could not be swung from one character to another when titles were being spoken, instead of having jerky cuts to each one who speaks. Bill said he saw no reason why it could not be done, and promised to try it sometime. Bill Wellman beats us to it. He avoids cuts by panning the camera exactly as I suggested to Howard. A man speaks, and from him the camera is swung to the man who replies to him, carrying the interest of the audience with it, and making it something smoother to view than the succession of sharp cuts that usually are used in connection with titles. Clara has a new characterization in this picture, and in every one of her scenes maintains her reputation for being a superb little tramp. It is a characterization of moods with some dramatic high spots in it, and Clara is convincing in every phase of it. To Richard Arlen goes a big share of the credit for the picture's high acting average. Dick, also, is a tramp. I don't think any of our young fellows ever gave a more commendable performance than

John Waters
DIRECTOR
ORegon 7767

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he does as the confirmed crook who is in love with Clara. He is sincere and convincing throughout. Helen Lynch, whom I saw first in The Showdown and whose work in that picture I praised highly, justifies in Ladies of the Mob all the nice things I said of her. She has another fine performance to her credit and gives every indication of going a long way on the screen. These three and Mary Alden compose a quartette of crooks, and I would call them good types for their parts as they do not look like our standard conception of crooks, thereby adding a refreshing touch to the picture. Crooks, I might add, do not look like our standard conception of them either. I am sorry that Paramount did not go all the way and make its crooks unlike all others by making them talk straight and moderately correct English. It would have heightened the effect of the characterizations.

**Melo at Both Ends and Romantic in the Middle**

A SOMewhat denatured Bill Haines appears in Telling the World, which Sam Wood directed for M.-G.-M. He still is a wisecracker, but not such an obnoxious one as usual. There are several scenes in this picture handled in a way that give me the impression for the first time that Haines really can act. He is clever at superficial comedy, but he can strike a sterner note when he has to, and can make it convincing. Telling the World is not so offensive as his other pictures because it is not all wisecracking. It is melodramatic at both ends and has a romance in the middle. The romance sags a little and is directed poorly, but we forget all its weaknesses when the main show opens in the last reel or so.

For the first time in a couple of years Haines appears in a part that did not irritate me. He might have been toned down a lot more, however. Care was taken to plant Bill as the son of a great family, a polo player, yachtsman, tennis and golf player, and all that sort of thing, yet he is given the manners of an East Side assistant barber who never was taught anything and who has no powers of observation. A man moving in the circle in which Haines was placed does not force his way insolently into a girl's apartment and survey it snarlingly before he removes his hat. The sense of humor of such a man might lead him to indulge in wisecracks, but his training would not permit him ever to do anything that was not in the best of taste. Making the principal character an impossible one, as always has been done in the Haines pictures, throws the whole thing out of time. The love story was made unconvincing because no girl could love the pest that Bill's characterization made him out to be. In Telling the World it is not so bad. It is conceivable that Anita Page could fall in love with the kind of boy Bill is. Also it is conceivable that any kind of a boy could fall in love with Anita. Unless I am mistaken badly, this young woman has a brilliant future before her. She is an actress, not just a pretty girl with a sweet personality. She has charm and beauty, but back of it all is a dynamic power that will take her a long way as a dramatic actress. William V. Mong appears in Telling the World as a city editor, and as one who has been a city editor, who has bossed city editors and been bossed by city editors, I will give Mong credit for behaving like one. He is an excellent actor, and when screen art comes into its own, I suppose players of his ability will be seen more frequently on the screen. Bert Roach, Matthew Betz, Polly Moran and Eileen Percy enrich the picture with adequate performances. Sam Wood's direction is spotty. All his big, important scenes are handled capably, but there are a number of little things in the production that keep you from forgetting that it is a movie. For instance, Haines proceeds to wash his face. He fills his eyes with soap and gropes wildly for a towel. That is childish direction. In another scene he is shown walking rapidly along a crowded street, on route to his sweetheart. He stops in the middle of the moving throng, gazes rapturously at the engagement ring he is carrying, makes an ecstatic speech to high heaven, and no one pays any attention to him. A man behaving that way on the street in real life would be carted off in the hurry-up wagon. But we have to thank Sam for a remarkable demonstration of how news travels around the world. There is a long series of dissolves to and from traveling shots, the whole sequence being one of the most striking bits of camera-drama that I have seen in a long time. Telling the World is full of entertainment value and is a picture that no exhibitor need be afraid of booking.

**Henry McMahon Asks Us to See Arch Reeve's Picture**

H ENRY McMahon did it. If Arch Reeve doesn't like it he can take it up with Henry. I received one of Henry's telephonic pleas to see the Carmel theatre and see a preview of Power. I seldom go to picture houses, projection-rooms being my usual haunts, but in this instance I yielded because it so happened that about preview time I would be near the Carmel anyway. Donald and I arrived early. Drag Net was underway. While waiting for Power, we had to sit through considerable footage of the Paramount picture, which both of us had criticized severely. I was glad of an opportunity to see it again. In my review of it I stated that the story was all right, but that the direction was terrible, and that all the people on the screen were movie actors pretending that they were something else. After I had written my review I read some criticisms of Drag Net that appeared in Eastern papers whose reviewers I hold in some regard. I was surprised at the number of favorable notices that I read. In fact, so many people praised the picture that I began to wonder if it possessed virtues that I had overlooked. That is why I was glad to see it again. Instead of hidden virtues, I found sins I had overlooked. There is a scene in a night club. Revelers throw paper streamers about the place until the dancers have to wade through it. The air is so full of it that the camera can not pick up the wall across the room. At all the tables people are making merry. Cigarettes and cigars are being smoked. One carelessly waved match would have set the interior of the place afire with the suddenness of an explosion. No sane patron would have remained in the place a minute, and no sane proprietor would have permitted such excessive use of confetti. When the scene was shot, Joe von Sternberg must have exercised extraordinary precaution to avoid someone endangering the scores of people on the set by carelessly dropping a burning cigarette on the
floor, or doing any other of the many things that can be done with a cigarette or a match to start a fire. If Joe did not exercise such precaution, insurance companies should cancel Paramount policies. If thought had been expended on the sequence the conclusion would have been reached that it would look just as dangerous on the screen as it must have looked when it was being shot. The dullest person in any audience would see the impossibility of the whole thing, yet it is not a whit less convincing than all the rest of the picture. When I saw it the first time I thought that Bill Powell's performance was a good one of its kind, even though I did not approve the kind. Now I think it was a punk performance; and the same thing goes for the work of my other friends in the cast, Evelyn Brent, George Bancroft, Fred Kohler and Francis McDonel. McDonel is an excellent actor—so good that it is a shame he is overlooked so consistently—but Von Sternberg handed him a characterization in this picture that is utterly absurd. Now, Arch Reeve, who promotes publicity for Paramount, no doubt is sore at Henry McMahon, who does the same thing for Pathe, for putting me in a position to take a second whack at Drag Net. It will appease Arch somewhat when he reads that I think Henry's picture is much worse than his. It is so bad that I'm not going to review it until it receives its final cutting. I do not blame Howard Higin, who directed Power. The direction is all right in every particular, but the story being about nothing whatever, it was a tough one to make anything of. Jackie Logan, Alan Hale and Bill Boyd are wasted in the principal parts.

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Raymond Cannon Shows Us Several Intriguing Shots

RAYMOND Cannon is a lucky dog. For years he has been writing screen stories that received the regular screen treatment which has standardized motion picture art. Being an intelligent person, Cannon must have shed bitter tears over the things he was forced to do. "You can't do that," has deadened many ambitions and blocked paths along which screen art may have advanced. It is a dictum born of ignorance, but one to which this creative art must make obeisance. I call Cannon lucky because he managed to break through. He not only found a producer who would let his story be produced as it was written, but in the same producer he found a person who was willing that he should direct his story. There's luck for you! Fanchon Royer is the courageous producer. Judging by what I saw on the screen I would say that Life's Like That will be a successful venture, but any ordinary producer could prove that it would be a flop. It does so many things that a picture simply can not do. For instance, the characters are not introduced. We don't know who they are or where they came from. That's something that isn't done. When Grant Withers prevents Wade Boteler from drowning himself, I found the scene quite gripping, but one of our standard supervisors would tell me that I must be mistaken in thinking I enjoyed the scene as there was nothing to reveal Withers' name, his birthplace, or whether he was vaccinated and was going to vote the Republican ticket; also the scene must have lacked interest because Boteler's lodge affiliations, his wife's age, and any birthmarks either of them had were not enumerated on the screen. When Cannon selected his location he did not search for places that would make pleasing pictures. In every instance he made the location match the mood of the scene. A street scene in which the action is rather drab had a lean looking telephone pole rising from the center foreground; when the mood of a scene is gayer it is played in a flower garden, or on a street that looks comfortable and satisfied with itself. The story itself is a departure. The mind of the audience, in the form of a spiritual being, goes forth on the street, meets Withers and Boteler, who come together and who have adventures. In trying to break away from family conventions, Boteler sets out to have an affair with a girl, and complications arise which eventually make him mayor of his city. That's an interesting idea, and Cannon has made it most interesting on the screen. But Life's Like That will be noted principally for the fact that it makes a valuable technical contribution to picture-making. In some mysterious manner Cannon, in what looks like an ordinary pan shot, swings the camera from the interior of a residence to the interior of a road house miles away; he swings from the interior of a building to the curb and back to the interior of some other building. This innovation marks a distinct step forward for screen technic. Anything that will reduce the number of cuts helps the art, and this traveling shot does that. It will prove invaluable for use in those spots in pictures where it is doubtful whether to fade out or cut. Another extraordinary shot that startled me was one that made a complete circle. With the camera stationed in the middle of a circle, what's going to happen to the reflectors when the lens picks up the entire circumference? Cannon tells me that they had to be moved with the camera as it swung steadily around. The ordinary picture audience will not be aware that it is looking at something new in screen photography, but it will get a sense of continuous action of a smooth and sustained narrative, that it would not get if the usual number of cuts were in the film. Another thing that Cannon does is to play intimate scenes in front of plain, black drops. He proceeds on the theory that if the audience is interested sufficiently in the action, it will not notice the lack of conventional background. Apparently he is right, for he had to point out to me that there were no backgrounds. Life's Like That is really a notable picture and in the person of Raymond Cannon it brings to the screen a creative artist who should go far.

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Picture Distinguished by a Lot of Good Acting

GEORGE Fitzmaurice, over whose success with Lilac Time I expressed mild surprise in the last Spectator, having considered him more a pictorial than a dramatic director, comes to bat with another success that is practically all drama. The Barker is a splendid picture, one of the best that First National has produced in many a day. The most notable feature of the production is the acting. There are four excellent major performances, and several exceedingly well done bits and small parts. Betty Compson, Dorothy Mackail, Milton Sills and Douglas Fairbanks Jr., are the four who distinguish themselves. Possibly for sheer artistry, Betty's characterization would carry off the acting honors, but it is only
hairline that distinguishes her work from Dorothy's. This young Mackail person seems to be advancing rapidly. She has one scene in this picture that makes me enthusiastic over her future. She is in the arms of young Doug, whom she loves, but she wants to disillusion him. She determines to let him think she has been playing with him for pay. The look on her face changes from one of love to one of disdain, and the whole thought process that produces it is photographed. Dorothy's eyes tell the story as plainly as it could be told in printed titles. You know exactly what she is thinking, and you know what she is going to do as soon as she knows itself. That is screen acting. As we have so many pictures with no acting in them, The Barker comes as a novelty and should be a great success. I like everything about it except the titles, many of which were written excellently, but the punctuation of all of them was vile. Isn't there at least one educated person on the First National lot? The titles also commit a strong fault. Young Doug is being educated by his father (Sills) and the story practically is built around the idea that the boy's world differs absolutely from the circus world of the father. Yet when the educated young man comes into the show world he speaks with the same degree of illiteracy and carelessness that characterizes the speech of those who have been in the show business all their lives. If the people responsible for the production had been alert, the boy's titles would have been written in perfect English. That in itself would have established the fact that the boy was from another world. A clever idea was used in the narrative titles. Much of the action takes place on the carnival company's train, and all the time-lapse titles are superimposed on moving locomotive wheels, an effect that keeps the mind of the audience on the fact that the story is moving along. Fitzmaurice's direction makes the most of the pictorial possibilities of the production without sacrificing any of the drama. Particularly brilliant is Fitz in his grouping. The arrangement of his characters in his intimate shots, particularly on board the train, is the best work in that line that I have seen on the screen recently. There are some close-ups that I think are unnecessary, but the abuse is not too flagrant. The opening atmospheric shots are graphic, illuminating and photographed splendidly, giving the picture an intriguing start. The characters are not introduced by titles. We never learn more than their first names, and we learn them from spoken titles. This is in keeping with the disposition pictures are showing of late towards eliminating non-essentials, a trend along the right line, and which will reach the peak of perfection when it gets to supervisors. Exhibitors may be assured that The Barker is a picture they should book. I believe there is a market for good acting, a commodity of which there is an abundance in this First National production.

GLORIFYING the American cop is the chief mission of The Cop, which Donald Crisp directed for Pathé. Bill Boyd is the star, and Jacqueline Logan, Robert Armstrong, Alan Hale, Tom Kennedy and others appear in the cast. It is a crook drama, but it does not move with the snap that characterizes such dramas when they are made in a way that realizes all their possibilities. I believe that in its first couple of sequences a motion picture should indicate what it is about. The Cop proceeds for nearly three reels before you know what kind of a story it is going to be. That means that during the first three reels the audience does not know what it should become interested in. After a while it begins to perk up, and moves along rather briskly, but it commits the fatal mistake of trying to drag a love story along with it. Love stories have no place in the majority of crook dramas. They serve to divert the mind of the viewer from the thing that the picture is about. In The Cop what we're interested in is the struggle between Boyd and Robert Armstrong, and this is slowed up every little while to make us give attention to a girl who really had no place in the story. Crisp was up against an unconvincing story, but has managed to make quite an entertaining picture out of it, even though he frequently makes inexcusable use of close-ups. In one of them he brought the camera so close to Jackie Logan and Bob Armstrong that to get both heads within the frame Jackie and Bob had to stand so close together that he put his nose in her eye. Armstrong's performance in this picture is an excellent example of screen acting. He plays a crook, and is convincing and sincere throughout. It is the finest thing I have seen him do on the screen. Alan Hale also contributes a fine performance, and Tom Kennedy is good. He passes out of the picture by being shot down by Armstrong, and the manner of his dying is one of the best bits in the picture. All Boyd's characterizations are pretty much alike. He has a pleasing screen personality, but I think he uses his grin too much.

JOE E. Brown has the soul of a Romeo, although he does not possess that degree of manly beauty that the stage and screen deem to be the necessary endowment of the ideal lover. Joe started when a boy into the serious business of being a comedian, and in course of time reached Broadway, which is the last stop that the actor makes before ending his season in Heaven. On the advice of friends, or in spite of the advice of friends—I don't know which—Joe made a plunge into pictures, and I think he's going to make a splash. I have seen him on the screen but once, in an FBO picture, The Hit of the Show, directed by Ralph Ince, and having in its cast Gertrude Olmstead, Gertrude Astor and Daphne Pollard, whom I will dispose of now by stating that each of these girls does very nicely indeed, and contributes her share towards making the picture the satisfactory hit of screen enter-

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**TALK**

—that is, comedy talk in pictures, is NOT cheap unless it gets laughs. No one has a better-earned reputation for writing loud, honest-to-goodness laughs than myself. Ask Al Jolson, Howard and Howard, Rooney and Bent, Sophie Tucker, Klein Brothers, William Lord, Wright, Eddie Kane, Hugh Herbert, Florence Moore, etc. For years I have analyzed audiences and know what will make them laugh. My services will save you experiment. Am also a top-notch constructor of original scenarios, gags and titles. Let's T-A-L-K it over.

**JAMES MADISON**

323 North Citrus Ave., Los Angeles ORegon 5627
tainment that it proves to be. Next I will get rid of Ralph Ince by stating that he has directed this picture just a little better than he ever directed a picture before, and quite a lot better than the vast majority of pictures are being directed. He gives us but few close-ups, is not afraid to point his camera at a player's back, cuts no lines through his people to allow the camera to reach its objective, and refrains from doing any of the silly little things that other directors constantly are doing and which Ralph himself has been known to do when he was younger and more foolish. He also shows us two love affairs, but no kissing. But with all its other virtues, the feature of The Hit of the Show that interested me most was Joe Brown's screen debut. I think he is an excellent actor. He is an unusual type. He seems to be an agile acrobatic dancer, which should help him in some of his parts. But it's the human quality in him that attracted me most. I can recommend Hit of the Show to the exhibitors.

AS we progress farther with sound we are going to discover that the lines spoken by a screen actor are of more importance than the exact manner in which they are spoken. This fact, of course, has limits. The best lines spoken by an unintelligent actor with an impossible voice will be ruined, but we have to assume that such actors will not be used. I have argued recently that a trained voice and stage experience are not essential to an actor who hopes to be successful in talking pictures. Robert Benchley's Treasurer's Report, done in Movietone, is proving to be a big hit wherever shown. Benchley has had no stage or screen experience. He is just a writing fellow like a lot more of us. He wrote something funny, speaks it before the microphone, and it makes a hit. It is what he says, not how he says it, that makes it funny. All of which points up the fact that the writer will be the big man in pictures from now on, and that the supervisor, who supervises the life out of nearly every picture that he touches, will disappear. I do not mean to discourage screen actors from cultivating their voices. It is essential that they should do so, for the man with the best trained voice always will get the best break. The quality of the voice is not as important as the manner in which it is used. Ethel Barrymore has a wretched voice, but because she knows how to use it she has retained her popularity for a quarter of a century. The important thing about the screen voice is that it must reach only the microphone. It does not have to carry to the man in the back seat in the gallery. Amplifiers attend to that. Cultivating carrying power, the chief consideration of the stage actor, need give the screen actor no concern.

PROBABLY on account of the change in the thought process of the nation, drunk scenes, always sure-fire comedy stuff in the past, seem to be disappearing from the screen. The only excuse for them now is when they are done particularly well, as Monte Blue did one in So This Is Paris! and Ned Sparks in The Magnificent Flirt. Apparently we grant privileges to a man in a dress suit that we deny the man in overalls. In rich surroundings a mild bun is amusing; in a meaner setting it is odious. I do not see Sparks on the screen very often, but when I do I always see an excellent performance. He is one of the funniest comedians we have. No matter what dramatic phases the screen goes through, comedies hold their place as the favorite entertainment of the public. Some astute producer could take Sparks and make him a sensational success over night. He is one of the greatest pantomimic artists in pictures, has a trained voice and a rich sense of comedy. In suitable stories he could be made one of the best box-office bets in the business. I would like to see him do Sherlock Holmes, which would be new entertainment with sound applied to it. Such an excellent actor could give a humorous touch to the famous detective, without sacrificing any of the dramatic qualities of the part.

* * *

THERE are some shots in Ladies of the Mob that I would recommend to directors generally. I have argued that directors rely far too much on the facial expressions of their actors to put over scenes, and do not use

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THE FILM SPECTATOR

July 7, 1928

Greta Garbo establishes the fact in The Divine Woman that it is all right for a young Parisian washerwoman to have carefully plucked eyebrows. In many pictures we see our screen girls, desperately poor, toiling in a squalid home, with carefully manicured nails and the latest thing in marbles. Don't they make eyebrow toupees which our girls can wear when they're poor and discard when they get rich somewhere along in the fourth reel? A washerwoman with plucked eyebrows is rather unconvincing.

THE BARKER would have been a sensational success had George Fitzmaurice, the director, used some intelligence in the matter of close-ups. He had them all over the place, and the great majority of them were unnecessary. They made the picture seem slow in spots. However, The Barker is good anyway, due to the fact that Fitzmaurice got brilliant performances out of everyone of his principals. Milton Sills, who had the title role, did some work which was splendid. It is, however, without a doubt, the best piece of work he ever has done. Betty Compson, who, in my estimation, is one of the cleverest women on the screen, gave a performance which was outstanding among all the other good ones. Dorothy Mackaill was excellent. Her work showed an ability for dramatic acting which I did not know she possessed. Now that she has demonstrated that she can handle such parts, she should be given them instead of the silly things she has been playing. Douglas Fairbanks, Junior does very good work, but he is handicapped by being poorly cast. He isn't the type for the part, because he doesn't look as though he would fall for such a girl as Dorothy Mackaill was supposed to be. An instance where a close-up was used senselessly was the scene where the Barker is introduced. There are shots of a huge close-up of just Sills' head. That was a poor way to do it, because it did not explain what he was. He might have been a banker or a lawyer from all that close-up told. In The Barker, Fitzmaurice had hardly any chance to make the scenes works of art, because the background did not lend itself to any attempts at beauty. However, there was one sequence in a peach orchard which was very pretty. The free-masonry of the show world was very cleverly depicted, also its petty squabbles and jealousies. Fitzmaurice made the whole thing intensely human. That is why the picture is destined to be a tremendous success. It shows how the trouper, under the tinsel, are just the same as other people. Their emotions and feelings are just the same. To any one who knows show people, this picture will not have as great an appeal as it will for the great majority of theatre-goers who know nothing about them. Whoever punctuated the titles needs some one to explain to him what a question mark is. Several questions in the titles were not marked.

ONE thing kept The Patent Leather Kid from being a fine motion picture. The cheap, silly ending ruined it. The hero is so damaged by the war that he becomes a hopeless cripple, unable to move arms or legs. Just as he has resigned himself to his lot, the American flag comes along, and he gets up and salutes. These cues which result from great emotional strain are poor motion picture stuff, anyway. They demand too much of one's credulity. However, the main reason the ending was weak was because no soldier during the war got bet up enough by the flag to perspire several quarts trying to salute. They were fed up with that stuff. The Patent Leather Kid should have ended with the hero just beginning to get well. All the picture needed to have a happy ending was just some little hint that he would be all right eventually. Another thing I did not care for particularly was the way the hero showed his cowardice. He announced the fact that he was scared in a loud tone of voice, and it stands to reason that if he had enough courage to tell of his fear, he would have been brave enough to go through with the fighting. He should have been characterized as the loud-mouthed, aggressive type, until he reached the real shooting. Al Santell did a good job of the direction, although among his shooting scenes as Bill Wellman shoots them is one way of avoiding close-ups without sacrificing drama.

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numerous close-ups he used one in which the hero makes a
triumphant effort to move his paralyzed hands. Instead of
shooting the scene so as to get both his agonized face and
his dead hands into camera range, Santell made a close-
up of just his face. Therefore, the terrific struggle he
was making was not connected by the camera with his
paralyzed hands. One thing about The Patent Leather Kid
which I liked particularly was the fact that the atmos-
phere was perfect. The story was laid in 1917, and the
surroundings were typical of that year—not 1928, as
some of these war films have been. The boxing stuff
was very good. Richard Barthelmess was starred in The
Kid; and of course, he gave a superb performance. There
is no one on the screen who can touch him when it comes
to a certain type of characterization. Molly O'Day, who
played opposite him, was quite satisfactory. Arthur
Stone, one of the cleverest actors in the business, gives a
characterization which is outstanding by reason of its
brilliance. Matthew Betz and Lawford Davidson complete
a highly satisfactory cast.

RADICAL ideas on direction make Life's Like That
a notable picture. Raymond Cannon wrote the story
and did the direction, so it is his picture absolutely.
It was produced by Fanchon Royer. Jack and Clark
Murray had something to do with it; I think they edited it.
Now that all the preliminaries are disposed of, I
can go on and talk about the picture itself. The most
unique feature of Cannon's direction was the shift shot
which he used instead of fade-outs. He could travel miles
with just a few feet of film. It was very remarkable stuff,
and did away with the sensation of time lapses which
fade-outs and fade-ins give. Another revolutionary move
on Cannon's part was the fact that he just picked up
his characters off the street and did not indulge in long
accounts of their names, pedigrees, and political affiliations.
Had they been characters in a novel, it would have
been different, but they were in a motion picture where
their looks were enough to identify them. That's some-
thing that a lot of directors should take up. Cannon used
very few close-ups, another point in his favor. Incidentally,
he had his young couple make love as young people
do these days, not as they did back in the eighties. This
love in a garden stuff is out of date. Modern methods
may not be as pleasing to the eye, but they are more
direct and to the point. Wade Boteler and Grant Withers
headed a competent cast.

ANYONE who doesn't believe that color in motion
pictures is here to stay should see the two latest
Technicolor two-reelers, The Virgin Queen and
Cleopatra. In addition to being well written and well
directed, they have some beautiful photographic value.
This talk about color being hard on the eyes is a lot of
rot. The eye is used to seeing colors all around it, so it
naturally expects color in anything it sees. Therefore,
how can anyone's eyes be strained by seeing colored mo-
tion pictures? After one is used to them, they are no
different from the regular dull gray, except that they

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PARAMOUNT—FAMOUS—LASKY
offer more treats to the eye. It stands to reason that no one is going to be satisfied with the present film when he can have color. It is like asking a person to admire the first rough sketch when the finished painting is handy. Technicolor is the best color process I ever have seen, and their historic two-reelers are veritable gems. A man named Neill directs them and Leon Abrams writes them. Natalie Kalmus is responsible for all the beautiful color effects, and her husband, Herbert Kalmus, produces them. He is the nominal head of the company, but I have it on good authority that Mrs. Kalmus is doing all the work until his golf game gets good enough for him to go around in about ninety.

As a rule, I go to Harold Lloyd's comedies merely to be amused. There never is anything in them to criticize, so I go and enjoy myself. His latest, Speedy, left me cold, however. It didn't seem to reach the heights of humor to which The Freshman and The Kid Brother attained. It was funny enough in spots, but there were no long, sustained laughs as there were in the previous comedies. Nevertheless, it was a far better picture than the majority being released these days. Its main trouble was its double plot. At the start of the picture two themes were begun, one, Speedy's attempt to get a steady job; and second, the big traction company's efforts to squeeze out its smaller competitors. When about half the picture was run, it settled down on the street car plot. A lot of time which might have been spent in making gags was used up in developing the stories. That, I think, was the reason Speedy did not go over so well with me.

Steamboat Bill Jr. is one picture where Buster Keaton's frozen face did not grate on me. As a rule, I don't think it is a good idea to go through an entire seven or eight reels and show no expression at all, but it fitted in beautifully with the gags in his latest opus. Steamboat Bill is a very amusing comedy; and Charles Reisner, who directed, deserves a great deal of credit for his clever work. Ernest Torrence, who is teamed with Keaton, gives a performance which can be placed on a par with his superb work in The Covered Wagon. Between the three of them, they managed to keep their laughs well distributed through the picture. There weren't any long pauses between the funny things, something in which Steamboat Bill stands alone. As I remember the last Keaton comedy I saw, there would be a laugh, then a long period in which nothing amusing happened, then another laugh. Steamboat Bill did not strain for laughs at any time, another comedy quality which always appeals to me. The cyclone sequence deserves a lot of credit. That was the funniest part of the picture. The sequence where Torrence goes to buy his son a hat was also very amusing. Tom McGuire and a girl whose name I did not get formed the supporting cast. I have seen McGuire dozens of times on the screen, and every time he does good work. I can't understand why he is not given larger parts, since he certainly is capable of handling them.

Someone should present Lewis Milestone with a medal for his splendid direction in The Racket. It is one of the best pieces of work turned out by anyone this year. It is his stuff and the superb performance of Louis Wolheim which make this a great picture. The Racket starred Thomas Meighan and was produced by Caddo. Meighan did quite satisfactory work, but his role did not offer the opportunities of Wolheim's. There was no artificial, motion-picture atmosphere to the picture. Everything seemed true to life, so naturally, the dramatic scenes attained tremendous power. One sequence in particular was very good. It was a cafe where Wolheim, the gang leader, was giving a party. The rival gang leader and his men came in and took seats at nearby tables. The suspense became terrific; and at just the right time, Milestone ended it by having Wolheim kill his rival. Incidentally, the man died with his eyes open. Another good thing about The Racket was the fact that it was logically worked out. Everything turned out exactly right,
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something that probably was due in a great measure to the picture's close adherence to the play. Logic in a motion picture always appeals to me. In spite of its being slightly more than average length, The Racket does not seem to be long. Every reel is so tightly packed with action that length never enters the head of the person viewing it. Milestone demonstrates that he can handle human comedy story with the comedy relief, and they're very good. Lee Moran, who has always been a brilliant comedian, is one; and Skeets Gallagher, a newcomer to me, is the other. Gallagher is a good actor and a very funny man, and I hope he will be given bigger parts. Marie Prevost, in a new sort of characterization for her, does fine work. George Stone and Lucile White, two characters given by Mr. Milestone, are excellent. John Darrow was quite satisfactory, and the men who played the policeman, who was shot by Holmes, and the lawyer deserve praise.

TELLING the World has achieved something notable in that it presents William Haines as even more of an impossible ass than he has been hitherto in his pictures. Aside from the silliness with which Haines was characterized, the picture is pretty good. The story was quite satisfactory, although there were things in it which rather strained one's credulity. Sam Wood's direction displayed intelligence in everything but the matter of close-ups, which he used indiscriminately and unwisely. The pictures were not too long, which were very amusing. In them Haines demonstrated that he could be a clever comedian if he were only allowed to do something besides these half-baked things he plays now. It isn't possible to make a hero out of a man who hasn't the sympathy of the audience. In Telling the World Haines was supposed to be the son of a wealthy banker, and was presumably a gentleman. His actions gave so little hint of that it when there was a cut to some pictures of him taken prior to his father's throwing him out, I was rather surprised to find that he was supposed to have some breeding. Again, during the scene where he marries Anita Page, he answers one of the questions of the wedding ceremony with a wisecrack. He is supposed to be in love with her, but he apparently doesn't care enough for her to be serious during the wedding. Another evidence of his gentleness is the sequence where he takes Anita home to her boarding house and follows her right up to her room and falls asleep. Had any fellow behaved like that in real life, the girl would have batted him in the eye and thrown him out, instead of falling madly in love with him. I don't think Haines is to blame for his silly parts, because no actor is going to deliberately ruin his drawing power. Anita Page plays opposite Haines in this picture. She is going to be a sensation if she is cast correctly. In the two pictures I have seen her in, her work shows promise; but she should not be given parts such as she had in Our Dancing Daughters, where she was a hard-boiled little fortune seeker. I don't know Miss Page at all, having seen her only on the screen, but she seems rather young for such roles. In my estimation, she would be a bigger box-office success if she were given parts into which she fitted more naturally. Joe Farnham's titles were as excellent as usual.

BEAUTIFUL production made Fazil a noteworthy picture, although there wasn't much else to it, except Howard Hawks' splendid direction of the love story. The love scenes between Charles Farrell and Greta Nissen were very well done except for the silly kisses, "Squishy" is probably not a word, but it is the only thing which can describe the lovers' oscillatory intervals. The lack of goopy love scenes was one thing I liked about Street Angel. A great love can be put over just as well without a lot of promiscuous necking, and it certainly is a quite suitable story for the screen. We insist that Charlie and Greta are great lovers, although Charlie is better at it when he is not hampered by having to be a passionate sheik. In Seventh Heaven and Street Angel, Charlie was just himself. In Fazil his mind seemed to be occupied by the thought that he was making a silly fool of himself. Not that his performance wasn't good. He made a fine sheik, and it was only momentarily that he dropped into his real self. Farrell is, without a doubt, one of the finest actors the screen ever has known; but I think he should be given parts which suit him better. To do Fazil justice, it contained the thing without which no picture can be good. It was logically done and logically ended, and logic is a quality which I always enjoy in a motion picture. There was no hope for any lasting love between the sheik with old-fashioned ideas and the modern girl, so the story killed them both in order that, theoretically at least, they would find peace and a solution of their difficulties. That was good stuff. Fazil uncovered a new acting discovery, Greta Nissen. She has been on the screen some time, but never has she given a performance like her work in Fazil. Her beauty and cleverness contributed a great deal to the picture. Mac Bush and John Boles were quite satisfactory.

FOR consistently good program pictures, De Mille wins the prize. About the only one with which I have found any fault was Skyscraper, and it had many redeeming features, including Sue Carol. The latest good one is The Cop, which is a very entertaining little picture. It is a crook story, and Donald Crisp, who directed, did a good piece of work. Bill Boyd was starred in The Cop, and he gave one of the best performances of his career. For the first time he let some of his intelligence reach the screen. Hitherto, he has given the impression of being too dumb to live. The plot of The Cop has the merit of being very original, and the crime which is committed is very cleverly worked out. It is very interesting when the job is pulled. Another thing about Crisp's direction which I liked was the way he had of creating natural looking street scenes. None of them looked like a motion picture set. He used too many close-ups, however. Alan Hale and Robert Armstrong, both fine trouper, gave excellent performances. Jacqueline Logan was quite satisfactory, as usual.

THE next picture I saw after saying that Pathe-De Mille made fine program pictures was Power, which is among the silliest pictures ever made. It hasn't a sane moment in it, but it has the unique distinction of being the first picture ever stolen by the title-writer. John Krafft, who always turns out satisfactory work, does a magnificent bunch of titles in this. They contribute the only laughs which appear in Power. Krafft is one title

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who should welcome sound pictures, because he can write dialogue. All of his titles would be very funny if spoken, a quality which few titles possess. Howard Higgin, who directed the picture, is mere to be pitied than scorned. His direction was highly satisfactory, but the story was too silly for any use. He managed to insert a few touches which were rather amusing. Skyscraper, the first of the industrial opuses which Pathé turned out, at least had some dramatic stuff on the building. The great dam, which was the reason for this picture being called Power, is figured in the story marvelously. All in all, it was pretty poor stuff. Bill Boyd, Alan Hale, and Jacqueline Logan attended to the acting end of the picture.

Reviewed In This Number

BARKER, THE—
A First National picture. Directed by George Fitz-maurice; adaptation by Benjamin Glazer; from the play by John Kenyon Nicholson and the stage production by Charles L. Wagner; photographed by Lee Garmes; Cullen Tate, assistant director.

CLEOPATRA—
A Technicolor picture, released by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Directed by R. William Neill; story by Natalie Kalmus; scenario by Leon Abrams; photographed by George Cav; art direction by Andre Chotan; settings by Tee-Art Studio; edited by Aubrey Scotto; production manager, J. T. Reed.
The cast: Dorothy Revier, Robert Ellis, William Walling, Serge Temoff, Ben Hendricks Jr., Evelyn Selbie.

COP, THE—
A Pathe-De Mille picture. Directed by Donald Crisp; produced by Ralph Block; art director, Stephen Goosen; photographer, Arthur Miller; film editor, Claude Berkeley; assistant director, Emil De Ruelle; production manager, Harry Poppe.

FAZI—
A William Fox picture. Directed by Howard Hawks; from the play L'Insoumise by Pierre Frondaie; adaptation by Philip Klein; continuity by Seton I. Miller; sets by William Darling; technical director, Jamiel Hasson; cinematographer, L. W. O'Connell.

HIT OF THE SHOW—
An FBO picture. Directed by Ralph Ince; from the story, Notices, by Viola Brothers Shore; screen play by Enid Hibbard; photographed by Robert Martin.

LADIES OF THE MOB—
A Paramount picture. Directed by William Wellman; associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; story by Ernest Booth; adapted by Oliver H. P. Garrett; continuity by John Farrow; photographed by E. Lloyd Sheldon; supervised by Henry Gerrard; assistant director, Otto Brower.
The cast: Clara Bow, Richard Arlen, Helen Lynch, Mary Alden, Carl Gerard, Bodil Rosing, Lorraine Rivero, James Pierce.

LIFE'S LIKE THAT—
A Fanchon Royer picture. Unleased. Directed by Raymond Cannon; scenario by Raymond Cannon; photographed by Owen Huggins; editor, Jack Murray; assistant director, Clark Murray.
The cast: Wade Boteler, Grant Withers, Elba Anglegus, Beatrice Prentice, Mike Tellegen, Aniela Elter, Paul Ralli, Vesey O'Davoren.

PATENT LEATHER KID—
A First National picture. Directed by Alfred Santell; from the story by Rupert Hughes; adaptation by Adela Rogers St. John; continuity by Winifred Dunn; cameraman, Arthur Edeson.

POWER—
A Pathe picture. Directed by Howard Higgin; associating producer, Ralph Block; story by Tay Garnett; adaptation by Tay Garnett; cameraman, Peurrell Marley; assistant director, Robert Fellow; production manager, Harry Poppe; titles by John Kraf; film editor, Doane Harrison.
The cast: William Boyd, Alan Hale, Jacqueline Logan, Jerry Drew, Joan Bennett, Carol Lombard, Pauline Curley.

RACKET, THE—
Produced by The Caddo Company and released by Paramount. Presented by Howard R. Hughes; directed by Lewis Milestone; scenario by Del Andrews; photographed by Tony Gaudio and Dewey Wriggle; edited by Eddie Adams; art director, Julian Fleming; titles by Tom Miranda; assistant director, Nate Watt.
The cast: Thomas Meighan, Marie Prevost, Louis Wolheim, Henry Sedley, Sam De Grasse, Lee Moran, Lucien Prival, Pat Collins, George Stone, Skeets Gallagher, John Darrow, Dan Wolheim.

SPEEDY—
A Harold Lloyd picture. Story by John Grey; gag men, Rex Neal, Howard Rogers, Jayne How; titles by Al de Mon; directed by Ted Wilde; photographed by Walter Ludin.
The cast: Harold Lloyd, Ann Christy, Brooks Benedict, Bert Woodruff.

STEAMBOAT BILL JR.—
A United Artists picture. Directed by Charles P. Reisner; story by Carl Harbaugh; photographed by Dev Jennings and Bert Haines; technical director, Fred Gabrielle; assistant director, Sandy Roth.
The cast: Ernest Torrence, Tom Lewis, Tom McGuire, Marion Byon, Buster Keaton.

TELLING THE WORLD—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by Sam Wood; story by Dale Van Every; scenario by Raymond L. Schrock; titles by Joe Farnham; settings by Cedric Gibbons; wardrobe by Gilbert Clark; photographed by William Daniels; film editor, Margaret Booth.

VIRGIN QUEEN, THE—
A Technicolor picture, released by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer; directed by Roy William Neill; scenario by Leon Abrams; photographed by George Cav; art director, Andre Chotan; color art director, Natalie Kalmus; sets by Tee-Art studio; supervised by Aubrey Scotto.
The cast: Dorothy Dwan, Forrest Stanley, Armand Kaliz, Aileen Manning.

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Among the Contributors

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Rod La Rocque
Ivan Lebedeff
Darryl Zanuck
Madeleine Matzen
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He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill.—Burke.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, JULY 21, 1928

By Way of Apology
A last-minute rush brought in so many articles for The Contributors’ Number that it was not possible to publish all of them in a single issue. A number are presented herewith, and the remainder will appear in subsequent issues of The Spectator.

Conrad Discusses the “Talkies”
By CONRAD NAGEL

Off the coast of Norway lies a huge rock inhabited by millions of birds. Many, many years ago the first vessel to sail that way passed this rock. The birds, startled by this unexpected sight, rose in the air—hundreds of thousands of them. So vast was their number that the people aboard the vessel were amazed and thrilled by the sight, and each time the vessel passed that way its passengers looked forward to the moment when the startled birds would take wing.

But the birds soon became accustomed to the vessel and were no longer frightened from their rock as it passed by.

Someone conceived the idea of firing a gun when the boat appeared off the island—thus startling the birds into flight again.

The gun, becoming familiar, was soon ignored. By this time steam was used to propel the vessel, and a sudden blast of the whistle once more sent the flocks skyward. But the whistle, naturally, soon was disdained and the feathered myriads retain their perch to this day.

Entertaining the public is exactly like frightening the birds off the rock. A variety of methods must be employed or the birds and public alike will ignore that with which they have become too familiar.

The public’s hero one year is Babe Ruth—next year he is forgotten and the mobs are hysterical over Valentino—Valentino gives way to Red Grange—Grange to Jack Dempsey, and so on. But always there must be change—variety, something new.

Because the motion picture was so entirely new it dominated and held the field of popular entertainment as nothing else has ever done. That hold has been weakened somewhat because variety and newness is less and less a part of each production. Stories have become such familiar formulas, and casts so stereotyped, that a picture-wise audience can tell just what will happen after seeing the first reel of an average production.

Years of great prosperity have softened the mental and physical muscles of the motion picture industry until the industry has allowed itself to slip into a rut so deep that a cataclysm is needed to jar it free.

The talking picture has provided the necessary upheaval, and every man and woman connected with motion pictures is being aroused and stirred into new and greater activity that will be productive of much progress.

The talking picture has not been welcomed by the industry, but like all things new and different it has had to batter its way in. Even now when it is well in, its presence is resented by most of those secure in established positions. Actors, writers, producers and directors—all make up the great majority of those who argue against it, and the arguments advanced against the “talkies” are word for word the arguments used against the movies twenty-five years ago!

At any gathering of from two to fifty picture people these days one will find the debate on in full force. A small group of enthusiastic supporters of the “talkies” will be doing battle with an overwhelming majority of those who see nothing in the sound pictures.

The human mind because it is human, resents anything new and will not judge it fairly. The average individual is so constituted that he will not view progress through the open window of the mind, but prefers to squat out at it fearfully through the narrow slits of his prejudice.

This unfortunate state of mind is exemplified by the little old lady who stood watching the first steam train endeavoring to get under way. “It’ll never go! It’ll never go!” she declared. When the test was successful and the train disappeared down the street she cried, “It’ll never stop! It’ll never stop!”

Regardless of those who, because of their lack of vision, oppose the “talkies,” the talking pictures are here to stay. They are going to rouse every person in the picture industry from stagnant self-satisfaction and revive a sadly waning interest of the public in screen entertainment.

Edison gave to the public the first silent moving picture over thirty years ago. The cold silent moving picture has had breathed into it the breath of life and has become a living vibrant thing.

Vast new fields of material are opened up. Writers struggle over every story to eliminate long talking scenes. Now those scenes are desirable. Greater demands will be made on players and directors resulting in a greater measure of effort put into each production.

Many changes will occur and much that is good and healthy and normal will come to motion pictures. But all this will come gradually and will come without affecting greatly the vast organization of the industry itself.

Just as the self-starter and the pneumatic tire caused a flurry in the automobile industry, and then sold more cars than ever before; just as the radio upset the talking machine industry and then sold more talking machines than ever before, because of the loud speaker and electrical
recording brought by radio developments—so will the talking picture slowly make a place for itself without disrupting the motion picture industry.

The silent picture will always be made—at least for many years—to supply the great foreign market and the thousands of small theatres that cannot afford talking equipment as it is now installed. Nor can producers afford expensive all-talking productions when these can be placed in only a few hundred theatres.

The talking picture after much abuse, many trials and experiments, will find its proper place without disturbing greatly the scheme of things other than to bring new life to the industry and revived interest from the public.

Let those who doubt that the “talkie” is here to stay, go into any theatre that is running one of the latest talking pictures. Watch the audience lean forward and listen with rapt attention while the players are speaking. Watch the audience relax—sit back and whisper comments when the talking ceases and the old familiar printed title is flashed. The picture is once more a dead thing—without life, until another talking sequence occurs.

The birds will sit on the rock until frightened by something new. Mr. and Mrs. Public will sit at home unless they are lured to the theatre by a constant variety in their entertainment. Not only is the “talkie” new, but it will afford an endless variety of entertainment. It will become as established a part of our everyday life as the moving picture itself.

Those who welcome progress and rejoice in that which is new will welcome the talking picture and plunge eagerly and enthusiastically into the task of promoting it. Those who fail to see its possibilities and stand on the sidelines emulating the old lady watching the first steam train, will find themselves where she found herself—left behind in a cloud of dust.

Talking Pictures and Foreigners
By ROD LA ROCQUE

My Dear Welford:

I have religiously followed your Spectator and have, therefore, read everything that you have written regarding the so-called talking pictures. You have treated the subject most cleverly and I have nothing more interesting to report than that I agree with you as far as you go, but I don’t think you go far enough. You have signed off at the most interesting point. You have ignored our greatest problem.

Now it is generally agreed that the European, or foreign market for pictures is thirty percent, or forty percent, (or something like that) of the American market. The percentage really doesn’t matter. Pictures should be international in their appeal regardless of the market. Anyway, let’s say that our pictures should be run in foreign countries, or that foreign-made pictures should be run in America. It works both ways. At any rate, the average successful American picture, I am authentically informed, is translated into seventeen different languages.

In my opinion, this fact presents the talking pictures with a pretty problem. I cannot help but feel that it would be bad policy to just do our pictures with English spoken titles and then be satisfied to release the same pictures to the non-English speaking world as ordinary old-fashioned silent pictures.

On the other hand, something tells me (very probably innate premonition) that we might experience a degree of difficulty in obtaining a cast that spoke seventeen languages. And even if that were possible it would be too laborious and expensive to make seventeen takes of each scene.

Furthermore, Europe will very probably make several talking pictures. I am sure that we will want to see them. Also hear them. Will we be content to listen to a language that we do not understand in the hope that the action will explain itself? Many European-made pictures have already proven a great success in America, but with English titles.

Therefore, I firmly believe that some method of synchronizing a voice (any voice so long as it is pleasant and suits the character) in any language, to the action of the picture at any time after the picture is completed is necessary. Suiting the word to the action would be comparatively simple.

Is there not a possible solution to this problem in the general mechanics that made possible the production of the opera Le Coq D’Or?

Rimsky-Korsakoff, when he wrote this famous opera, was intent upon having it done by a cast of opera singers. There was, however, a great amount of dancing in it, and it finally proved difficult to find a cast of singers who could do the ballet work. It proved, likewise, difficult to find a cast of dancers who could sing.

At the time that Le Coq D’Or was first given production at Petrograd M. Fokine ingeniously devised the plan of having all the singers seated at each side of the stage, while the dancers interpreted, in pantomime, what was sung. This proved a great success, and has stood the acid test.

Of course, as far as the pictures are concerned one might easily argue against the above mentioned method. But will the objections eclipse the advantages?

For instance, one might raise the already worn-out lip-reading objection, on the ground that what words another person would speak would not perfectly synchronize with the movements of the lips of the player who was in the scene.

Well, the answers to this objection are obvious. In the first place, the titles of a finished picture have never been what we said when the scene was played. Secondly, the only people who are proficient at lip-reading are deaf persons, and fortunately, in comparison to the population there is a very small percentage of them. Thirdly, I have seen many American pictures exhibited in France, Germany and Hungary with French, German and Hungarian titles respectively and particularly noted (I believe the box-office receipts also record the fact) that the audiences enjoyed the pictures in spite of the fact that the French, German or Hungarian titles they read contained no words, as far as lip-reading was concerned, that were spoken in the scenes in the picture. Also the only time that the lips of a player can be read are in the very large close-ups. And the exaggerated close-up is rapidly becoming passe. Observation and deduction, therefore, convince me that the lip-reading objection is nil.

The next objection is very likely the cost. Starting anything is expensive. But after the thing would be organized...
Feeling and Acting
By IVAN LEBEDEFF

It became almost an axiom—even for the non-professionals—that the screen acting is very different from the stage acting. The stage has its different established schools and theories, classic principles and examples. The screen is too young yet, and has not had time to establish it nor time to systematize and classify. The aim of this article is only to trace what we consider the essential roots of acting generally, and screen acting especially. The author does not flatter himself with the idea to know sufficiently to attempt an academical analysis of different theories of screen acting as terra incognita with all possible deductions and details. Besides, we think that only the introduction for such a work must have much more space than this entire study.

The stage has two principles—almost opposite schools. The first—the so-called classic school, represented by the Comedie Francaise—says (speaking synthetically) that the acting is composed by ten to twenty-five per cent of emotions (feeling) and ninety to seventy-five per cent of technic; everything else is amateurish.

The second—which, at least, for the author of these lines—is represented by certain great individuals of the Russian theatre generally and the Moskow Art Theatre particularly—supposes the acting to be composed differently.

Technic is important, but feeling is still much more important. “An actor”—used to say the great Russian dramatic actor, Davidoff—“must make definitely clear for himself every step, gesture, pose and modulation of voice, then go and feel and live his part as deeply and sincerely as he can. The art of an actor is not in impersonating and imitating to perfection a created by his imagination type of character, but to become for a few hours in his mind and soul the character itself, remaining always the type (it means bringing out and underlining the distinction of the type), and think and feel as the character should. He must not act, but live his part. A technically finished and polished performance without feeling, I call miserable; but a sincere performance without technical perfection will only be an unfinished performance.”

Davidoff was an educated, well read and cultured man. He could analyze his characterizations to perfection, but we have another striking example of what a power of feeling can do. An ignorant plain and illiterate man with a great soul, by the name of Edmund Kean, became a century ago one of the greatest actors of all times and

and the method perfected it would cost very little more to make an extra record in any one language than it would to have the titles translated. And wouldn’t the end justify the means?

In addition to whatever other advantages the method I suggest possesses it would also permit such foreign artists as Emil Jannings to make talking pictures for the English speaking world. Should we be robbed of the art of Jannings merely because he does not speak our language?

And that’s that. Now, you big stiff, go to Alaska and enjoy your vacation. I’ve done my bit. ROD.

July 21, 1928 THE FILM SPECTATOR Page Five

UNIMPORTANT IF TRUE By K. C. B.

MR. JACK Warner. * * * A GREAT big sign.
HIS Studio. * * * GIVE the address.
MY DEAR Jack. * * * AND STICK it right up.
WHAT I want to tell you. * * * * * OVER OUR driveway.
IS THAT your Bill Guthrie. * * * * * AND THEY worked all day.
CAME TO Lake Arrowhead. * * * * * AND WE enjoyed it.
WITH ROSE Lederman. * * * * * AND everything.
AND RIN Tin Tin. * * * * * AND AT 2 a.m.
AND A lot of people. * * * * * ON THE morning after.
AND A lot of trucks. * * * * * WHILE Bill and his gang.
AND MY wife’s mother. * * * * * WERE sleeping soundly.
HAS A house up there. * * * * * AT YOUR expense.
AND IT’S some swell house. * * * * * IN THE Arrowhead Tavern.
AND I was there. * * * * * I WAS awakened.
AND I knew Bill. * * * * * IN MY pajamas.
BACK in Washington. * * * * * BY A couple of people.
AND HE can’t to me. * * * * * WHO HAD seen your sign.
UP AT Arrowhead. * * * * * OVER OUR driveway.
AND HE said to me. * * * * * AND THEY wanted a room.

“MAY WE use your house?” * * * * * IN THE “Pine Lodge Hotel.”
AND I said to him. * * * * *
“THE HOUSE ain’t mine. * * * * *
“BUT I’LL see about it.” * * * * *
AND SO I did. * * * * *
AND OF all the trucks. * * * * *
AND SUN reflectors. * * * * *
AND SUN burned actors. * * * * *
I EVER did see. * * * * *
THEY WOKE us all up. * * * * *
AT 7 a.m. * * * *
AND FIRST thing they did. * * * * *
WAS UNLOAD from a truck. * * * *

I THANK you. * * *

shook London “on Wednesdays and Fridays” by the three-minutes agony of “Hamlet” in the last act, and by the words “And buried, gentle Tyrell?” from Richard III “on Mondays”.

Now, what is the essential principle of screen acting: feeling or technic? A famous diplomat and one of the cleverest men—Charles Maurice de Perigore, known in history as Prince de Talleyrand—once remarked that the tongue is given us to conceal our thoughts. Paraphras-
ing this paradox we should say that as screen acting concerns—the technic is necessary for use only to control the expressions of feelings on our faces.

Before we go further, let us establish one and the most important axiom that not only the expression of the feeling or thought photographs, but the unexpressed on facial or bodily surface functions of the soul and mind registers too, and are transmitted as some kind of immaterial power to the corresponding antennae of the audience.

For most of the actors there is nothing new in it. They believe in it, discuss it and, strangely enough, take it very little in consideration and do not apply it in their work.

Many actors know even that “the camera” registers not only the actual emotions and thoughts, but very often* brings out the hidden sides of the whole character and personality of the actor.

The much discussed ‘it’ or “personality” is to us to a great extent nothing else than the natural, inborn (or artificially developed) capacity and depth of feeling. If an actor or actress does not register, it means that the strength of his emotions is very little—or none. Only extraordinary photographic qualities of his face and very polished technic can save him in such a case, but such an actor will never be a “hit”.

On the other hand, we all know that there have been examples, when playing with their backs to the camera, that actors and actresses have registered and transmitted to the spectators their emotions with full strength and distinction.

Another—still more extraordinary phenomenon in the sphere of the photography of feeling—is the performance of Janet Gaynor in Seventh Heaven. It is hard to suppose that a young girl like Miss Gaynor could know either by life experience, or theoretically as much about such a great, beautiful, all-absorbing and all-conquering love, as she has given us with such a plain and terrific power in this picture. It is hard to believe that she could know enough about the transient and vain, about the great sadness and hopeless grief in earthly existence and the suffering of the human soul, to be able to portray something, that we never before have seen on the screen; the photograph of an absolutely empty human soul, and she did it to perfection. We consider those two things as great examples of photoplay of one hundred per cent condensed and one hundred per cent discharged feeling.

Janet Gaynor does not need “to learn to act”—in common sense of this expression. Her inborn tactfulness in measuring the strength of her facial expressions is also extraordinary—and is there anybody who can teach her how to feel?

At the same time there are several quite prominent players who have never learned to feel. Few of them, whose technic is perfect, whose performances are always an example of “finish”, have never been able to move the audience. They are admired for their cleverness, but never felt by spectators.

In a few scenes from Seventh Heaven, a little girl, Diane, has brought out of the souls of the audience more reactive emotions than these stars put together during their “big” and long careers. Why? Because in these few scenes she has given to the audience more than they will ever be able to give.

Is it possible to learn to feel?

In a great majority of cases, we think—yes. Feelings—as the functions of soul (or spiritual beginnings of human beings) can be trained just as the capacity to think—the function of reason or mind.

Life itself usually is doing it automatically—with experience, but it requires time and opportunities. It can be accelerated artificially*, just like the training of the mind by education. Music, art, good reading, thinking—and generally—corresponding (or sharply paradoxical) environment helps the awakening of the capacity to feel. General development of mind is very important for the development of the strength, depth and refinement of feeling. (Although we know that the animals can feel—and very strongly, indeed; often stronger than many human beings).

To teach a young actor or actress “to play” is first to teach him or her to feel, and then to express it in certain measure on the surface, leaving the rest of the feeling to be caught by the camera behind the facial expression. (Here is the point of certain particular difficulties of screen acting: different tempo of action, limitation of space, more artificial than the stage surroundings, disconnected action and necessity to be able in repeating the scenes to awaken several times the feeling with all required strength and sincerity.)

The screen is recruiting its new contingents almost solely among the youth—and the youth mostly does not know how to feel. They are inexperienced in life, their emotions are sudden, abrupt and quick-passing; their minds react on their emotions—without analyzing them. It’s very difficult for them to awake or provoke emotions and feelings—and it is almost impossible to control the abrupt eruption of an active one.

Therefore, the most necessary experience for the screen acting consists in controlling and timing the expression of feeling—after one knows how to feel.

It must not be understood, as the complete denial of

*Not always! Because otherwise many of our screen actors should either retire from the screen—or at least change sharply their types.

To Producers!

Talking pictures are still experimental as far as permanent audience popularity is concerned. Cut out one element of chance by having your dialogue written by a man who has been for twenty years a successful vaudeville author, a field by the way, where every line has to click. Am also an expert writer of original scenarios with box-office ideas, comedy relief that doesn’t seem dragged in, and titles that induce audible laughs. Let’s T-A-L-K it over.

JAMES MADISON

323 North Citrus Ave., Los Angeles
ORegon 5627
The Effect of Talking Pictures
By Darryl Zanuck

The talking motion picture is here to stay. This fact is unquestionably demonstrated in the box-office performances of the following Warner Brothers Vitaphone productions: The Jazz Singer, Glorious Betsy, Tenderloin, The Lion and the Mouse, Lights of New York, formerly known as Bright Lights, and Women They Talk About.

The achievement of the Warner Brothers theatre in Hollywood is only a duplication of the hundreds of other theatres throughout America that have broken box-office records with sound and talking photo-dramas in the last six weeks.

Naturally the question arises as to the adaptability of the motion picture scenario and title writer, the motion picture director and supervisor, into the talking picture field. It is reasonable to expect as many changes in personnel of the men behind the camera as there will be changes in personnel of those who appear before the camera. Actors and actresses will be judged not only by their beauty or personality, but by their speaking voices and stage experience. Likewise, the trained dialogue writer will supplant the title writer of to-day, providing the title writer has not the qualifications and the adaptability to change his "silent technique".

Personally I believe the title writer will make a better dialogue writer than the experienced stage dramatist for the reason that the title writer has been taught brevity and condensation of speech which allows many talking incidents to be injected into a limited amount of talking film. . . . In other words, the title writer, when he adapts himself, will get to the point quickly, for he has been taught to do this through the system of the "silent technique".

The scenario writer will also be supplanted by the dramatist unless he studies Vitaphone, as scenario writing will be revolutionized and is right now being revolutionized in the preparation of our forthcoming Warner Brothers talking pictures, such as: The Terror, The Singing Fool, My Man, The Redeeming Sin, and Conquest. These are all extended run specials which are being made talking pictures employing both voice and synchronizing effects one hundred percent.

The silent picture director will also be forced to alter his views and accept a technique that he has heretofore avoided. It was once advisable to avoid as much talking or as many title situations as possible. It is now necessary to invent and properly direct clever dialogue incidents as demonstrated in Glorious Betsy, where in the last reel of the picture Conrad Nagel tells Dolores Costello, in four spoken lines what would take one reel of film to pictureize. And this is only a trivial example.

However, I feel that the motion picture director will in most cases be a more successful talking picture director than the experienced stage director, for the reason that the movie director knows the value of pantomime, camera angles, and picture technique in general. If he is willing to accept and learn, he will appreciate that Vitaphone has given him opportunities for effects which he could never before employ.

The motion picture supervisor will have to adapt himself as well as others. He must study the scenario as well as the directorial talking effects. It is up to him primarily, whether or not sound effects are properly taken advantage of and he must have the courage of his convictions and be willing to experiment and instruct his writers and directors to take advantage of Vitaphone and all that it offers.

Unless he is a good judge of dialogue, a good judge of stage presentation, he will be a backward number, as upon his shoulders rests the responsibilities of the undertaking.

In closing may I not say that if the Warner Brothers, in their entire career, have never done anything for the motion picture industry heretofore, they deserve the greatest appreciation that we can give them for sponsoring talking pictures? They are the originators of Vitaphone, which has financially saved the life of the exhibitor and the motion picture industry. After two years of ridicule and an expense of four million dollars, they may now sit back and rest on their laurels while the rest of the industry scrambles frantically in an effort to catch up. The day of the "silent picture" is a day far in the past. The black shadow of Al Jolson in The Jazz Singer, was the well-known "hand-writing on the wall" . . .

A New Species of Writer is Discovered
By Madeleine Matzen

The Wampas, that enterprising association of motion picture publicists ("publicist" is merely a fancy name for the good old press agent), have turned explorers—and they have been exploring the motion picture industry. In the course of their activities they unearthed a new and interesting species—the illegitimate writer.

Now most of us write and as many of us are paid for what we write, and what we write is printed and distributed via the magazines and newspapers, we consider ourselves legitimate writers if we think about the matter at all. But the Wampas seem to have discovered a fine hairbreadth of difference between publicity writers—a difference that places the defenceless writer either in the legitimate or the illegitimate class. To call anyone a bastard is a breach of etiquette and good manners (see Mrs. Post's book)—to be called illegitimate is to be called a bastard. To be dubbed such a thing personally is a fearful strain upon your sense of humor, but to have one's "Art" called that—well, it is too much!

If you are a member of the Wampas (or their feminine contingent, "The Wasps") you are a legitimate publicist. If you are not a member of either of these unions you are a "scab" or an "illegitimate writer".

It makes no difference how many articles you have had printed in the various fan magazines and papers—you are illegitimate. And yet some of the best fan writers, some of our most skillful publicists are not union mem-
bers. I never heard of a union of portrait painters or of sculptors, or of virtuosos, or of novelists—did you?

It looks a good deal as though a publicity trust were being formed, as though a "freeze-out" were in progress. It looks a good deal as though the fan magazines would eventually be controlled by the Wampas and Wasp, and this means a deluge of publicity about the Wampas "Baby Stars" and a dearth of recognition for the old stars. It means that this organization can make or break a star or player—or for that matter make or break almost anyone in the industry who depends upon public acclaim for their success. This is giving the Wampas and the Wasp far too much power—and they are apt to do a lot of damage to the industry unless their wings are promptly clipped. They may grow arrogant, and there is far too much arrogance in the industry now—too much arrogance and assurance and too little real ability.

I went to see Mr. Barrett Kiesling, who is chairman (or something very important) of the Wampas "Credentials Committee". I asked him about the new ruling.

It seems that one must either be a staff writer or under contract to a magazine, or paper, in order to obtain stories or interviews. If you are not under contract (or a staff writer) you must get an order from the editor of the magazine or paper for that special interview or story—then this assignment has to be O.K.'d by Mr. Kiesling—then, and then only, will the studio doors be opened to you. This means that the free lance will have an almost impossible road to travel before arriving even in the outer provinces of success. For almost every editor buys an article or interview from a free lance after it is written because the manner in which it is written or treated is usually what sells it—not the subject matter.

Real news stories are naturally the first right of the staff writers—but a unique style of writing, a different treatment accorded an old subject often sells the free lance's story.

For example—last year a free lance was told by the editor of a fan magazine that only the contract writers would do interviews. He was told to submit only symposiums or feature articles. Following this the editor bought every interview the free lance sent him. He wrote these interviews so well that they were accepted in spite of protests from the staff and contract writers who resented furiously his "crawling in under the fence". He is still writing and selling interviews, for which he had a peculiar flair—and has yet to do a symposium or a feature.

But with the new Wampas ruling the best writer can no longer win out. It is all in the hands of the staff or contract writers and the Wampas who stand behind them. And yet the editors of the different fan magazines are asking for and anxious for contributions from the free lances.

But what chance has a free lance of obtaining an interview under the new arrangement?

I asked Mr. Kiesling (very meekly) if this condition did not savor of a publicity trust.

He told me it was an arrangement "for the protection of legitimate writers". It seems odd to me that "legitimate writers" should need protecting—I should think the standard and excellence of their work would be their protection against upstarts who imagined that they could write.

I asked Mr. Kiesling if this new ruling was not a little hard on the free lance. He shrugged his shoulders.

I asked him if it was not true that the free lance had to write far better than any staff writer on a magazine in order to have his story accepted—and he said "Yes!"

Inasmuch as all the free lance writers who have been appearing regularly in different fan magazines for the last few years in spite of the protests of the staff writers and because they must have written rings around these same staff writers—the new ruling seems very unfair. Inasmuch as there are Wampas and Wasp members in every studio publicity department it will be next to impossible, from now on, for the free lance to get a story, or any "stills" or photographs, to illustrate it.

What possible chance has a bright idea, if it is the idea of a free lance, or an illegitimate writer, in this case?

Let us take a look at the array of fan magazines and the motion picture sections of the newspapers and see what is offered in the way of interesting reading. Very little—just the usual hooey about this sweet young thing and that. Most of the magazines give much space to "society gossip" in screenland. And inasmuch as "society" in cinemaland is very new, rather absurd, and constantly changing as the contracts change, we, or the fans, can not take it seriously. Yet we read over and over again about the "nice buffet luncheon" that this star or that served, about who went to who's bridge party, or how happy she and so is with her husband, or what a sweet girl she such and such an ingenue is. And who cares? Nobody! They read it because it is embellished with pictures of the players and scenes from the screen plays.

The producers complain because a star is losing his following; he blames the writer—he never thinks of blaming the writer of articles for the fan magazines.

Recently the editor of one of these magazines told me that his whole staff of writers were making a try at writing an article on the new talking picture. And all attempts so far had been colorless and dull reading. It was, he told me, too big an assignment to hand over to a free lance or to entrust to an "illegitimate writer"—so doubtless he will publish a dull and colorless story. And yet talking pictures should offer one of the biggest and most colorful subjects as well as a romance of achievement to almost any writer. No wonder the legitimate writers need protecting!

We read again and again that Marion Davies appeared at such and such a first night "looking blonde and radiant" and "wearing an ermine coat." Every fan knows that Miss Davies is blonde and radiant—and ermine coats are worn by every star. Why comment upon the obvious? The public have grown to love Miss Davies because of her rollicking humor, her mimicries—she is an excellent comediene. Added to this she is a real personage in Hollywood—she has a brittle, splintered-glass personality that will make itself felt in spite of the bonbon, yellow curls and pink marshmallow coating which they continually smother her in. The fans love her in spite of this goozy coating, in spite of her poor screen plays. Marion has brains, she has something to say, is she allowed to say it? She is
not! The legitimate writers keep harping on the ermine coat, the bloneness—and the fans are beginning to weary.

But lately one of our popular stars returned from a trip abroad. The comments which she made about this trip and which were printed consisted of two remarks. One—that she had “bought a lot of clothes in Paris.” The other—when questioned as to what she saw in Europe she answered, “Oh, a lot of night clubs and I don’t know the names of any of them!” Moronia? Yes! And yet this star is clever, witty and observing.

There is such a thing as censoring publicity too closely, so that it becomes puerile. There is such a thing as a contract writer who can not write or who does not know news when he meets it.

Give the fans real, interesting and amusing information and they will be twice as happy, twice as loyal. The days of “Pollyanna” and of “Elsie Dinsmore” have passed; Freud and Havelock Ellis are here; the word “moron” is known by everyone. The public—even the fan public is growing sophisticated. But the fan magazines remain in the same stale and innocuous rut. No wonder these magazines are not making money!

As for the publicity trust—so far it has done one thing: it has discovered for us the “illegitimate writer.”

Equity’s Offer to Motion Pictures
By FRANK GILMORE

FOR fifteen years the Actors’ Equity Association has represented the actor of the legitimate stage. In that time other organizations have presented claims to represent the actor and, one by one, their claims have been tried by experience and they have passed on. To-day no one questions the right of Equity to represent the legitimate actor.

During its existence Equity has acquired a tremendous store of knowledge about producing managers, about contracts, about what requirements are practical and what would upset the balance of the theatre.

Since 1924 Equity has been in a position to obtain any concession upon which it might insist. But so fair and so tolerant has been its attitude toward the producers that among the serious and established managers there is not one who is unfriendly to Equity or Equity Shop, or would voluntarily dispense with either.

“But,” say certain motion picture actors, “the motion picture field is different from the legitimate and the experience gained by Equity in one is not applicable to the other.”

Let us see what Equity wants of the motion picture actor and what it has to offer him; and also what Equity wants of the motion picture producer and what it is prepared to offer him. For Equity does not demand everything and offer nothing in return.

Primarily Equity wants an Equity Shop in motion pictures such as exists in the legitimate theatre. Equity Shop is the term for the policy under which every actor or actress coming into the motion picture field would immediately join the Actors’ Equity Association; would maintain himself in good standing in the Association as long as he remained in the field; and would play only in such companies as were composed of Equity members in good standing.

There is nothing in that policy, you see, which would tell the actor or the manager what actor might play any part, or for what salary, or in what sort of picture, or how. In none of those vital functions would the control of the management be disturbed. How, then, would equity benefit the actors in return for their dues?

In the first place, with all motion picture actors in its ranks, Equity would be able to negotiate a satisfactory basic agreement and standard contract with the producers. There is not such an instrument in existence now. The contract for free lance players now issued by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences is better than the original contract issued by that body, but it is not a satisfactory contract and can not be while the power of enforcing any arbitration handed down under it is lacking.

No actor dependent upon the good will of his employer is in a position to fight his own battles; nor can any actor, no matter how important, or any small group of actors prevent a conspiracy among his employers to establish a black list or regulate salaries and conditions of employment. It has been tried, but never successfully.

When Equity has all screen actors in its ranks it can establish a basic working week with pay for overtime, such as exists in the legitimate theatre. All the arguments denying the possibility of such an order only parallel those advanced by legitimate producers and since disproved.

Then, the Actors’ Equity Association is the only body in existence which is devoted primarily to the welfare of the actors. Where there are divided interests there is divided allegiance.

Through its alliances Equity is stronger than any other body could be which would not have the backing it has. In many states where actors are few and without influence, Equity’s friends are strong. That has been proven in Texas and Wisconsin where legislation inimical to the actors has been beaten by that help—and even in California where three years ago laws which would have worked a direct hardship on the motion picture actor were headed off by Equity.

Now, it is true that Equity has been able to do all this for the legitimate actor, but only because it has had all the actors in its ranks, and because when it has spoken, it has spoken for them all. It needs all motion picture actors in its ranks before it can do equally splendid things there.

If there is one thing which Equity has learned in its fifteen years’ dealings with legitimate producers and its ten years’ negotiations with motion picture producers, it is that the best intentions and the most logical reasons have little weight in the scales against determined self-interest. When a stubborn producer or body of producers declines to recognize the representative of the actor; to listen to a request for arbitration; or to abide by the decision of a Board of Arbitration, the most just of causes can not proceed if it depends solely upon moral suasion.

These things the Actors’ Equity Association offers to the motion picture actor in exchange for its initiation fee and dues: a standard contract which will be negotiated by experienced and devoted executives, and secured by adequate guarantees; an executive staff and Council which has been in close touch with and made a close study of motion picture actors and their problems for ten years; a strong
and fearless representative which will stand between him and managerial aggression, as it has with the legitimate actor, (and if such a representative is not necessary now, it will be in the near future).

If Equity is prepared to promise these things to the actor what can it hold out to the producer of motion pictures? Is it not hopelessly prejudiced in favor of the actor?

* * *

There is Equity’s record for scrupulous fairness and strict adherence to its word for which any reputable legitimate producing manager will vouch. That is a good foundation upon which to build any negotiations.

There is, further, Equity’s promise that it will see its members live up to their contracts and give the best performances of which they are capable. That promise has been amply demonstrated only recently, and should carry considerable weight with producers of motion pictures.

And, although Equity has been able to require almost any change in the terms of employment, its actual requests have only been for such things as were fair and workable. And when there has been a question as to whether or not any particular item has been fair or workable, Equity has invariably been willing to submit the dispute to an impartial board of arbitration. That procedure Equity now offers to the motion picture producers, also.

Actually the stabilization of working conditions is a help to the responsible producer and is a hindrance only to the irresponsible one. It will eliminate the driving of actors, the unfair conditions of labor which at present permit the unfair and the unfit to compete on even terms with the best men in the field.

Far from being antagonistic to producing managers Equity has worked with producers and dramatists to combat inimical legislation. The repeal of the war tax on theatre admissions was due, in part, to Equity’s long and courageous campaign for it. And the force behind the formation of the American Theatre Board, in which at this moment, actor, manager and dramatist are working peaceably and harmoniously on the solution of common problems, was the Actors’ Equity Association.

To manager and actor, alike, Equity offers peace and stability in motion pictures such as it has brought to the legitimate theatre. Its record is plain for all to see.

Equity believes that it is to the best interests of both actors and managers to cooperate in the establishment and maintenance of an Equity Shop in the motion picture field.

Vitaphoning the Beaton
By TOM REED

AUTHOR’S NOTE—The last time Welford Beaton asked for articles so that he might hie himself away for a vacation and look at brooks, I schemingly waited till he had safely passed the city limits and then sent in my offering. Being a title writer, and zealous one, I naturally extolled the dot and the dash and bellowed for paragraph after paragraph. I was positive that I had closed to my self for ever the columns of The Spectator, but here I am again. And if Welford can stand it I can. The following outburst is an allegedly humorous Vitaphoning of the amazing Beaton, with but a modicum of close-ups. We will pick him up at the breakfast table awaiting the appearance of Mrs. Beaton and Donald. He is peering out of a sunlit window and envying Edward Everett Horton the ownership of pink and purple pansies with red and yellow stems.

FADE IN ON LONG SHOT.

Welford stands as Mrs. Beaton and Donald seat themselves. He is the first to speak.

FULL MEDIUM SHOT AS WELFORD SPEAKS.

Welford (with furrowed brow still pointed in general direction of Horton’s pansies): “Dash it! I didn’t sleep well. Had bad dreams—no coherency—and an atrociously bad ending.”

Mrs. Beaton (with affectionate understanding): “Well, you insisted on seeing a picture last night and I knew if you did you’d be mad this morning.”

Donald (sipping coffee): “Dad, this coffee gets worse and worse. It’s evident we’ll never have better product unless the producers find themselves—in their present fog of inefficiency.”

* * *

TROLLEY SHOT MOVING UP RAPIDLY TO WELFORD AS HE REGISTERS REACTION, THEN BACK TO FULL MEDIUM.

Mrs. Beaton (paying no attention to offspring and addressing Welford): “What did you dream about, dear?”

Welford (in half whisper): “The Vitaphone—the Vitaphone. It seemed as though I was looking at thousands of reels of it. I heard voices—hundreds of voices. I was searching for a title to criticize and dash it—I couldn’t find one. I visualized the pages of The Spectator bereft of criticism. It was horrible!”

Mrs. Beaton (trying to conceal a show of alarm): “Perhaps it was that caviar at Sam Goldwyn’s last night—that imported caviar.”

Donald (tilting nose): “Imported from Seattle!”

Welford (with finality): “Imported caviar is all right—you can’t fool me on foreign fish. The Russians have a

Winifred Dunn
Writing for
First National

UNIVERSAL’S

TARANGA
A Tale of Moonland

WRITTEN, DIRECTED, EDITED AND TITLED BY
ALEXANDER MARKY

One of the most unique attempts in the history of the motion picture
THE FILM SPECTATOR

Donald (yawning as he turns his eyes back from Horton’s pansies): “Don’t forget we’re due at Lasky’s in a half hour, Dad. They’re going to show us “Interference” — and Lord, how I hate football pictures.”

DISOLVE TO EXTERIOR, WHERE THE THREE MAKE THEIR ADIEU.

Donald (surveying grey haze which is enveloping landscape): “My what an inefficient fog.”

Welford (eyeing waiting car with critical orb): “I certainly don’t want to see a picture this morning. Those dreams — they still bother me. I wish I were looking at a rippling brook.”

Mrs. Beaton (waving a cherly good-bye as they step into car): ‘Good-bye, boys—don’t lose your tempo.”

Welford (turning back): “G-r-r . . .”

Donald (turning back): “G-r-r . . .”

FADE-OUT.

Getting It Off His Chest
By WALTER KRON

THERE are moments in a writing man’s life when his venom becomes exhausted. I realize this when I aim my shots at the sad machinery behind the making of the motion pictures. I have been shooting elephant bullets at canary birds. My attitude, I have decided, shall be one of a little more patience.

Some day when the great movie Renaissance arrives, the following stories should be pictured: Dostoievsky’s White Nights, Harvey Furgeson’s Blood of the Conquerors, De Maupassant’s Bel Ami, Galsworthy’s Justice, John Doe Passos’ Three Soldiers, and a little-known story called Chaney by a little-known writer, J. W. De Forest. This

THE PATRIOT
A LUBITSCH PRODUCTION
ADAPTATION AND SCENARIO
by HANS KRALY

The Screen Story
For
THE METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER PRODUCTION
“White Shadows in the South Seas”
WAS WRITTEN BY
RAY DOYLE
Management
LICHTIG & ENGLANDER
last writer is undoubtedly dead, as I found the story in a book published in 1895, and possibly no one else possesses the book. It is a fine moving tale of love and typical movie material. I could mention a dozen good stories, excellent even in box-office angles, but that is not my business.

A revival of Jack London's Martin Eden or Bret Harte's "Outcasts of Poker Flat" would make good in capable hands.

The familiar wail of producers, "We can't find stories," is a gimmerack for the ears of dubs. The producers should connect with a library rotary for information. Instead of sending scouts to view Broadway plays, why not send the office boy to the public library? It requires searching, undoubtedly, to find screen material, because artists do not write originals. None of the stories I have mentioned would be costly in production. Martin Eden, Bel Ami, Justice and White Nights are all intimate tales with great civilizing themes.

That cynical tale of the World War, Three Soldiers, would not be costly. The Blood of the Conquerors would be questionable as far as the great American censor and the petty interference of club women are concerned. We will probably not see these stories in the films for some time, with the exception of Galsworthy's Justice, as Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, I believe, holds the rights. I have been told that they are waiting until 1950 before they start production, as they must first finish a large consignment of bed-time stories. That is not a witticism, either.

A worker that moves in the seven arts can leave something to posterity. Even a writer of essays leaves his mark. If the work is puerile, the generation following will gauge the creation and place its creator in a frightful position. But in the poster of the arts, the motion picture, posterity can measure the worth of a serious effort. The genuine author knows as long as printed words are in use, his works will live; the sculptor, through production in granite; and the painter, in the gentle hands of a nation or a connoisseur.

But who cares about the great motion picture? The much-talked of Birth of a Nation has to-day lost its force. It does not even quicken the pulse of a Kansan. The reason is plain. The thing was full of the mechanics found in the low-grade Western picture of to-day—the picturesque shots of the man on horseback, last-minute rescues, the assault of virtue, theatrical battle-smoke, thunder, and hysterical acting, every act in high tension, not a subdued note—this opus, directed by a man not filled with artistic justice, but motivated by subconscious propaganda. The negro was a despoiler, the white man, prompted by the Almighty. A sympathizer of witch-craft would be just as admirable.

Griffith, the real father of the movies, can produce a fine motion picture. Broken Blossoms revealed this. It is difficult to discover the man's actual ideas. He can conceive the most delightful of pastoral scenes. He has a vivid, individual imagination and a detached insight into the characters of his players.

To-day it is regretable. The advance of directors less gifted but more worldly is leaving the label, "Griffith", as a name only.

If there are any connoisseurs of films containing merit, I have never heard of them. The Last Laugh, if a good
preserving process has been discovered, should bring a few thousand on the auction block. It is artistically perfect in all points. It contains the stuff that defies the years and man's mind. It is superior to the humdrum thinking of a thousand writers. It remains to-day a formidable example of the art of the motion picture. A thousand movies will be made this year. Yet, The Last Laugh will remain a Sphinx, head and shoulders above a mess of garbage.

**A Murder in Hollywood**

*By JOSEPH JACKSON*

It was difficult to believe that this polished, well-groomed gentleman had committed such a brutal murder. This Wenwood Alden, with his Greek profile, his long, white, artistic fingers, and his dreamy eyes.

As he sat in the crowded courtroom awaiting trial, hundreds of movie fans, who had come to know Wenwood Alden on the stage and screen as the soul of gentleness, wondered if he really could have done such a ghastly thing.

Alden looked completely calm as he awaited his turn to take the witness stand. There was none of that nervousness, that biting of fingers, that heaving of chest which he would have used had he been playing this scene before the camera.

At last the actor was called to the stand in his own defence. He walked steadily to the witness chair and looked confidently at his attorney for his cue.

"Is it true that on June eighth last you killed Miss Winona Semple?"

The lawyer spoke triumphantly, victoriously, almost as though he were establishing his client's innocence with this damning sentence.

"It is," the prisoner answered.

"Would you mind telling the Judge and the jury in your own language just what happened?"

"It was like this," Alden began. "I had just finished making a picture, 'The Gentle Gentleman', in which I played the leading role. I had worked very hard and had gone away for a week's rest in the mountains before starting another film."

The listeners strained forward on the edge of their seats. Alden spoke in a low, well-trained voice which carried easily throughout the room.

"On the third day of my vacation I received a telephone call from the publicity department asking me if I would come back and devote one day to the interviewers of the fan magazines. I had been so busy on my last picture that I had not had time to give any interviews for several weeks. The publicity man agreed to arrange all of the appointments for the one day, so I consented to come back.

"I arrived at the studio promptly at nine and received the first of the journalists—a young lady. She asked me if, in leaving the stage, I didn't miss the applause of the audience. This question had frequently been put to me before by young lady interviewers, so I gave her my pat answer. I told her that I did miss the warmth and the contact of my dear public, but that the screen offered great advantages which the stage could not—the opportunity to play to millions of people in all corners of the..."
world, to bring joy and entertainment into dark places...

Alden looked at the Judge rather apologetically and said, parenthetically:
"Terribly trite stuff, your honor, but those are my lines and I must speak them as though I were taking part in a play—the interviewers expect it, you know."

Then he resumed the main thread of his story:
"The next interviewer was also a young lady, and she asked me the same question. I answered it in the same way—I shall not bore you with repeating the words—and showed the girl every courtesy, although she did have on a most unbecoming hat and had a disturbing habit of giggling nervously as she questioned me.
"To summarize, your honor, all day long I gave interviews to young ladies, all of whom asked me the same question. Along about five o'clock when I was getting pretty tired, Miss Winona Semple, the young woman whose name has been frequently mentioned at this trial, came into my dressing-room.

"Miss Semple was an interviewer for 'The Gush'—the star of the staff, I believe. After I had poured tea for her and given her a gold-tipped cigarette, which she slipped into her pocketbook as a souvenir, she took out a pencil and notebook. She paused significantly and I felt sure that she was going to ask a deep and penetrating question.

"'Mr. Alden,' she began, 'do you miss...?'"

"Something inside my head snapped. I lost all my senses. There was a pearl-handled paper knife on the table. I grabbed it and plunged it into the girl's heart. Then I cut out her tongue"—he turned to the jury—"but I shall not bore you gentlemen with the details."

Suddenly the foreman of the jury stood up and received the court's permission to ask a question.
"What I want to know," he asked, "is why you didn't kill the others also?"
"I did," replied the actor simply.

About Some English Pictures
By OSWELL BLAKESTON

The first question the interested American visitor puts to me is: "How seriously must I take the Quota?" And I tell him that he must take the Quota very seriously indeed, because the British studios have acquired the regrettable knack of spawning cheap and nasty pictures so long the monopoly of Poverty Row. There is now no difficulty in flooding the British market with these lamentable productions, and it only remained for the law to step in and coerce the exhibitors. More ambitious efforts are attempted by the British Studios at Elstree, but one is apt to wonder why.

All the time and money wasted on lavish Moulin Rouge, all the fame of Dupont, its director, failed to make it a picture from which the spectator derived anything. Strange to relate, it is booking remarkably well for foreign countries; while other efforts of this firm, almost as expensive and stupid, have been less commercially successful. What need is there to speak of such indiscretions? Rather would I speak of the one white hope of the British screen—Anthony Asquith.

Shooting Stars, the first production of this young direc-
tor, was intelligent; mind you, I do not say intellectual. I believe that the director must be blamed for everything in his pictures. If the sets are inartistic and garish it is his fault, he had no right to pass them; if the story is feeble or non-existent, it is his fault, he had no right to accept it. Therefore, I became conscious of the guiding intelligence of a cultured mind throughout Shooting Stars when I found the actors playing in rooms which might be discovered in the homes of people with aesthetic sensibilities, when I found a story that was a story and all the better for the unblushing tinge of melodrama.

Clever production touches are almost taken for granted nowadays, and brilliant lighting, in this case the work of a German expert, and photography are conspicuous only by their absence; for that reason I refrain from pointing out the technical excellence of Shooting Stars. It is chiefly on account of this gloss that it deserves comment, but the picture was by no means perfect. Langorous in the story, especially in the so-called comedy sequences; some sets which were lit a little too hardly; and the uncompromising features of the leading lady, might profitably be forgiven to a young director. The fact that the nominal director was Mr. Bramble may have hampered the young man's ideas, and Underground—the next picture which he is making entirely unaided—should prove the true worth of a long-looked for British discovery. On the other hand, Mr. Asquith may prove himself to be not so much a shooting star as a falling meteor.

The Film Society has closed an uneventful season. This year it has given us nothing to compare with the lingering power of Joyless Street, a picture of poverty-stricken Vienna which thrilled the Society's members last year. The best items were the short films by Lotte Reiniger, which managed to recapture the fascinating elegance of The Adventures of Prince Achmed, a full-length silhouette film. The creations of Miss Reiniger should certainly be screened in America. Her art is truly cinematic and her fantastic little paper figures do bizarre things which could be translated to no other medium. You may scoff and say: "A cartoon film taking itself seriously," but you must see the marvelous backgrounds, the breath-taking poses, before you can grasp the fragile beauty of the whole conception.

Among the foreign films shown recently in London, two deserve to reach New York. One, The Loves of Jeanne Ney, by G. W. Palst, the director of Joyless Street, is a

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Jack Cunningham

wishes to announce:

The adaptation of—

"The Thrall of Leif The Lucky"

(in 8 to 9 reels)

for

The Technicolor Motion Picture Corp.
The First Sound and Color Picture

and recently—

DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS'
Next Great Feature—a Sequel to
"THE THREE MUSKETEERS"
Written in Collaboration With
Mr. Fairbanks

Also the continuity for—

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's
"White Shadows in the South Seas"
one of the
Outstanding Pictures of 1928

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HAVE YOU SEEN

"Hearts of Romany"?
milestone in the history of our art. Here is a film which is true, true to men and things. It is acted by a perfect cast; and Fritz Rasp, the sinister footman of Warning Shadows, is deservedly hailed as a genius. Should the "Art" guilds of America overlook this film they no longer have any right to their titles. The other picture, The Jackals, has not the strength of unity found in The Loves of Jeanne Ney; the interest is centered mainly on the acting. Jenny Hasselquist burns with the inward fire; at any moment she appears about to "blow up". ("Blow-up" of course is too undignified, but it conveys the violence of her beauty). Olga Tschechowa is wanly poised as the courtesan. An interesting picture worthy of notice, but The Loves of Jeanne Ney is great.

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By Donald Beaton — The Spectator's 17-Year-Old Critic

THE BATTLE OF THE SEXES is very good entertainment, and is one of the best pictures D. W. Griffith ever made. It certainly is more human than anything he has done in years. It has humor and pathos, both well done; but Griffith's management of his dramatic scenes does not appeal to me. He makes them too violent and theatrical where they should be repressed and human. Average human beings don't go through the contortions which Griffith characters suffer. However, The Battle had less overacting than any of the late Griffith pictures, due perhaps to the superb cast. There is one scene where Jean Hersholt and Belle Bennett, as husband and wife, do a bit just after Hersholt has given her a very valuable birthday present. They both cry, and the highest compliment I am able to pay that scene is that it is the first piece of motion picture work since Seventh Heaven to get a rise out of me. There were several other little bits through the picture which deserve favorable mention for that same human note. The Battle was rather eccentric. It would leap from these touching little scenes to shots which reached the height of motion picture artificiality. The humorous parts of the picture were very cleverly done. Phyllis Haver was responsible for them, and in all the clever performances she has to her credit she has never done anything as good as this. I did not like the way Griffith characterised Belle Bennett after her husband left her. She was supposed to be stunned with grief, but it didn't seem right for anyone to remain stunned so long as she did. It did not seem the right reaction somehow.

Jean Hersholt and Miss Bennett headed a very powerful cast. Hersholt, of course, gives a performance which is a classic. It is a worthy successor to his other masterpieces. Miss Bennett does a splendid piece of work, except for the thing which I mentioned and which was probably not her fault. Phyllis Haver's portrayal has already been mentioned. Sally O'Neil is excellent. She always is good, but the last few pictures I have seen her in did not give her so much chance for sympathetic work as this role did. It is certainly the best acting she has done in a long time. Don Alvarado gives a finished performance. William Bakewell has a smaller part. I think he has great possibilities and that some producer is overlooking something in not signing him up. John Batten completed the cast.

A MONG the numerous quaint motion-picture superstitions, perhaps the strangest is the weird idea that homely men do not fall in love. All the love affairs on the screen are participated in by people of godlike beauty, which is all right scenically but is not so good where logic is respected. I don't suppose it ever occurred to the production moguls that the average man is going to regard these love scenes in an "interesting if true" attitude. He doesn't take so much interest in them as he would if the principals were nearer to his own case. Also, the great lovers of history were no beauties. The majority of them were just homely, and some were downright ugly. Dante, who is credited with being one of the great lovers of the world, looked as if he just had eaten his first raw oyster. He had a rather strained expression

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(Harry D'Arrast—Fox)

HE. 9915
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which made him hard to look at. I have proof of my statement, because I took out my well-thumbed volume of Elbert Hubbard’s "Little Journeys to the Homes of Great Lovers", and after cutting a few pages arrived at his picture. Nevertheless, I would like to see a homely man in a great love story.

**HOT NEWS** isn’t very sensible; but it is pretty good entertainment, anyway. It has all sorts of action and production and is judiciously sprinkled with laughs. Clarence Badger, who directed, used intelligence in his work; although there were moments when the picture went joyously insane. George Moser contributed a set of good but terribly punctuated titles. When sound comes generally, poor punctuation of titles will vanish; but it probably won’t until then. Hot News opened with a very thrilling airplane sequence, and the action managed to remain quite speedy up until the end. There was one thing about the picture which was not so good. A newsreel cameraman enters the office and says he lost out on an assignment because his rival, the hero, stole his camera crank. Now, stealing part of your competitor’s machine may be perfectly ethical in the newsreel business, but it seems like dirty dealing to the layman. No professional picture hero should be guilty of underhand practices, so his action should have been explained some way. Badger put over everything he wanted to very unobtrusively. On the yacht, when the hero operates the wireless, his knowledge of that science is planted early in the picture. Another good thing was his getting a ride from the policeman who arrested him. All in all, Hot News was good entertainment.

Bebe Daniels was starred. She is a quite clever comedienne and her work is highly satisfactory. Neil Hamilton, who is capable of handling far bigger parts than he gets, gives a very clever performance. Paul Lukas makes a good heavy, and the rest of the cast is entirely adequate.

**A SUPERB** performance by Pola Negri makes Loves of an Actress an outstanding motion picture, although Rowland Lee’s brilliant direction would have made it a good film in any case. The picture is eight reels long, and the story is scarcely big enough to stand all that length without a let-down of some kind. There are moments when the action seems to drag, but on the whole Miss Negri’s great acting manages to keep everything fairly interesting. Lee handled his camera intelligently, although there were instances where he cut aces through crowds in order to reach his main characters. His lighting was very good and also displayed thought. Lamps cast light where they would naturally, and shadows were cast in the right direction. It is a peculiar commentary on the art of motion picture making that natural lighting has to be aided as something unusual and excellent.

In addition to Miss Negri’s splendid work, Loves of an Actress contained other good performances. Paul Lukas was excellent, as he always is. Nils Asther was quite satisfactory, and so were Nigel de Brulier and Richard Tucker. We were given a short glimpse of Mary McAllister. She is pretty and talented, and I can’t see why she doesn’t get bigger parts.

**THE thing which Love Overnight needed most was a title at the end of it stating that the producers of it didn’t know what it was all about either. The story was nothing but a very thin string of plot with a lot of unrelated incidents hanging from it. Its chief fault lay in its story, because E. H. Griffith directed it well enough. He did his best with it, but it remained incoherent in spite of everything. The humor was clumsy and poor, because it had to resort to vulgarity. The surest sign that the men behind the picture are at a loss for something funny is when they start putting in "off-color" things. The questionable parts of Love Overnight were put in with absolutely no other reason than to cater to the lowest of very poor stuff on which to try and build permanent popularity. Love Overnight contained a pleasant surprise in the person of the strikingly beautiful Jeanette Loff, who played opposite Rod La Rocque. This is the first picture I
Frederick Warde

The distinguished classic and Shakespearean actor, says:
When the silent film of today passes into the talking picture of tomorrow there should be constant demand for the services of

Edythe Chapman

the accomplished actress whose hold on the sympathies and affections of moving-picture audiences is so firmly established.

During the three years this gifted artiste was leading support to Warde and James in legitimate repertoire the conviction became established in my mind that no actress, but one, with whom I had acted in my long service to the amusement world, possessed a voice of greater range and flexibility, of finer timbre and melodiousness, and that one exception was the illustrious Adelaide Neilson, who passed into shadow-land two generations ago. For delightful diction, for responsive skill and easy efficiency and for artistic understanding no actress with whom I have been associated since Adelaide Neilson's day has surpassed Miss Chapman.

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Glendale, Calif.

Phone Glendale 1563
have seen her in, and I think she is going to get somewhere, because, in addition to her looks, she has the ease and poise of a veteran trouper. As a rule I speak of the star of the picture first; but I know Rod, whose popularity is not established, would not mind giving precedence to a promising newcomer, particularly one as charming as Miss Loff. Tom Kennedy, who is a good comedian, does his best to be funny in a bunch of gags which preclude any possibility of humor. John Kraft again wrote a good set of titles, one of which was responsible for my only laugh during the entire picture.

**RIP-ROARING** action characterizes Tenderloin perfectly. There is everything in it from mayhem to murder, including several sequences which were done in sound. The scenes after the Vitaphoned sections fell terribly flat. There was no earthly reason for Tenderloin not being all sound, as a complete spoken set of dialogue would have raised the picture from merely average rating to the ranks of first class film. Michael Curtiz directed Tenderloin, and his work was quite satisfactory. He used a lot of close-ups and had a lot of scenes which were almost too melodramatic; but on the whole, the direction was good. There were times when the picture dragged considerably, but once the action got under way it moved furiously. Tenderloin starred Dolores Costello, who is one actress whose work I always enjoy. The effect of her great beauty is not destroyed when one hears her voice; because, to me at least, it is splendid. She can act very well, too; and she is one of the very few actresses I have ever seen who can hold their own in my way to see. Conrad Nagel plays opposite her in Tenderloin. His perfect voice, in addition to his clever acting, made his characterization stand out. George Stone, who is a very talented actor, does superb work in this picture. His performance is the most outstanding one of all. Mitchell Lewis, as usual, is splendid; but he appears so rarely on the screen nowadays that I scarcely recognized him. If ability counted in this business, he would be working steadily.

**FORGOTTEN FACES** is a tribute to the directorial skill of Victor Schertzinger. It is one of the finest motion pictures turned out by Famous Players lately, and is a remarkable piece of work, judged by any standards. Clive Brook, William Powell, and Olga Baclanova have the leading roles, with Brook being featured. The story of Forgotten Faces is well done; since it contains what is to me the best quality of all—logic. There is nothing overdrawn or impossible in the entire picture. It is human, so it naturally will appeal to the greater majority of fans. Schertzinger retained all the power of the story in the picture, and his intelligent use of the camera made it very plausible. He shot the camera in the only sensible way, no matter how or where he has to plant the camera. As a result, all his characters and crowds are real-looking and don't resemble puppets. Another thing about Schertzinger's direction which appeals to me is his regard for the intelligence of his audience. He leaves something to the imagination, since scenes are very deftly put over, another point in the director's favor. The dramatic scenes were well done, although with trouper such as I have mentioned they could not help but be good. They had power and force and also gave the impression of being real, not acted, which is a quality very rarely attained on the screen. There is nothing artificial or motion-picturish about Forgotten Faces. The production was rich and carefully done. The camera and lighting work were perfect, and amounted almost to genius on the part of whoever was responsible for them. Although the picture was eight reels long, there wasn't a moment when the interest flagged. It seemed like about six. As I have said, the acting was excellent. Clive Brook gives an intensely sympathetic characterization; and is the dominant figure at all times, although the cast is composed of superb performers. Miss Baclanova has the leading feminine role. She does very good work, but she has a tendency toward over-acting. Repression is something which I think essential to a good performance. William Powell, at last in a part worthy of his talents, gives a perfect perform-
H. d'Abbadie d'Arrast
PARAMOUNT
Reviewed In This Number

BATTLE OF THE SEXES—
A United Artist picture. Directed by D. W. Griffith; from the story by Daniel Carson Goodman; adaptation by Gerrit J. Lloyd.
The cast: Jean Hersholt, Phyllis Haver, Belle Bennett, Don Alvarado, Sally O'Neil, William Bakewell, John Batten.

FORGOTTEN FACES—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Victor Schertzinger; associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; adapted by Olive H. P. Garrett; from a story by Richard Washburn Childs; screen play by Howard Estabrook; photographed by J. Roy Hunt; editor-in-chief, David O. Selznick; assistant director, Russell Mathews.
The cast: Olive Brook, Olga Buelanova, Mary Brian, William Powell, Fred Kohler, Jack Luden.

HOT NEWS—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Clarence Badger; associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; story by Monte Brice and Harlan Thompson; adaptation by Lloyd Corrigan and Grover Jones; screen play by Florence Ryerson; photographed by William Marshall; production supervision by B. P. Fineman; assistant director, Paul Jones.
The cast: Bebe Daniels, Neil Hamilton, Paul Lukas, Alfred Allen, Spee O'Donnell, Ben Hall, Mario Carillo, Maude Turner Gordon.

LITTLE SHEPHERD OF KINGDOM COME—
A First National picture. Directed by Alfred Santell; story by John Fox Jr.; adaptation and continuity by Bess Meredith; produced by Henry Hobart; photographed by Lee Garmes.

LOVE OVER NIGHT—
A Pathé picture. Directed by Edward H. Griffith; produced by Hector Turnbull; original continuity by George Drongold and Sanford Hewitt; photographed by J. Joseph Mescall; assistant director, E. J. Babelle; production manager, R. A. Blaydon; art director, Mitchell Leisen.
The cast: Rod La Rocque, Jeanette Loff, Richard Tucker, Tom Kennedy, Mary Carr.

LOVES OF AN ACTRESS—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Rowland V. Lee; associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; story by Ernest Vajda; screen play by Rowland V. Lee; photographed by Victor Milner; editor-in-chief, E. Lloyd Sheldon; assistant director, Dan Keefe.

TENDERLION—
A Warner Brothers picture. Directed by Michael Curtiz; from the story by Melville Crosman; scenario by E. T. Lowe, Jr.; photographed by Hal Mohr; assistant director, John Duval.
The cast: Dolores Costello, Conrad Nagel, George Stone, Dan Wolheim, Pat Hartigan, Fred Kelsey, G. Raymond Nye, Dorothy Vernon, Evelyn Pierce.

Dear Mr. Beaton:
Aren't we all inclined to get just a little bit ahead of ourselves in forecasting about sound pictures?

The invention of photography did not cause a crash in the prices of the oil paintings of the old masters. Neither has the invention of the airplane and its subsequent development to its present remarkable state ruined the automobile industry or the railroads. In fact, I wish I had bought a little General Motors and a little New York Central here a while back!

I am afraid we in the motion picture industry are inclined to be "jumpy." Here we have at hand another very wonderful combination in mechanics: we can now combine sounds with photographic motion. Like yourself, I also believe we will soon combine color with the other two. And who knows, perhaps some futuristically inclined fellow will combine only sound and color, and let your imagination do the rest.

I should dislike to believe that the quiet beauty of some of the great motion picture productions I have seen in magnificient theatres was immediately to be disturbed by noises. I don't always want noise; neither do you! Neither do we always want silence. By the same token, if you have a fine steel engraving in your home, you don't rush out to have someone daub a lot of water color on it. Yet you like good water colors, good oils, too, don't you?

Then along comes another "jumpy" one who sees a...
WILL SOUND BE A SUCCESS?

Dear Mr. Beaton:

We hear and see lately a great deal about the Movietone and Vitaphone which is of great interest to me on account of being a large stockholder in two of our large companies; their success or failure means a great deal to me.

I will admit, both are marvelous, but I have my doubts whether they would be an entire financial success.

Our actors speak only English; could such spoken movies be shown in foreign countries, for instance, in Japan, Russia and others, whereas if English sentences are translated into the different languages and thrown on the screen it would mean and does mean financial success. In Paris at the Gaumont theatre they give both the English and French translation.

I do not know what would be needed in the line of instruments and if they cost much would the smaller theatres be able to buy them? Again, every movie star or actress has not a soft and melodious voice. This has been forcefully brought to my knowledge when I saw Lion and the Mouse. Lionel Barrymore and Alec Francis both having been on the speaking stage showed it during their speaking lines.

Years ago every actress or actor before entering that profession took a course in elocution and that cultivated their voices and made them soft and melodious.

I distinctly remember Sarah Bernhardt’s voice in her early days; it was of a most wonderful timbre, and never again but only once did I hear such a voice from a Spanish actress in Mexico.

How would the gin voices of some of our actors or actresses sound? (I am told some drink gin.) It seems to me movie artists should take at once vocal culture and get their voices in shape, for it may come to it that in casting, the actor may be told to “get your voice on a record”, and beauty and a cultivated voice will be a great asset. If some of them are hard drinkers (there may be some) such gin voices would be harsh and rasping.

How would the English of some of our foreign artists sound with their foreign accents, and would America take to them?

I shall carefully watch for their success, but in case of financial failure get out of my investments, which are of a considerable amount. I would be glad to have some reply through your valuable paper.

LEO GALITZKI.

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He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill.—Burke.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, AUGUST 4, 1928

Temporary Editor
Address His Readers

THERE were a number of reasons why I consented to edit the Advice Number of The Spectator, one of them being that it sounded like such a simple and easy task. But I find that running a magazine is just like conducting any other successful business. It requires ability and plenty of hard work.

Another reason which prompted me to help Welford get a much needed rest, was, that during his absence, I could get a look into his Holy of Holies, where he files away all his secrets, and learn the truth about how the world really appreciates him.

Also, since I am getting no salary for this work, and believe me, it is work, I thought it would be a great joke on the old boy to take advantage of the opportunity and tell all the producers about my work, especially the titling of Lewis Milestone's marvelous production, The Racket, which the Eastern papers have hailed as the finest crook drama ever produced, and about which Variety, in referring to the titles said: "Tom Miranda was given wide latitude with slang and gun chatter and the result is the most authentic set of titles that have graced an underworld picture to date. The gorillas talk as they should and not as some lame-brained obstructionist thinks they should. They don't go to jail—they go to the can—and without those diagrams the average super wants with any title in vernacular." But, lo! today I received six sparkling trout from a chilly mountain stream and a nice letter of appreciation from our good friend Welford, so I've decided not to say anything about my work, but to wait until he gets back, and in the next issue to tell it all in advertising for which I shall pay, as others do for theirs.

But getting back to the Holy of Holies and the secrets I expected to find. This morning I made a thorough search and after a time I came across a large envelope (carefully hidden behind numerous letters of praise from divers theatre owners all over the country), which contained newspaper clippings about The Spectator from Sydney, Melbourne, Siam, Bombay, Tokio, Paris, Rome, Madrid, London, everywhere. Many of them were printed in English, many of them I couldn't translate. But here's one from the leading paper of Berlin. Referring to Welford Beaton, it states: "The most brilliant genius that screen journalism yet has produced."

I know I shall catch hell from him when he sees this, but after spending several hours reading over such notices of his ability and recognition of his genius, I determined to "tell it to the world". And if he gets sore about it, well, it won't be the first time we've disagreed.

I've done my part to help him get a rest, and if he comes back with a better understanding of golf, I shan't have to win so much money from him every week. Then perhaps he'll stop worrying and we'll get a better Spectator, if that's what you want. As for myself, The Spectator is all right as it is, and after playing golf with the editor for almost a year and taking away considerable of his hard earned cash, I am convinced that whatever his policy may be, that he is a square-shooter, prompted only by that which he sincerely believes will aid the motion picture industry as a whole to accomplish bigger and better things, and, as such, is worthy of the combined support of every one in the industry.

TOM MIRANDA.

How I Would Run "The Film Spectator"

By PETE SMITH
Publicity Director, M.-G.-M.

Fancy an editor asking a press agent how he (the press agent) would run his (the editor's) paper.

This surely proves the height of something or other. I have heard people refer to Welford Beaton in language unfit to print. I have heard words of warm praise for him. I admit to indulging in a little of both.

This business of Beaton asking me how I would run his sheet proves one thing. The goof has a sense of humor. There is always hope for such a person.

If I were boss of The Film Spectator I would first of all discover a cool, shady brook containing oodles of trout. I would then solicit funds from the producers for the purchase of a fishing rod. The fishing rods that could be purchased from the amount thus gathered, if placed end to end would reach here to there and from there to thence — and back again.

With Beaton safely up to his ears in fish and mumbling to himself about the size of his latest catch, I would then proceed to move in various members of the M.-G.-M. publicity department.

I would freely print publicity about Paramount in every ninety-seventh issue provided said publicity could be confined to three lines.

I would place on the cover of each edition of every issue, photographs of M.-G.-M. executives, stars, directors, players, cameramen, electricians, property men—in alphabetica order. I might even go so far as to print a photograph of myself once in a while—say, in every issue.

I would pan the pictures of every company regardless of merit provided those pictures were not produced or distributed by M.-G.-M.

I would indulge in personal attacks upon everyone connected with anything pertaining to the motion picture art, business, or what is it. On second thought, I might omit
panning persons associated with M.-G.-M. pictures. In fact, I am sure of it.

I would not write for the Mercuries—American or Film.

I would not use the personal pronoun—much.

I would get out a Wampas Number at the time of each Annual Frolic giving each press agent a full page picture—at $100 a page—aash; no checks.

I would establish a research bureau to discover a copy of the Wampas Constitution and publish it free of charge—provided Tony Martin donated the printing.

I would be big-hearted in every way to help further the progress of the fifth, fourth, third, second or first industry of the land, whichever you prefer to call it. I would adopt this big-hearted attitude because it is so typical of our budding industry, art, business, or what not.

I would give away copies of The Film Spectator free of charge—to each advertiser who took a double page advertisement. Provided the advertiser paid the postage. (No charge for licking the stamp and affixing it to the wrapper.)

I would then limit the circulation of the publication to two, one copy going to my secretary for my personal publicity file and the other going to Mike, my dog, who simply loves to chew up packages that the mail man delivers.

I would adhere strictly to this policy until Beaton could waddle from out of his mess of fish, throw me out on my ear and publish a paper that, reports to the contrary notwithstanding, is read by some people including the very best, in this infantile industry, as some unkind persons And so to bed—if any.

call it.

P. S.—Dictated—but haven't the heart to read.

The Advice

My advice to you is not to accept any.—Sue Carol.

Dear Film Spectator:
Go ahead, tell the truth, always the truth, and nothing but the truth.—Fred De Gresac.

Dear Welford:
Run your Spectator for the next year just as you did in the past and its success will be assured.—Ernst Lubitsch.

My dear Welford Beaton:
You've blazed trail. Why not follow it? Your policy is progressive and constructive, so follow your own lead.

—Ralph and Vera Lewis.

Mr. William de Mille says the best advice he can give you about running The Spectator for the next year is not to let him do it. My best wishes to you. Always sincerely.—Margaret Ettinger.

Dear Mr. Beaton:
I am satisfied with The Spectator as it is. You can even make it a little worse next year and I will still be a cash buyer.—Frank Condon.

You want my advice as to how I think The Spectator should be run next year? My only suggestion is: Do not change your policies one iota. The Spectator commands the respect of every reader and slowly but surely is assuming a powerful influence in the industry. Why change that?—Nick Stuart.

I think The Film Spectator should be run this coming year exactly as it is being run now. It would indeed be difficult to improve upon present methods. Wishing you a grand vacation.—Lois Moran.

(A telegram.)

How to run The Spectator question mark what a ridiculous question exclamation point I refuse to tell you that The Spectator is perfect period—Dorothy Farnum.

It seems to me that we are already burdened with excess prophets; and, after all, why should I criticize a critic? He, at least, never becomes so lost to the fitness of things that he can't see the other fellow's duty!—Clive Brook.

My dear Welford:
Regarding the advice you solicit for the policy of your publication for the coming year, permit me to pass on to you an old adage of the theatre: "Never tamper with a success".—Rod La Rocque.

Dear Welford:
Next year will undoubtedly be your most trying. My advice is that you interest more producers in settling here. You know you've already made the rounds and there's no one left to pan.—Tom Reed.

Replying to your inquiry as to how I would run The Spectator, would say that William Haines in Excess Baggage, directed by James Cruze, scenario by Frances Marion, titles by Ralph Spence, looks like it will be the talk of the industry.—Harry Rapf.

My dear Mr. Beaton:
In view of your predilection for sound and color, may I suggest that The Spectator should abjure the use of silent white paper and appear, in the future, on a multihued phonograph record.—Mary Pickford.

My dear Mr. Beaton:
Replying to your inquiry of June 6, requesting a note as to how I think The Spectator should be run for the next year, I would say continue as you are doing, even though I don't always agree with some of your views.

—David Thompson.

Dear Welford and Little Welford:
I am writing this to say that I do not agree with everything you two write. And your punctuation is all wet. This just to be different from most of your contributors. My advice is to make your vacations your vocations.—Arthur Guy Empey.

Dear Welford:
If you will continue to devote the same thought and thoroughness in the analysis of motion picture ailments as you have in the past The Film Spectator will undoubtedly become a most important factor in the education of
film executives. To counteract some of the criticisms directed at your herculean efforts why not have an executive write an article each week answering one of your previous criticisms? Anyhow I will renew my subscription.—George Ullman.

Dear Welford:

Being on location or rather vacation in one of the most wonderful spots on earth near Lake George, I flatly refuse to even think of The Spectator. You might call me selfish, but you would do the same thing if you were here I am sure.—Jean Hersholt.

My only suggestion is that you give particular attention during the coming year to talking movies. I agree with you that we have nothing to worry about as yet, but I believe the coming year will bring about interesting developments worthy of critical comment from you. More success to you.—Marian Nixon.

Dear Mr. Beaton:

I wouldn't dream of advising you to change the method or manner of The Spectator. It's interesting, courageous and full of variety always. I can only say that I hope you have a restful vacation and return to continue The Spectator as before.—Hector Turnbull.

A little advice is often like a little knowledge—a dangerous thing. Why worry a healthy child with a lot of doctors? The lad is holding his own and going strong notwithstanding many attempts upon his life. His form is good, his stamina beyond question. Let him alone. He will be there at the finish.—H. B. Warner.

Dear Welford:

Telling you how to run The Spectator is as futile as you teaching those trout to swim. One might influence a man's opinions, but never his hobby. Honest criticism is scarce in pictures. Continue giving your opinions just as you see them, whether we like it or not.—Frank Capra.

The Spectator should make a list of classic gags, onion peeling and tears, pants falling down, etc.; a list of classic symbols of Parisian life, bottle of absinthe, top hat, Apache, Eiffel Tower, etc.; and a list of classic, not little touches, clinch, legs, undies, etc. They would be a great help to tired writers and directors.—Francis De Miollis.

My dear Welford:

It is a great deal easier for me to accept advice than to offer it. However, if you want a suggestion on how to run The Spectator next year, here it is: Make it a weekly instead of a fortnightly publication! Pardon faulty punctuation and accept sincere good wishes. Yours very truly.—Ernest Torrence.

My advice, in fact my plea, is to continue in your constructive criticism. My pet abomination is the critic who tries to destroy the industry which is his means of livelihood. All praise and power to The Spectator, which builds two for every one it tears down, and that is something worth while. Candidly, I hope that your request to have me write is not based on your belief that as an actress you think I am a writer. However, I trust that your vacation will net you lots of fish, no pun intended, and a good rest. That’s that.—Patsy Ruth Miller.

The only advice on "how to run The Spectator" that I can possibly think to offer is to suggest that you make an addition of a sort of roll of honor, containing the names of players, who, in your opinion, gave the best performances of the past two weeks. I think that this would be a very fine addition to an already very fine publication.—William Bakewell.

Personally I believe if The Spectator is run in the future as it has been in the past it will always have an interested and eager reader in me. I have learned more about the film racket through your articles and criticisms than by any other medium. Wishing you continued success and with kindest personal regards, I am very sincerely.—Lisa Basquett.

For once I'm forced to be that which I detest, a Hollywood yes-man! Tell you how to run The Spectator? Nothing doing! Run it the way you have and keep harping on the perfect script. For only by achieving this end will the picture game ever be made the picture business! Best regards and luck to your rod and reel on your well earned vacation.—Bart A. Carre.

My advice regard Spectator's editorial policy for ensuing year guaranteed to hoist circulation. Roast everybody (don't stop). This may annoy victims, but will tickle their friends (why stop). We are all dear friends in picture business. (Stop—my eye.) And just love to buy copies of The Spectator for each other. Moderate wishes.—C. Gardner Sullivan.

I am glad you asked my advice. As an actor I am a great type to play editor of The Spectator during your vacation. You could not find anyone better qualified. My only regret is I must share the job with other subscribers. The Spectator lacks something which I have already tried to remedy through an advertisement: You don't use my name often enough.—John Peters.

In attacking the inefficiency of the motion picture business you are peppering an elephant with a peashooter, and in the criticism of motion picture art you are hunting sparrows with heavy artillery. You are to be commended and congratulated so long as you refuse to carry water for the elephant or throw crumbs to the sparrows.—Grant Carpenter.

Dear Mr. Welford:

I suggest that you have a column running in every number of The Spectator listing important pictures as excellent, good or bad. Present system you review pictures month ahead of release making it difficult for those respecting your judgment to know what photoplays are worth seeing. Best wishes for vacation.—George Lewis.

The Spectator has been conducted with a degree of frankness that should compel admiration. Constructive criticism enables people to learn of their shortcomings and
gives motion picture people an insight to what the pub-lic wants in the way of entertainment. There is much benefit to be derived from this sort of criticism because of the entire lack of rancor throughout.—George O'Brien.

Dear Mr. Beaton:
Think you have awful nerve asking subscribers to fill your columns while you look at a brook. How do you get that way? Besides where is this brook? I'd be satisfied to get a peep at a frog pond. You would not take my advice anyway and besides while you're looking at the brook you'll probably be thinking of an ocean instead of The Spectator. Indignantly.—Edward J. Montague.

My dear Welford:
I wouldn't presume. If you really want a fun number—wouldn't it be great to suggest to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences that they have the producers give to the actors a Movietone record of their final salary agreement and their arguments leading up to same in place of a written contract? Sincerely.—Noah Beery.

Dear Welford Beaton:
I am quite content to have you run The Spectator exactly as you have done and are doing. Personally I want to do things that you and other extremely critical people will like, but when I do things you do not like I want to be told about it from "A to Izard." Truth, no matter how much it hurts, is fine medicine for your friend and well wisher.—Louise Dresser.

Dear Welford:
It is impossible for me to suggest anything on how you should run The Film Spectator, as it is doing very nicely now and is very interesting. This is for a newspaper man to answer and not a studio manager. Hope you enjoy your vacation and that you will come back all peped up and let the people know that the world entertainment is Vitaphone.—William Koenig.

Dear Mr. Beaton:
This will acknowledge receipt of your communication of the 5th inst. re the proposed Advice Number of your publication. Thanks for the compliment. Could I give you any suggestions that could possibly improve on the present make-up of your little magazine, I would surely offer them. I enjoy it as it is and the only thing that I can offer is, to "carry on".—Mitchell Lewis.

Why don't you launch a red hot campaign against something? There is nothing like a vigorous editorial battle to stir up reader interest. I suggest that you take some vital subject that has not received much attention. For instance, the punctuation of subtitles. Those horrible dashes that the title writers us: Somebody should point a finger of scorn at them! If you have a disengaged finger, there is your target. Yours for the revolution.—Joseph Jackson.

My dear Mr. Beaton:
Your letter of the 5th at hand in regard to suggestions or changes to be made in your magazine while you are on your vacation. It would be a good idea, I think, to invite different directors and producers who have objected to some of your reviews and give them a chance to "get even" with you in your own publication. Some would be serious, others in a comedy vein. It might be a novelty.—Eddie Cline.

Dear Mr. Beaton:
I think a great Hollywood scandal could be created and a great satisfaction could be registered if in your Advice Number of The Film Spectator you had all of the authors of last year's feature films tell the palpitating public what was wrong with the way the scenarists and directors made the picture version of their stories. It would be a number which they would go out and talk about.—Paul Gulick.

The Film Spectator is a one-man dog. It reflects, and is, the Beaton personality. Remove the Beaton quantity, even for one issue, and what have you? You have a Clara Bow starring picture without one foot of Clara Bow. And that, my friend, is not box office. My advice to you is to cancel your vacation plans. Non-creative pleasures are hollow. Find your joy in getting down to your desk an hour earlier in the mornings, and carry on!—Bennie Zeldman.

Dear Welford:
The best advice I can give you is to write less and take more vacations. Of course the columns of The Film Spectator must be filled, but it is too big a job for any one man. Why not put in a vox pop department same as Liberty magazine is running and let your readers blow off steam? Limit letters to two hundred words and bar nothing but libel. Hope you enjoy your vacation. I am still enjoying mine.—Alfred Hustwick.

La Rochefoucauld remarks somewhere that old people take pleasure in giving good advice because they can no longer serve as bad examples. That lets me out. I take pride still in being a bad example and I have not yet reached the age of advice. I like your paper as it is and would shudder at any change of policy suggested by your readers who for the most part cherish a salutary fear of you and your candor and therefore entertain for you a wholesome respect.—Milton Sills.

Dear Welford:
Your letter of June 5th at hand and contents noted. You ask for suggestion to be published in your Advice Number. Our contract people have supported your publication with considerable advertising and my advice is for you to show a spirit of co-operation. I feel that you accept and act upon good advice and will probably offer us a complimentary advertising page at an early date.—Demmy Lamson and Ruth Collier, Inc.

Dear Welford Beaton:
Having been a subscriber and an admirer of your paper since its inception, I welcome the chance to give my advice as to how to run The Spectator for the next year. I peruse each number diligently, but have had very little success in finding my name mentioned except in the
anniversary number; therefore, I advise "an Anniversary Number" or "an Advice Number" once a month, and hope I am asked to contribute.—Otis Harlan.

My dear Welford:
It is very difficult to think of anything I could possibly suggest that might improve The Spectator for next year. You see, I have always thought your magazine just about all right and would never have presumed to offer any suggestions had you not asked me. With many apologies, therefore, I venture the following advice: Keep your eye on the ball and follow through—and I'm sure you will get great results. All good wishes, ever.—David Torrence.

Dear Spectator:
While looking at running brooks may you find continued inspiration to champion the player; may the growth of every gray hair upon your head continue to influence the friendliness, kindness and fairness of your critical judgment of his every honest human endeavor. The actor is the guts of the stage and screen, may you never waiver in his cause; may you find "books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything".—William S. Hart.

Take my advice and don't take a vacation; Spectator is not The Spectator without you. I will certainly miss your polemics against punctuations and close-ups. For the love of literature please break up your transpecific paragraphs. How about lunging at the love interest evil? Hasn't the success of Toulable David, Miracle Man, Covered Wagon, Beau Geste, Big Parade, Patent Leather Kid proven that men don't go through life doing great deeds for the sole purpose of winning the love of a bank of hair? For God's sake stop exclamation point.—Joseph Henry Steele.

My dear Welford Beaton:
So you are going away to look for a "brook"? While you are "feasting" you intend to refuse us our "daily bread", and as for writing for you, that is adding "in- suit to injury". However as generosity is one of my great faults, I really wish you a very happy vacation. Don't look to deeply into the "brook". Come back to us with your own fresh, charming, frank personality and run The Spectator as you always have. Good luck.—Albert Gran.

Dear Mr. Beaton:
Run The Spectator just as you have in the past with due consideration for the rights of all. Continue to be impartial, open-minded, quick to condemn abuses, to praise innovations, to recognize new talent, to expose injustice, to harmonize all discordant elements, to lead the industry onward and upward to greater artistic achievement. I feel if you do this you can go away on your vacation with the thought that The Spectator will have a successful year and many more equally successful after that.—Dolores Del Rio.

My dear Welford:
Run The Spectator without fear or favor, without malice, without hope of reward; dare to tell the truth; fight not against personalities, but for principles; stand up for the rights of artisan, actor, writer, director, producer; denounce all who seek to profit by injustice or special privilege. To do this you will need the crust of a producer, the ego of a director, the fortitude of a scenario writer, the audacity of a press agent, and the clear vision of Ben Turpin!—Finis Fox.

You can't please me or anyone. You can interest me and everyone, so run The Spectator as you damned please; make your subscribers pay your profits; double your rates if you have to, but don't let a lot of big-headed advertisers tell you what your opinions should be. I'll stay on your books just as long as you don't give a whoopee whether or not I like what you publish. Your ego may sometimes annoy me and I may think you are sap-headed, but I am perfectly willing to support your right to be both egotistic and sap-headed.—C. S. Dunning.

My dear Welford:
Inasmuch as the movies, which have heretofore been gloriously silent, now have become "talky", I believe it would be a good retaliatory idea for The Spectator to become gloriously silent. I am sure this would be more than satisfactory in the industry, especially among the supervisors. Hail the silent Spectator! For the coming year may your snow white sheets be untainted by the blur of printer's ink or the opinions of Donald. Yours for more silence in expression.—Fred Niblo.

I am up here vacationing myself, but am moved to earn that gratitude you speak of. I think The Spectator is run very well azis, but if you must inject new faces suggests that you join with Hearst in effort to put over Boulder Dam. I have some property near Palm Springs that this measure won't hurt, so you will be serving the motion picture industry by helping me to stay in it. I also suggest that you continue to review me charitably during the next year as I am running out of good advertising copy. Wishing you a merry and prosperous flag day.—Hallam Cooley.

My dear Welford Beaton:
Anything to earn your gratitude, and do my bit to send you out in God's great outdoors. How should you run The Spectator for the next year? In the same undaunted, straight from the shoulder way in which you have hertoefore conducted it, and thus earned the respect and admiration of your many readers. I could go on indefinitely, but I happen to be familiar with the cutting room floor—so—silencium. Best wishes to Mrs. Beaton and yourself, happy vacation, hope the trout are plentiful.—Bodil Rosing.

Dear Mr. Beaton:
As I happen to be suffering from a severe attack of ptomaine poisoning, any attempt on my part at the present writing, of being "gay" would, I feel, be a ghastly affair. Nor can I be "grave"—that, too, is out of the question. One would have to be very "gay" indeed before venturing to "advise" you how to run The Spectator—No! No! Mr. Beaton, only a Will Rogers might be expected to tackle a job as "grave" as that. So, I am afraid I
can be of no practical assistance, but I would like to quote from a letter written you by Mr. Harry Silver, Palace Theatre, Hamilton, Ohio: "... and as long as you keep free from entangling alliances The Spectator will be worth while." Anyway, I do hope that you will enjoy that "brook", and be very sure that you always enjoy my warmest regard and appreciation.—Marc McDermott.

Dear Mr. Beaton:

I think you should keep up your penetrating, sharp comments on pictures and players in your worthy magazine for next year. I know that the majority of players and directors greatly enjoy them. However, I am an exception. I imagine I am the only one in Hollywood with this peculiar turn of mind—I am always pleased to read flattering things about myself. Doesn't that seem strange? Remember these facts and success will always keep with you—so far as I am concerned. With good wishes, sincerely.—Vic Varconi.

If I ran The Spectator I would make it twice as powerful as it is by having it come twice as often. If you won't such a lazy devil you would publish a weekly. If you worked for me I'd make you do it. This is how I would run it: Each week it should contain half the amount that you give us every two weeks; it should have a department written by some person discussing general subjects—not pictures; Donald's department should be each week about as big now as it is every two weeks, and you should encourage letters from readers. There's my advice to you.—Antonio Moreno.

My dear Mr. Beaton:

How can I write an article when I am thinking of you under a shady tree alongside some rippling brook, laughing at the futile attempts of those of us who are historically inclined attempting to become Shavian in our old age? What do I care how you run your paper? It's all right most of the time and your batting average way above the middle, so why worry? Go up into younger hills, think of those who are earning their bread by the sweat of their brow, and as you cast your line just say, "The poor fish!" Have a good time!—Ben Bard.

You might tell us, for a change, how to make the moving picture business a better, more economical and more artistic industry. The trouble with your magazine in the past has been that you haven't dwelt upon these subjects at all. Oh no, you haven't! The effectiveness of The Spectator resides in its highly individualistic viewpoint. The force of its critical and inspirational comment would only be diminished if that viewpoint were to be colored by suggestions from others. You can serve the industry best by continuing to maintain your purely personal and well considered outlook on its problems.—Paul L. Stein.

The Film Spectator has been a fearless, unbiased, constructive force in the production of motion pictures. It is published without partiality or prejudice, its reviews are always intelligently presented, and without any doubt it is one of the most meritorious and valuable publications dealing with the motion picture industry. While I do not always agree with The Spectator, I am always amply rewarded for having read it. My advice as to how to run The Spectator for the coming year is to adhere to your policy as carried on heretofore, and you will have accomplished something of real value to the industry.—Adolphe Menjou.
The so-called talking pictures have developed so wonderfully in the past few months that I want to reverse the opinions I expressed six months ago. I am so convinced of the ultimate success of this form of entertainment that I believe within two years it will double the present motion picture audiences in the United States and will win back millions who have been fed up on the mediocrity of the average picture of to-day. I doubt that the average actor who has been worrying about his voice and living in fear of talking movies need worry much about them changing all the well-known screen faces.—James R. Quirk.

It is not the mischievous in the movies that do the most harm, it is the mistaken. This lies with those creating or directing. Experience teaches what is wanted for the "best minds" to concentrate on Hollywood; and that it is ridiculous to think for one moment that such minds will not prove to be the most popular. You should emphasize even more about this being done in the future than you have in the past; because it is the chief means of raising motion picture standards. But above all, keep emphasizing that the present rate of advance in improving the industry is far too slow to be effective.—J. Tarleton Armstrong.

My dear Welford:

Criticism? I'd feel like trading bites with a bulldog. But I do smile over this dissertation anent voice in the "speakies"! Anomalous as it may seem, voice is the least of the pre-requisites. And those who know the least talk the loudest and longest and with the greatest assumption of authoritative ness. Dramatic instinct, pre-natal articulation, post long training, observation, instinctive and continuous, and, above all, a knowledge of how to "put it over" that only comes with long and arduous experience. The layman doesn't understand. I think I'm talking Greek to you. But the humblist of my brothers and sisters knows exactly what I mean.—Theodore Roberts.

Dear Mr. Beaton:

Who am I, an humble scenario writer, to tell Sir Welford how to run The Film Spectator for the coming year? Inasmuch as scenario writers should be neither seen nor heard, I can only quote as other good subtitlers do, and suggest that bearing in mind the uncertainty of credit or blame for the completed picture, the policy of all good motion picture critics and editors should be: "How with your might, let the chips fall where they may," with justice toward some, mercy toward many and malice toward none! In the words of the little girl writing her uncle: "I am well and happy, and have lots more sense than I used to have. Hoping you are the same, and with lots of love."—Eve Unsell.

In answer to your letter of June 5, may I suggest that to use the "paragraph" sign more frequently would make reading of The Spectator easier for that portion of us whose eyes give occasional trouble? Similarly, I would wish for a trifle more orderly arrangement of material. Your editorials and reviews are so mixed together that it is difficult to find a specific article quickly. Outside of that I would not presume to give "advice". You are "you" and to attempt to persuade you into some other style would be a silly procedure. All that I ask in return for this letter of mine is an exact diagram of the trout streams to which you are able to go because of this diabolical scheme to get your friends to do your work!—Barrett C. Kiesling.

My dear Mr. Beaton:

I have been away for over a month, so my answer to your request of June 7th has been delayed. Having just returned from a vacation trip to Honolulu, I am all out of touch with the movies, but my only suggestion for next year, is to keep up the good work of this year. Oh yes! And please always tell the truth about these new sound pictures. I think most of the voices are terrible when reproduced, and I sincerely hope I am not called upon for my untrained elocutionary efforts until perfection has been reached in reproducing methods so that I will not sound any worse than I really am. Then, too, I wonder would Warner Brothers' Theatre draw so well with talkies were

Lady who played the mother in Humoresque. On the back cover I'd have drawing of the party who appeared so prominently in The Cohens and Kellys series, then I'd use the inside cover for a glorification of the person who works with John Gilbert in Four Walls and I'd finish with a double center spread about the actress who has been chosen to do Mrs. Feitlbaum in Milt Gross' Nize Baby. These are my stories and I'll stick to 'em.—Vera Gordon.
they to discontinue the elaborate and costly review? I mention this because everyone refers to the enormous business that Vitaphone is doing at that theatre, and I, personally, attended last week solely to see the revue. So, I wonder? Best wishes for a pleasant and extended holiday.—Esther Ralston.

Keep hammering away at stupidity and astigmatism in high quarters as well as sycophantic knee bending of film workers; unmask parasitical film journalism and their sounding board lackeys; emphasize insistently overwhelming importance of individuality of story, acting, direction only real to public favor; give a little thought and attention to film art with no box-office objectives; a word of encouragement always to the experimenter, the pathfinder. Tell the world and Hollywood that film-making is not merely another way of grabbing a meal ticket, but a serious problem in moulding a new art form, to project a new medium of world expression, and find the rhythm of our age. More power to your typewriter and best wishes for your well-earned respite.—Symon Gould.

(From Washington, D. C.)
Dear Mr. Beaton:
Just received your letter here. I think the greatest energy next year should be expended in discovering what the public really does want, not what we think it ought to have, and not necessarily what is being given it, because we do not produce pictures from altruistic motives, but to make money and much is wasted through this uncertain knowledge. If it is impossible to ascertain what the public does want, at least it could be discovered what it does not. We are told it won't accept an unhappy ending and yet Flesh and the Devil was a great success. We are told comedy relief is essential and yet Street Angel is drawing capacity. Could you not get the truth and guide us poor authors?—Elidor Glyn.

Establish method of understanding between supervisor and director and earn Nobel Peace Prize. Great publicity in this. Devote comedy department to directors who want to publish how they would have improved other fellows. Publish as serial same method of delivering talking pictures in all languages; this will make all producers subscribers. Find one good title writer and promise to publish his name and don't; this will bring in the deadly enemies five. Above all, give plenty of space to constructive criticism, good or bad. Time will bring results. Stick to pictures and avoid personalities and boost; balance of policy O. K. with me for coming year. P. S.—A Special Number printed in all languages will find ready sale in Hollywood and add considerably to prestige and bank roll of magazine.—James W. Horne.

Dear Mr. Beaton:
Sorry, very sorry to be unable to comply with your request. Hardly knowing how to run my own business, you want me to tell you how to run The Film Spectator for the next year. No, sir. None of my business. Go on fishing. Have a good, deserved vacation, and let The Film Spectator get one as well. There we are. You wanted a foolish idea. Here is one. As stores, theatres, offices, etc., are closing a while at this time, why not close your office and put on the score of The Film Spectator a blank number? And away you go without worrying any more about your subscribers, or the “talkies”, etc. Yours very truly.—August Tolleaire.

Dear Mr. Beaton:
Now that titles are punctuated correctly to the extent of becoming obsolete, I would suggest that The Spectator advocate or produce an All-Hollywood masterpiece. All these ideas sent you by writers, directors and supervisors could be scrambled into a continuity without a story. This should make a good comedy yet have dramatic moments. I would also suggest that all long-shots be taken in slow motion so as to give the extras a chance to steal the picture and at the same time give the featured players an opportunity to act as reflectors—which should prove that men are in five reels or more. The rushes should prove the cutting-room floor is no place for actors to lay around. It should click, as I am positive that The Spectator would take it big if stars would refrain from close-ups.—Eddie Quillan.

Dear Spec:
What! Going away again? I thought you already had a brook. If you think I'm going to tax my alleged brain filling your magazine while you go into your impersonation of Wordsworth's primrose by the river's brim... well, you need the rest and quiet. As to how your magazine should be run... who cares? It's not necessary for you to canvass the Industry (?) to learn in what esteem The Film Spectator is held. My only squawk is the weekly waste of news print on the feature, "How They Appeal

Scott R. Dunlap
Now Directing
for
WARNER BROTHERS

Attention! Producers!
I have just completed a new underworld story without gangsters, stool pigeons or "gats". It is called "THE GO-BETWEEN" and the leading character is a famous female fence—"the most wicked woman in New York", but who nevertheless has a heart. I believe Vera Gordon could make it another box office "HUMORESQUE". Incidentally, she has read it and thinks it's a great story. May I submit it to you?

JAMES MADISON
(Scenarios — Gags — Titles — Talk)
323 North Citrus Ave., Los Angeles
OREgon 5627
to a Twelve-Year-Old". However, the California legislature has repealed the law which compels me to read sections of magazines I do not like ... so there you are. You said to keep our letters down to night-letter length. This is the length I usually send mine ... collect. No regards ... too many words.—Paul Perez.

My dear Editor:
You have got a fine idea of journalism when you ask me, a supposed "comic", to tell you how to run your paper. Well, now that you have asked me, and don't get sore if I happen to tell you the truth. From my observation I have concluded, after pushing my way through your Spectator, that all a man needs to be a successful editor is a lot of nerve, a copy of Madison's Budget, a continual flow of words that nobody understands (including the Editor's son), a perpetual antagonism against all pictures that are previewed. Just conduct the next year's Spectator as you have in the past, for anything I could say wouldn't change the subscription list one weeny bit. Yours for bigger hearts and smaller heads in journalism.—Charlie Murray.

My dear Beaton:
It certainly takes an ink-slinger for gall. Here you propose to go away and loaf by some quiet stream with a fishing rod while we poor devils sweat in Hollywood, and you coolly expect us to get out a number for you. Pretty soft! I hope you lose your hatt just when they are nibbling good. Then of course we will have to listen while you discourse on the "big ones that got away". Perhaps you do require a vacation, for you seem to be losing your pep, and haven't been lambasting the poor producers of late. So during your exploits with the other fish you may catch a few new ideas with which to refresh us on your return. Yes; you need your vacation all right when you request a night-letter from a Scotchman, while a two-cent stamp does the trick. Just another instance of your sense of humor being slightly out of focus.—James H. Finlayson.

Dear Welford:
Do you mean to tell me you can gaze into a brook and see your reflection in those purified waters and still think about running The Film Spectator for another year? How can you look yourself in the face in a babbling brook and enjoy a vacation with the knowledge that you have filled your waste-paper baskets to the very brim with press-agent copy among which is a fair share from the writer? I hate you for your good fortune in daring to sit beside a brook and enjoy a vacation. I hope the trout will swim right past your hook; I hope the mosquitoes bite you hard and often; I hope the heat is unbearable—because all of these elements will serve to bring you back to your desk, where you fill a far greater capacity in the film world and to those engaged therein, than you do sitting beside any babbling brook in the land. Always a pal.—Harry D. Wilson.

My dear Mr. Beaton:
I've just got a new typewriter, and I think one of the best things I could use it for would be to tell you how to run The Film Spectator. I'd suggest that you and Donald go to different shows, because you write about the same plays all the time, and I have an idea you talk them over, too, because he says the same things; and I would like to know just what Donald thinks, for I always read his reviews. And if you say a show is good I usually get to see it, because mother likes the same pictures you do. I wish you would have a comic strip about motion pictures only, no one has ever done that. And a different kind of interview with stars, a short one each month. Gee, this is pretty slow work because I have to hunt up every letter,

TITLES — DIALOGUE — EDITING

ALFRED HUSTWICK
Formerly Supervising Title and Film Editor
Paramount West Coast Studios
With Paramount 1919-1928

Now Freelancing
Management of Lichtig and Englander

Wm. A. Seiter Productions . . . .
Latest release "Happiness Ahead" - Colleen Moore
Now shooting "Waterfront Sadie" Mulhall-Mackaill
In preparation "The Outcast" - - - Corinne Griffith
so I think I will stop. Hope you are having a nice vacation while we write your paper for you. Your friend and admirer,—Philippe de Lacy.

Dear Mr. Beaton:

Well Sir, Beaton, my butler ran all the way from my house to my place of business, the apple stand across from Hershey's boarding house, to tell me a letter had come for me at last. I was so tickled to know I had a letter that I ran all the way home and the butler fella ran after me—I beat him by a head. Well Sir, Mr. Beaton, there it was sure enough, your letter I mean, just like he said—on the library table, Well Sir, Mr. Beaton life is strange. I've been trying to get into the newspaper business all my life. Irving Cobb once told me if I started at the bottom and worked up I would be a cokker. Well Sir, Mr. Beaton, I couldn't find out just where the bottom was so I had to give it up—but your invitation to join you is just what I have been looking for and as soon as I have the handle of my valise fixed and get my vici kids half soled I will be right on hand. Hysterically yours.—Ned. A. Sparks. P. S.—A boy's best friend is his mother.

Dear Welford:

This is the way you should run The Spectator for the coming year: First—Do not change your policy of frankness and fearlessness that has earned you the respect of every honest and thinking man in the industry. Second—Open the eyes of the financial interests of Wall Street to the incompetency of ninety percent. of the executives handling their millions. Third—Expose the weaknesses and rottenness that is brought about by those jackals known as "yes men" who could not make a living as good street sweepers. Fourth—Get a square deal for competent people and those who love the industry for what it will mean to mankind. Last, but not least—Call attention to the fact that a building is only as strong as its foundation and that the foundation of the industry is the story, and that the writer, who is responsible for the story, should be given a square deal. More power to you and may you catch the limit every day.—Bernie (Isadore Bernstein).

Dear Welford Beaton:

I am pleased to get a chance at you through your invitation to help get out your next issue. You are all wrong on your showman, or Frank Newman, article. When the producer will allow an exhibitor to have a voice on the staff of the studio, mountains of present blunders and flops will be eliminated. You go on the theory that at present producers and directors are showmen. They are not, and there is the keynote of the trouble. The producers do not know what the public wants; they only think they know. If one studio makes a hit with an Indian picture—presto! a flood of Indian pictures follows, a financial success if a crook picture brings a deluge of the same kind. If the showmen could all speak in a chorus they would cry out against such mistakes and say: "Give us innovations, not imitations; novelties, not copies." Your henhouse example in your article is "all wet". A showman would sense instant its relation and its value to the effect of the scene. A true showman is ever alert to changes—instant and constant changes. Memories figure not at all, to an up-to-date showman. The studios will some day realize the value of a true showman's viewpoint.

"HERE'S A THRILLER"
(Motion Pictures Today)
Playable in the Better Class Houses—(Billboard)
If movie thrill stuff is your meat see
"THE MICHIGAN KID"
—this film abounds in all the things that make life worth living—(N. Y. American) At the Roxy Theater—the audience groaned and exclaimed—at one point, the noise of the exclamations became a roar—(Harrison's Reports)

IRVIN WILLAT

directed the picture, which speaks immediately—for the splendor of its photography and settings—(N. Y. Daily News)
Conrad Nagle and Lloyd Whitlock engage in one of the most exciting fist fights that we have seen in a long while—(N. Y. Telegram)
A number of exciting events occur, among them a forest fire that's a humdinger—(Chicago Tribune)
—then comes one of the most thrilling scenes I have witnessed in many a day—(New York Sun)
Showing the plunge of the girl and her loved one down a raging stream (New York World) and a dash in a canoe over a water falls, that is a pip—(Film Daily)
Mr. Welford Beaton:
(Somewhere in the wide open spaces,
the more open the better)

Of all the sublime nerve: to request my assistance to fill space in The Spectator, while you tread the path of dalliace. Don't you know that Jimmie Walker is in town, and that we are all attending dinners given to His Honor? Not that we want to attend them any more than he does. It means that we must dine early at home before going to the banquet, for some darn fool is apt to pull that "We have with us"—about the time we have our mouth full of soda crackers. Then there's this talking picture business that is intriguing us and occupying all our attention. It was bad enough for an actor to keep his eye on the placement of the camera, but now! one has to hunt these confounded little microphones all over the stage, so as not to have one's voice trail off into space and sound like the last gasp of a saltzer water bottle. Will Hays is in town, Jesse Lasky is putting flowers on the grave of the silent picture and you are crying for a vacation. "Now is the time for all honest men to come to the rescue of their party", or words to that effect.—Robert Edeson, Vitaphoner.

Dear Mr. Beaton:
You ask for my advice. Yet the reason I read The Film Spectator with such zest every other week is because I feel you never take anyone's advice. You are the best wordsmith in Hollywood. But I really wish you would develop this idea: A great classic drama at that. But when transferred to the screen, this practical screenable drama is lost. Its mutilation is defended as a box-office necessity. But is it profitable? Love, the Gilbert-Garbo picture, has no right to the name of Tolstoi, or Anna Karenina. I can not understand why Count Tolstoi permitted this distortion of his father's masterpiece to bear his name. Only three shots from the hundreds making up the picture were from the book at all. And it has been an artistic and box-office non-success. So why do it? On the other hand, the film version of Resurrection was as faithful as the spirit of the book as a mirror. It netted
Warner Brothers
Vitaphone Production

“Lights of New York”

Directed by
BRYAN FOY

Story by
MURRAY ROTH

Chief Engineer
COL. NUGENT SLAUGHTER

Edited by
JACK KILLIFER

Photography
ED B. DuPAR    WILLARD VanENGERT

Revue Numbers by
LARRY CEBALLOS

Assistant Director
Doc Salomon

Props
Pinky Weiss

Makeup Man
Walter Rodgers

Electrical Effects
Leo Green

Recording Engineer
Chas. Althouse

Assistant
Chas. E. Wells

Acoustic Engineer
George Groves

Electrical Engineer
Frank N. Murphy
Motion Picture Aeronautics
LIEUT. E. H. ROBINSON
OXford 3753

EARLE SNELL
Wrote the Continuity
THE NIGHT BIRD
Starring Reginald Denny

Complete Managerial Service and Business Representation
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DIRECTORS
PRODUCERS
and WRITERS

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AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
6606 SUNSET BOULEVARD
Hollywood 2627

F. de Miollis
Accredited Correspondent of
"LE FIGARO", of Paris

Technical Advisor on All Matters Pertaining to
NAPOLEON
Thoroughly Conversant With
PARIS
AND ALL PHASES OF PARISIAN LIFE
Writers' Club
Completed!

"The River Pirate"

A

William K. Howard Production

for

William Fox!
success a flop here. Picture folk (and you) understand
suggestion on the screen, but do the small town and out-
side-of-Hollywood audiences want the effect by sugges-
tion or realism and every "if" and "but" photographed?
In two-reel comedies does a director fulfill the desire of
the B. O. with slapstick and "gooey" finishes, or is the
comedy as much appreciated by finesse? Do the audiences
relish a pie in the face or a pin in the pants better than
harmless pranks or situation comedies? I'm not asking
for your opinion. I can guess it. Also, the student of
Hollywood theatres knows the Hollywood opinion, but I
have a great belief that pictures are frequently made for
the Hollywood reaction, and my greater belief is that
the reaction is provincial, not universal, and that 95 per-
cent. of pictures should be made for those outside of
Hollywood and Broadway, N. Y. When companies send
their director and cutter to Seattle, Phoenix, and Salt
Lake City for previews they will come closer to the public
pulse than previewing on our sophisticated and "padded"
boulevards or suburbs. Then we will be making pictures
for the public and not for employees or "the preview
section". Damn it, all this isn't the kind of a letter you
wanted for your issue; however, deal on the subject some-
time, and the writer is not after any publicity. Now, re-
grading your issue, here is my answer: The less there is
of you and your criticism, the greater will be my own
disappointment and the greater the loss to the progress-
ive part of the industry. However, "all work and no
play," etc., so be off, catch a lot of trout, don't forget a
flush beats a straight and I hope you get to see one five
reels of long shots only!—Wallace McDonald.

My contribution must be verse,
It may not then seem quite so worse
As if I tried a long harangue
Half interspersed with latest slang.
You ask advice on how to run
The Film Spectator, that's a pun.
Imagine such a worm as I
Suggesting "how" to one so high
As Welford Beaton whom we know
Has mastered ideas long ago
Of plays, the screen, and actor lore.
To you they are an open door.
But I'll advise this little much:
Keep on roasting all those such
As may deserve to feel the fire
Of righteous wrath and critics ire.
Don't weaken; just keep up the fight
'Till companies treat their people right.
Reverse it, too, for well we know
Some troupers act like those below.
They rave and give their feelings vent
And please to call it temperament.
Just deal it square and tell them all
If they don't troupe they'll surely fall
Like Humpty Dumpty from the wall.
And all the pull and all the yen
Won't put them back with reg'lar men.
—Mary McAllister.
Covering 700 released films, Film Daily presents the work of the ten best directors of 1927-28:

- Herbert Brenon—Heau Geste, Sorrell and Son; Laugh, Clown, Laugh.
- Frank Borzage—Seventh Heaven.
- Josef Von Sternberg—The Last Command, Underworld.
- Ernst Lubitsch—The Student Prince.
- James Cruze—The City Gone Wild, Old Ironsides, On to Reno, We're All Gamblers.

Continuity Collaboration
John F. Goodrich

6683 Sunset Boulevard
GLadstone 6111
My dear Mr. Beaton:

Before departing for your fishing brook, let me tell you that your many “friends” would gladly pay your vacation trip, if you would accept a complimentary one-way ticket to Chicago, minus a bullet-proof vest. I find it difficult to say that there is a certain wisdom about your paper, which renders it quite stupid—if you mean what I know. It is seldom that I show such selfish generosity and yet retain what I give; so if you do not want this advice, take it. I will now voice these silent words, which mean a vast deal of nothing, to-wit: The Film Spectator could be greatly improved if you went on a permanent vacation. Just take your favorite messenger boy and put him in full charge. Publish your Spectator once yearly, and use only seven pages in the publication. Then tear the last five pages away, burn the sixth and keep the other one blank; thereby allowing the folks to use same for a scratch pad—(in case they have the itch). Or, your paper this way would always come in handy anyhow. If this seems inadvisable, print the paper in Greek. It is a dead language, and will match the head of the editor. Then we will loan you some of our title writers to punctuate it for you. When you run out of ideas, reprint a few pages of Sears, Roebuck & Company’s catalogue, and give the public some clean entertainment. Hoping you can’t swim, and enjoy your vacation by accidentally falling in the brook, I beg to remain, your most devoted “friend in need”—Paul Kohner. P. S.—Did you ever notice that I produce mostly dramas? So if my sense of humor does not appeal to you, blame my gag man.

Dear Mr. Editor:

It seems to me you would have facilitated the job you have unloaded on us downtrodden subscribers—that of getting out your paper with the sweat of our brow (and such ink as may be required) while you dangle and dip fish-hooks into babbling brooks—by definitely assigning as subjects on which to write—or try to. For instance, to the American feminine stars who are on your list of readers you might have allotted the theme: “Why we are happy to welcome Lila Damita, Camilla Horn, Greta Garbo, Greta Nissen and all the other Lillas, Camillas and Gretas to our hospitable shores?” To leading character actors who of late have lost some characterization plums you might have propounded: “Give us a critical analysis of the art of Jannings, of Veidt and of any other brilliant foreign newcomer of whose talents you are especially enamored.” And to that type of histrionic talent which is peculiarly of, for and by the movies and whose expon-ent has just had his or her first experience with television, you might suggest an essay on: “Why the Vitaphone is vital to my continued career in the silent drama.” Also many mysteries of movie making could be explained (perhaps) in your subscribers’ number if, for instance, you could prevail upon the so-called production “supervisor” to explain his function, a few movie directors to write some “true confessions” of their rise in the industry, and to wring from film cutters the awful truth as to how they gained their devilish dexterity in wielding devastating shears (by which I don’t precisely infer that their talent was developed behind ribbon counters, or might be there applied at the present moment). However, why obtrude weighty themes at a time when your thoughts already dwell on meadows with lowing kine, a brimming tankard of—oh, say sarsaparilla (since I can spell it), at a wayside tavern, and a tumbling mountain stream populous of trout—and spirited of reveries? I do hope and bespeak for you a vacation that will repair all the nervous wear and tear of a long year of concentrated and important peculiar critical work, in which you stand quite alone—a beacon to the intelligent cinematic playgoer. Happy to help you fill space in this issue—if these lines are deemed sufficient excuse to serve that purpose.—Frank Campeau.

Dear Mr. Beaton:

Your appeal for advice suggests an opportunity for The Spectator to simulate interest in a problem which at one time or another must have touched the life of every member of the moving picture business (as we sometimes sternly describe the most ephemeral of the arts). I refer, of course, to the problem of visiting relatives—or, more specifically, how to keep green the picture of Hollywood social life which is theirs when they arrive eager and
JOE E. BROWN
Scores an Unanimous Hit in Film Debut

"Joe Brown gives one of the best performances I have ever seen. His work, which ranges from comedy to pathos, is truly remarkable. He holds your riveted attention every moment he is before the camera.

"Brown has one of the most appealing personalities that has reached the screen in several years and with proper handling there is no limit to how far he can go. He is a natural comedian, yet superb in moments of sentiment or tragedy. He can undoubtedly be made one of the biggest favorites on the screen today.

"Brown should score an immediate and immense hit in "Hit of the Show." From then on it will only be a matter of getting the proper stories and roles for him. Brown has a personality different than any one on the screen and some care will be necessary in selecting the right sort of material for him.

"Brown is ideal for a box-office favorite in the silent drama because his quaint personality quickly wins its way into the spectator's heart. For the Movi told or Vitaphone, Brown is the best bet in the business today!—Tamar Lane, The Film Mercury.

"Joe E. Brown as "Twisty" does an eccentric comedy pathos role of the 'Laugh, Clown, Laugh' order, only he plays it straight. He is the whole picture. . . . Brown does a very interesting characterization of the homely order and holds the interest nicely."—The Film Daily.

"Joe E. Brown's performance under the able direction of Ralph Ince is one that will long be remembered and must indeed be gratifying to himself as he covered himself with glory. No doubt we will hear in the near future Joe E. Brown signing a long time contract under the F.B.O. banner."—Hollywood Filmograph.

"'Hit of the Show' at the Roxy is a good picture which introduces a new star, Joe E. Brown, of vaudeville and the musical comedy stage. . . . It is Joe Brown who makes the pictures. His work is fine.—New York Daily Mirror.

"Joe E. Brown makes his film debut at the Roxy this week. This popular comedian caused many a laugh and his gift for pantomime and funny facial contortions are developed to the full . . . he establishes himself as a film comedian full of possibilities . . . Brown makes his own character a thoroughly human one."—N.Y. Morning Telegraph.

"Joe E. Brown makes an unusually auspicious debut before the Kliegs. With years of song and dance experience behind him it is hardly to be wondered at that the stage star's characterization is more than skin deep."—N. Y. Telegram.

"Joe Brown goes through his part of the gullible, big hearted hooper, 'Twisty', with all the aplomb of a motion picture veteran. He makes the somewhat garish little story almost believable."—Geraldine Fitch, N. Y. American.

"A song and dance man, without a job or a cent, but with a heart of gold, is admirably played by Joe Brown."—Jeffrey Holmesdate, N. Y. World.

"Mr. Brown's acting is good . . . he imbues his part with some of the wistfulness of the also-ran."—N. Y. Times.

"Yet it is not as bad as it might have been, thanks to Joe E. Brown's genuine characterization and the stage atmosphere that Ralph Ince managed to inject."—N. Y. Herald-Tribune.

"Joe E. Brown has the soul of a Romeo. On the advice of friends Joe made a plunge into pictures, and I think he is going to make quite a splash. . . . He is an acrobat and acrobat type. His acting unqualifiedly type. He seems to be an agile acrobatic dancer, which should help him in some of his parts. But it's the human quality in him that attracted me most."—Welford Beaton, The Film Spectator.

"With the aid of good direction, acting and photography, the task of transferring Joe E. Brown, acrobatic comedian, from the stage to the screen is here acceptably accomplished. Drawing upon what might have been material from Brown's own pro-cinema career, the story gives the newcomer ample scope to display his peculiar talents."—N. Y. Daily News.

"Despite the familiarity of the material with which he is furnished, Brown manages to be sincerely affecting. . . . he is a new face to look at in the cinema, a new clown for critics to watch and predict about."—John S. Cohen, Jr., New York Sun.

"Making his debut as a screen actor, Joe E. Brown is a real success at the Roxy this week. . . . It may be a little early to prophesy. But judging by this picture the motion picture world has a new, real comedian, with a touch of pathos that is true art . . . Brown should go far in his new venture."—William O. Trapp, N. Y. Evening World.

"This week a new star arrived on Broadway. Not a 17-year-old star forced to the top because somebody thought she was pretty. But a real trouper, who arrived by knowing how to do his work. Joe E. Brown in "Hit of the Show" at the Roxy . . . This actor's performance as the sentimental, impulsive hamhoofer, who killed himself trying to save his show, made it. Broadway, which knew him in his vaudeville and musical comedy days, forgot professional jealousy to pronounce him an inevitable star."—Bland Johansen, N. Y. Mirror.

"Joe E. Brown and his 440-yard grin involve a very great deal of humor and—what is more remarkable—the phenomenon of honest pathos. . . . 'Hit of the Show' is none the less effective . . . and Joe Brown is almost entirely responsible."—John Hutchens, N. Y. Evening Post.

"A new screen star burst into the cinema firmament over the week end . . . Right now we want to go on record as saying that Joe E. Brown gets our vote this week for his outstanding performance as 'Twisty', the valiant trouser of small time. That guy Brown can jam more humor and pathos into one cork of his eye-brows and twist of his lips than any other guy we've seen in a long time . . . He has that rare combination of the tragic-comedian such as the screen has seldom had."—N. Y. Graphic.

"Joe E. Brown gets this week's hand picked laurel wreath for his work in 'Hit of the Show.' He gives a performance which is at the same time tragic and hilarious."—N. Y. Evening Journal.

"Movie break promising the greatest general public good and entertainment is the cinematic advent of Joe E. Brown . . . now a full fledged screen star facing success as great as he enjoyed in his golden days in musical comedy . . . He gave a performance so many-shaded humor and really moving pathos that the sentimentality became honest emotion."—John Hutchens, N. Y. Evening Post.

IVAN KAHN, Manager
aggressively broad-minded from some sleepy little hamlet like Chicago or greater New York. I am sure there is not a Tom, Dix or Gary in the industry who has not shared the mortification which was mine the other evening when I was forced to take Aunt Minnie home sober and at ten thirty-seven because the host was working the next day and had to get his eight hours. Nor were explanations of any avail. That was made brutally plain in the car on the way home. Aunt Minnie was frankly and bitterly suspicious. To this day, in fact, she is secretly convinced that as soon as she had retired my wife and I stole silently into the night and rejoined our host for the real party. It seems to me that the situation of which the above incident is typical calls for immediate and drastic action. We can not any longer allow our desire for life, liberty and the pursuit of sleepiness to stand in the way of a plain duty. The visiting firemen demand the sort of thing from Hollywood which they have been led for years to expect, and we must give it to them. The answer is systematic and unselfish organization. A club must be formed. Its object will be the entertainment of Aunt Minnie and her ilk. In fact, I suggest as a title for the organization, "The Brotherly and Protective Order of Ilks". The club will employ those members of the industry who are temporarily out of work to stage parties (five hours notice demanded) for the benefit of outsiders who want to see Moving Picture Life with a capital "L". It will probably be necessary in the interests of authenticity for the biggest stars and directors to lend their presence occasionally to the organization. After all, one night a month of simulated revelry is hardly too much to ask in support of a scheme which must obviously appeal to every thinking man and woman in pictures. Surely, Mr. Beaton, The Spectator will give

its support to a venture of this character—a venture which touches the lives and institutions of all of us. Unselfish yours.—Frank Tuttle.

Dear Welford:

Replying to your request of the 5th instant, inasmuch as I have never had any experience in running a newspaper or a magazine, it is rather difficult for me to dictate a policy for your paper. However, I would suggest that in view of the many valuable technical criticisms and suggestions you made during the past year, that you adhere to the same policy, particularly at this time when a new technique has come into the industry, which is more or less of a problem to both the administrative and technical ends of the business. There is no doubt but that the studio and executive staffs require advice regarding the application of sound to motion pictures; they will be inclined to consider it in the light of a "cure all". Unless careful study is given to the proper application of this invention to the motion picture, a great injury will be done to this innovation, as well as to the picture industry,

John Waters
DIRECTOR
OREgon 7767

Edward Everett Horton
FLOBELLE FAIRBANKS
MAUDE FULTON

in

"Mary's Other Husband"

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Bet. Hollywood and Sunset Boulevards
Make your reservations early.
Downtown ticket offices—Birkei
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Store, May Co.
Mat. Thursday and Saturday,
50c to $1.00. Eve., 50c to
$1.50. Phone GLadstone 4146.

GIFTS AND GREETINGS FOR ALL OCCASIONS

OSCAR BALZER
Hollywood Gift Shop

Shop at Balzer's—"Two Shops"—Just West of Vine
and instead of the public reacting to it favorably they may be turned against it. The lack of knowledge of this invention does not apply alone to the administrative and technical forces of the industry; it applies to the trade press also. As you know, the writer has spent several years studying and experimenting in this latest invention, namely, "photography of sound," and from the many refinements possible in this art, I can see for it great possibilities for the future. I also feel that if this invention is used with discretion, it will be the greatest improvement that has ever come into the industry since the inception of the motion picture. Powers Cinephone Equipment Corporation have obtained some wonderful results in the recording of sound and as soon as it is practical to manufacture this device for the reproduction of sound from the film, commercially, it will have the interest of the entire industry, and instead of making sound for pictures we will produce pictures for sound.—P. A. Powers.

Dear Mr. Beaton:

You ask me how you shall conduct your paper in the future. Flattered by the request, and being, as ever, eager for a bit of effective publicity, I hasten to tell you. Please to note that I am thoroughly partisan and wholly prejudiced, which is a good beginning. Being a writer, I can, of course, see nothing but vain asses in screen actors, and nothing but ruthless, bludgeoning pirates in screen producers—neither with a scintilla of intelligence or artistic appreciation. By that I mean appreciation of the artistic. But enough of this rough satire. I have always rather (get the "rather") liked the policy of The Spectator. Therefore, there can be no good reason for changing it. Again, enough of this cheap satire, this smart-Alec attempt at cleverness, this so-called wise-crackery. So far as I can deduct, the policy of The Spectator has been to be honest and fearless, which is much the same thing. Of course, you haven't always been right in your critical judgment. For you have damned many a picture that I liked and you have praised many a picture that I deemed rotten. But that isn't saying there is no health in you. One thing, you have damned and praised without fear or favor. You damn a certain producer's picture almost—I was going to say—blasphemously; you praise his next one to the skies; and then damn the next one. And so on. Also, you have roasted writers and players where they needed it and praised them quite as generously where they deserved it. You have done this all along the line, which indicates to me a fearless spirit of impartiality. Beyond every other motion picture critic in America—and this I have told you again and again when I had a favor to ask—the editor of The Spectator is exceedingly able and, best of all, to one none too gifted with powers of apprehension, exceedingly clear, definite, specific. Therefore, I say, why the devil should I instruct you to do anything but continue on as you have been doing?—Henry Irving Dodge.

——

John Peters
Characters
Gladstone 5017

“Tempest”

A Sam Taylor Production

Starring
John Barrymore

In its eleventh week at the Embassy Theatre, New York, at $2 prices

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(Harry D'Arrast—Paramount)
“DRY MARTINI”
(Harry D'Arrast—Fox)
Making the Grade
By Geo. Ade

A Movietone Feature
Directed by
Alfred E. Green
for
Fox Film Corporation
The Editor Is Back on Job With a Momentous Idea

Why Talking Pictures Are Here To Stay

Doug McLean's Contract With Sue Carol

A Number of Other Catty Paragraphs

HOT NEWS
TENDERLON
FORGOTTEN FACES
LITTLE SHEPHERD OF KINGDOM COME

LOVE OVER NIGHT
LOVES OF AN ACTRESS
BATTLE OF THE SEXES
Why buy Batteries for your Radio?

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A call will bring a representative to explain the features of these new receiving sets

E.A. Bowen
Music Company
5326 Wilshire Boulevard
ORegon 5206
A Weekly Spectator
and a Hold-Up Number

WETHER there be wisdom in gurgling brooks, in limpid pools, in tree branches or the shade they give, in views from hill-tops, or in the intimate embrace of small valleys with farms in them, and cows, and dogs that bark lazily at you—whether business decisions arrived at in such a diverting atmosphere will stand up under trial is something that only time can tell. At all events, I'm going to give them a chance to justify themselves. I'm not quite sure what the Oregon trout had to do with it, but it was at the exact moment that I had brought him to the surface and was leaning over to slip the landing net under him, a moment when my chief concern should have been to keep the canoe balanced, that I made the decision that The Spectator should be a weekly. I've known always that it should be, but I've dodged it because I didn't see how I could do any more writing than I am doing now and attend to the details of two publications in the same length of time that I now have to devote to one. I had no intention of joining the army of fools who work eighteen hours a day and regard it as something to boast of. The only difference between The Spectator and a producing organization is size. The same remedy applies to the difficulties of each. All either needs is organization. I have The Spectator organized, and I could turn out a daily, weekly, and monthly without doing any more work myself. For the present, however, we will be content with a weekly. I am going to follow the advice that Tony Moreno gave in the Advice Number. He told me to make The Spectator a weekly and to include a department dealing with general matters. I have interested K. C. B. in contributing regularly. I will keep the motion picture industry as my special care, while K. C. B. will deal with any subjects that he feels he can make interesting. Donald will continue to give us his views on pictures. And I hope that we will receive enough letters from readers to make an interesting department. It was when I was making myself comfortable for the night beneath a redwood tree that I made my second startling decision. I would publish a hold-up number! I know I've said several times that The Spectator never would do such a thing because these annual editions are nothing but petty grafting, and all that sort of thing, my chief argument being that advertising in them never did the advertisers any good. I still am of that opinion. That is why I am going to call it the Hold-Up Number. It will differ from all other special numbers of film publications only in name. Its advertising pages will be open to screen people with a sense of humor. I don't see what good it will do any of them, but they seem to fall for every special number that comes along, and I don't see why they can't help me finance my weekly. I'm quite sure that it will be the only Hold-Up Number I'll ever get out. It will be the first number of the weekly which will appear when I think I've milked the industry as dry as it will stand, which should take four or five weeks. I am going to make the milking process as painless as possible. The rate will be one hundred dollars a page—not because it is worth it, but because one hundred is divided so easily into sections. All that a victim need do is to send in a check for one hundred dollars or any fraction of it, and when advertising copy does not accompany the check I'll write the copy myself and make a heroic attempt to give the victim all the value I can for the amount of loot that I extract from him. Of course, there is a possibility that the advertising will do some advertiser some good, but it will astonish me greatly if it does. I should do the thing properly by getting Lon Chaney to make me up as a highwayman and to make threats of what will happen to the prospective advertiser who will not come through, but I'm afraid I couldn't make it stick. My fountain pen refuses to be corrupt. I can't get it to write anything I don't think.

* * *

Sound Is Something the Industry Can Out-Think

EARLY two years ago I claimed in The Spectator that talking pictures were a reality. An issue or two later I stated that if I were a producer I would put someone on my staff to work on sound, his duties being to watch developments and to keep me posted on the progress being made. I am not surprised at the producers for not taking my advice, but I am amazed at their failure to think out the thing for themselves. What was apparent to me surely should have been as apparent to those with a greater interest at stake. But more to be amazed at than their failure to recognize the inevitability of sound when it first appeared, is the failure of the majority of producers to consider it constructively even now. They are baffled by what is clear as crystal to a man on the sidelines. Those with whom I have talked recently tell me that they are not sure how much sound there will be in the picture of the future, whether all the dialogue or only a portion of it will be reproduced in audible speech. They seem to be waiting for someone to tell them, and while waiting are losing valuable time. And who is going to tell them? The public? What does the public know about it? Of all the producers, Warner Brothers are the only ones who are going about the business in the right way. They don't know any more about it than anyone else, but they are plowing through the middle of it and learning something from every furrow they turn. The problem of the industry is not to discuss the desirability of
sound or to hesitate to move forward through fear that the public will not like sound when it gets it. The wise producer is the one who will give it sound and make it like it. That is what Warner Brothers are doing. For perhaps the first time in its history, the industry is faced by a situation that it can out-think. Likos or dislikes do not enter into it. Many people have muddled the water by hurling verbal missiles at the innovation, but nothing can blind the clear-thinker to the inevitable conclusion that all-sound pictures will be the universal screen entertainment of the future. People go to picture houses for entertainment. They desire relaxation, and entertainment produces it. The simpler the form of entertainment, the more relaxation can be derived from it. A talking motion picture is the simplest form of entertainment ever devised. It can be enjoyed with a minimum amount of mental effort, providing thereby the maximum amount of relaxation. The voice can be projected mechanically to the ear of the person in the most distant seat; the most fleeting expression of the artist can be brought to the same person by means of the close-up. The patron of the talking picture does not have to strain himself either to see or to hear, an advantage that no other form of entertainment possesses.

In the silent picture there always is a moment of speculation on the part of the audience between the moment when the actor's lips move and that when the title appears on the screen, and there is left to the imagination of the audience that part of the conversation that is not reduced to titles. There is no speculation, no work for the imagination, in an all-sound picture. It is perfect entertainment to the extent that perfection is achieved in the making of the picture. It is obvious, therefore, that producers, instead of sitting around and wondering what sound was going to do to them, should grasp the fact that a wonderful new entertainment device has been made available to them, and that it is their duty to make the best of it in order that it will yield them the greatest possible returns. Every moment they take their minds off the fact that nothing but all-sound pictures will return the largest profits is a valuable moment wasted. Enough time already has been wasted in a lot of wild talk that is getting the industry nowhere. Also many worthy silent pictures are being spoiled by the inclusion in them of snippets of conversations in sound. Abie's Irish Rose was a fine motion picture, even if New York did not like it. With some of the speeches in sound and the remainder silent it will be neither fish, flesh nor fowl. The sound era is not one of hybrids.

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**When The Spectator First Discussed Sound**

T WENTY months ago is a long step backward in the history of sound devices. At that time I wrote for The Spectator my first comment on the advent of sound in pictures. Perhaps what I said then will make interesting reading now. In the issue of December eleven, 1926, I had this to say: "The effect of the Vitaphone on motion pictures is a subject for interesting speculation, both on its own account as a mental exercise and because anything affecting pictures is of vast importance to Hollywood. I approach the question with diffidence for the reason that Harry Carr already has disposed of it in his column in The Times. In terms of finality that forever remove it as a matter for argument, he states bluntly that we never will have talking pictures, thus closing the debate and permitting him in his next paragraph to settle the financial affairs of Europe. Like all those of us who must write so much a day, Harry can not escape writing rot now and then, and arbitrarily dismissing the Vitaphone as something that will affect the screen comes under the heading of rot. In this swiftly moving age he is a brave man who dares say that anything is not possible. I can not see upon what hypothesis those who say we will not have talking pictures base their predictions. We have them. Will H. Hays appeared in one at the Egyptian. In spite of that, many of our leading screen people gravely state that the public will not accept articulate movies, thereby adding more superfluous testimony to the fact that such people know nothing about either the pictures or the public. Whereabouts along the course of the history of mechanical advancement can you find X's marking spots where invention brought anything up to the point of realization and then stopped? Talking pictures are possible to-day. Our producers of silent dramas refuse to prepare to make their products articulate, and imagine that no one else will. This paves the way for really intelligent people to enter the film business and dominate it. A few good talking pictures would put the others out of business. We are going to have them because they mark an advanced step and because they are practical. How anyone can leave the Egyptian theatre with a different impression I can not understand. The present custodians of screen knowledge admit that for a time their novelty may appeal to the public, but that it soon will wear off. Exactly the same thing was said when automobiles first were introduced and again when motion pictures appeared. My own memory goes back far enough to embrace the time when we laughed at the machine that sets these words in type for you to read. As I write, the radio brings the voice of a guttural baritone who is singing of a lost love. And they say we never will have talking moving pictures. ** Much more profitable is it to consider the effect the Vitaphone will have on pictures. It will put a premium, but not a big one, on those actors who can read lines intelligently, but it will not banish the rest. ** The Vitaphone will affect but slightly the process of making pictures. But it will revolutionize the writing of screen stories. They will have to be what they would be now were it not for the lack of ability by production authorities—perfect. When a story has to be written with intelligent dialogue running concurrently with the action the scripts will be so far above the present production mentality that a new era in pictures will be born. The Vitaphone really is a joke on pictures. It is going to force them to be intelligent. They will come under intellectual domination and be free from the present financial domination. It will bring to them the best writers in the world, and the works of these literary men will reach the public with their merits intact and free from the scars of ignorance and inefficiency with which so many of our present pictures are afflicted. The scripts will have to be perfect because the members of the cast will have to speak the actual words the audiences hear. It will be necessary for the lip movements to conform to the uttered word. This will entail upon directors the necessity of shooting scripts as written, which alone will improve pictures by eliminating...
one of the deteriorating influences they are struggling under now. With the voice attachment pictures will improve what they now possess, and acquire in addition all the virtues that the spoken drama owns. It will make the screen the world's most intelligent as well as its most popular diversion. When, as is inevitable, the glory of color is added to the magic of the voice and the beauty of the scenes, there will be no other to match its power to express and its ability to entertain. It is not a prospect that only the far distance holds. It is something for an early to-morrow that even the inability of the screen mind to grasp the imminence of it can not long retard."

**Proving That Intelligent Audiences Are Available**

HERE is some significance in the warmth of the reception tendered Adolphe Menjou in Europe. The interest that Paris has taken in him as an artist no doubt was accentuated by the French flavor of his name, but this is not true of London which received him with more enthusiasm than the French capital displayed. Jack Ford and Ernest Torrence, who were in London at the time, tell me that Adolphe was given an extraordinary reception, much to even his own amazement. The Menjou pictures have peculiar appeal to the European, not because he is a European, but because he is a cosmopolitan. Adolphe, with his smartness and his sophistication, appeals most to the class that attends picture houses least, but which can be recruited in greater strength when it is given more of the kind of screen entertainment that it prefers. The low standard that pictures have maintained has established for them an audience equipped mentally to enjoy mediocrity without being able to recognize it. It is an audience that is the screen's own by right of conquest, and does not include as a class those who demand that their mental recreation must reflect mentalities that match its own. Many of the best minds in the world are numbered among the patrons of pictures, but they are drawn to them more by the persistency of their belief in its potentialities than by their satisfaction with the quality of the mental relaxation that they now provide. All over the world, however, the great mass of intelligent people shun the cinema for the reason that it has nothing to offer them. A picture acted by a Menjou, or one directed by a Lubitsch has in it that which would satisfy the keenest mind, but its salesman, the screen, is discredited and such a picture is not given the opportunity of impressing those whom its merits would impress if they viewed it. We don't hear so much nowadays about the low standard of the audience mind, but I believe the impression still prevails that the picture audience has the mentality of a fourteen-year-old child. The audience mind is, and always must be, on the same level with the producer mind, and pictures always will interest intelligent people only to the extent that they themselves are intelligent. And they never will be more intelligent than the people who make them. A distinguished French writer spent an evening with me recently. He related many experiences he had had with picture producers, experiences that were sending him back to Paris with a rather poor opinion of Hollywood. He had called by appointment on the head of one of the greatest producing organizations, to whom he had submitted his credentials, together with a letter explaining that he desired to interest the producer in a plan to make pictures from some of the D Maupassant stories. The French writer told me that the interview was fruitless, largely because throughout its entire duration the producer insisted upon addressing him as "Mr. de Maupassant." "And he couldn't even pronounce it," pathetically protested my visitor. Less than one week ago the same producer—he will identify himself when he reads this—told me that one of his difficulties is keeping pictures down to the mental level of their audiences instead of making the kind he himself would like to see. The truth of the situation is that every picture made reflects the full mentalities of those who make it. No producer since we've had pictures deliberately has tried to keep a picture down to the supposedly low mental level of the audience, but if that level be low it is the fault of the pictures and is not due to any mental deficiency on the part of the screen's potential audience. With the Menjou pictures Paramount is making a direct bid for the highest intelligences, and when Adolphe goes to London, the most intelligent center on earth, he nearly is mobbed by those who have responded to the intelligent appeal of his screen offerings.

**In This One Pola Gives Her Greatest Performance**

A TRULY magnificent performance by Pola Negri is the main feature of The Loves of an Actress, directed by Rowland V. Lee for Paramount. In my opinion it is the greatest portrayal that Pola ever has given the screen, and it is the finest directorial job that Lee has turned out, and he has many fine pictures to his credit. There is a sureness and a compelling force about the acting and the direction that makes the picture outstanding. The story is largely biographical. It sketches the life of Rachel, born a Swiss, but who became a tragic actress who had all France at her feet, and whose art earned her the plaudits of audiences in England, Russia and America. She was born in 1821 and died in 1851, which places the period of the picture. The story deals only with her life in Paris and does not concern itself with her tours abroad. It is a mixture of fact and fancy, being authentic as to her origin and her early years, but resorting to fiction in the manner of her death. She really died of consumption some years after she left the stage, which is undramatic, but the picture shows her taking poison in a great death scene on the stage and expiring shortly after, which is exceedingly dramatic and sufficient excuse for a departure from facts. It is a characterization that allows an actress to display the full range of her talent, and Pola is superbly equal to all its demands. Before she left for Europe she told me she thought I would like the picture as her performance in it was the greatest she ever gave. I did like it, and I agree with her own estimate of her work. No other woman in screen history ever has done better. It may not prove to be her most successful picture, for such a degree of art as she achieves will not be appreciated by the masses, but it is one that exhibitors everywhere should be proud to show. Paramount has provided an elaborate and colorful production, a fit setting for one great artist's characterization of another. There are several scenes showing Rachel before the French audiences that loved and admired her, and so magnificently does Pola enact these scenes that the adoration becomes
understandable. It is seldom that these performances within performances are convincing. To be convincing, they must give the picture audiences the same reason for being enthusiastic as they give the audiences in the picture, and this is accomplished by Pola's acting and Lee's direction. I have but one major fault to find with the direction. There are too many close-ups of kisses, more out of place than usual in a picture otherwise so artistic. In all other respects Rowland handles close-ups reasonably. He makes effective use of medium shots in dramatic sequences. In a scene showing Pola breaking down after denying the man she loves, a scene of tremendous dramatic force, Lee shows her in a deep medium shot, registering her grief by the despair of her attitude as she sinks into a chair in front of her mirror. I thank him for that shot. The conventional treatment would have shown us only Pola's face with agony written all over it, one of the scores of things that the screen has done to death. It was said of the real Rachel, "She does not act—she suffers." The same might be said of Pola. Nils Asther plays opposite her and also does splendidly. There are other Sterling artists in the cast—Nigel de Brulier, Paul Lukas, Richard Tucker, and Philip Strange, as well as several others who are not named. A woman who plays Pola's maid is particularly good, and her father and mother give worthy performances. I noticed that the theatre orchestra in the picture played all the time Pola was reading her lines on the stage. I wish Paramount had been more careful with the punctuation of the titles. The picture is one that will make its greatest appeal to the kind of people who will notice such a defect. The punctuation is below the standard that Paramount recently has set for itself. But I almost can forgive any title-writer who puts such a title as, "After all, the only realities are dreams," into the mouth of the great Rachel as she lies on her death bed. The Loves of an Actress is a credit to Ben Schulberg's production staff. And I make my obeisances to Pola Negri and Rowland Lee.

** * * *

D. W. Shows That He Knows How to Be Quite Up-to-date

D. W. has given us what I think is the best picture he ever made. The Battle of the Sexes lacks the epic sweep of The Birth of a Nation, and is without the romantic atmosphere that assisted in the success of some of his other pictures. It is an ordinary story about ordinary people, but so superbly has Griffith directed it that it is a notable example of screen art. Its appeal will be general. Women, particularly, will find it engrossing. It is made a great picture by the quality of its performances, yet there is not a broadly sketched character in it. Griffith's facility for handling numerous people and for grouping a few in intimate shots is much in evidence. He introduces no arresting light effects, contenting himself solely with telling his story directly and briskly, and without any frills. D. W. has shed all but one of the old fASHioned ideas that he has clung to throughout the years. In The Battle of the Sexes there are no stilted titles that tell what is going to happen, and in only one instance did I see a close shot that did not match its medium shot, a weakness that has been a feature of all Griffith pictures. The one habit that remains is that of defying convention by fading out in the middle of a sequence instead of cutting. It is odd to see a return to a scene that has faded out, but I hope that D. W. sticks to it. He will, if he has a sense of humor, and he must do something eccentric to show that he is no ordinary director. He has some exquisite touches in this picture. It deals with a family, Belle Bennett being the mother, Jean Hersholt the father, Sally O'Neill the daughter, and Billy Bakewell the son. I think D. W. will agree with me that with such talented artists in one group almost any director should give us some fine scenes, but I think there are few who could make them as compelling as Griffith manages to. In the opening sequence Hersholt gives Miss Bennett a jeweled bracelet as a birthday present, and it is done with such tenderness and feeling that it brought a tear to my eye, for I am an emotional old ass. Another beautiful touch is in a scene showing Belle reading a letter from Jean in which he tells her that he is leaving her. The strength of the scene lies in the fact that while she is reading the letter she is standing directly below a photograph of her and Jean in their wedding clothes. When she finishes reading she looks up at the photograph, and anyone who would not be moved by the scene has no place in a picture audience. Miss Bennett gives a superb performance, and Hersholt's is one of the best of his career. For the first time we see the real Jean on the screen. He plays the part straight, and it was a brilliant bit of casting to put such a talented character actor in such a role. Sally O'Neill is an actress. I said that once before, and I am even surer of it now. She does magnificent work throughout. Billy Bakewell is the same ingenuous boy as usual, a capital trouper with a rare screen personality that should be on the screen much oftener. Phyllis Haver is in the picture. In a field with less talented competitors she would be the picture. As the unscrupulous gold-digger she is simply great, again demonstrating that she is one of the most capable girls on the screen. Don Alvarado has a mean sort of part which does not allow him much latitude, but the acting excellence of the production suffers no relapse when it is his turn to sustain it. In a few places Griffith uses close-ups where I think medium shots embracing all the characters in the main scene would have been more effective, but the fault is not aggravated sufficiently to prompt me to become catty about it. The picture is a splendid one, human and entertaining, and that is all that matters. Of interest to Hollywood, but of none to audiences, is the fact that Griffith shot it nine days under schedule and for quite a few thousand dollars under budget. The United Artists production department, under that wise youth, John W. Considine Jr., is working efficiently and is turning out some of the best pictures that we are getting.

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Schertzinger Trots Out a Few New Ideas in Shots

EXCEPT where cuts are used to increase tempo, there should be as few of them in a picture as possible. That is something so obvious that it always should have been part of the directors' creed, but it is only during the past few months that I have noticed any distinct evidence indicating that those who make pictures are beginning to realize it. In some situations either the dramatic or comedy effect is heightened by quick cuts from one character to another, but such a situation does not arise once in a score of pictures. In all other cases when
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it is possible a pan or a traveling shot should be used in order that the eye of the audience can move smoothly with the lens and not be taxed by the jerk that always comes with a cut. Care will have to be exercised in grouping for these moving shots or considerable footage will be taken up with walls, space or whatever else is between two characters when the camera moves from one to the other. That is something that will have to be worked out. Meanwhile, it is interesting to note the progress that is being made towards the elimination of unnecessary cuts. In his latest picture, Forgotten Faces—a very good picture, by the way—Victor Schertzinger by his method of handling one scene, avoids the use of cuts, inserts and titles. We see Clive Brook being arrested for murder. Next we see him in jail. We need to know how long he has been there, and what has happened to his baby who was about one year old when he was arrested. How are you going to put over all that without cuts, inserts or titles? When we discovered Brook in jail he is facing the camera, gaz ing at something in his hand. The camera moves around behind him without a cut and we look over his shoulder and see that he is looking at a photograph of his baby. From an envelope he draws one photograph after another, each showing the daughter's progress from babyness to maturity. It is an effective scene and tells a whole story in itself without one break in the photography. All the way through his picture Schertzinger shows a refreshing disregard for most of the traditions that have been hampering screen art. Brook has the leading role, but we are not told what his name is or who he is. We learn from spoken titles that William Powell plays a character called "Froggy", but we don't know where he comes from or where he goes to. There are no introductions in the entire picture, and no footage is devoted to telling us anything that we do not need to know. Victor's direction brings out all the pictorial value of the scenes and the dramatic quality of the story, and would have been flawless if he had averaged his performances more evenly between too much repression and too much animation. This is purely a technical complaint, however, as neither sin is committed so flagrantly as to lessen the entertainment value of the gripping but human story that the director has told on the screen with admirable directness, feeling and force. It is one of the best pictures that have come from the Paramount lot this year. The value to a picture of casting real artists in small parts is in evidence here. There is a brief scene in which Hedda Hopper finds Brook's baby on her door-step. We do not see Miss Hopper again, but when the picture is over we remember still the sweetness, the tenderness and the mother love that she puts into her one short appearance on the screen. Crawford Kent appears for but a moment as a butler, but during that moment makes his bit so convincing and real that it is a considerable contribution to the sincerity of the production. Brook is too repressed. I do not know how the public will take it, but I think he has carried his impassivity just one performance too far. There is no screen entertainment in a man who can light a cigarette orcommit murder without a change of expression. Baclanova—no other name on the screen—shows a tendency to go too far in the other direction. If there be any truth in the report that Paramount is grooming her to succeed Pola Negri, I would like to suggest timidly that it will be time wasted. Miss Baclanova is a superb actress, but she does not possess the quality out of which stars are made. Forgotten Faces is a picture that I can recommend unreservedly to all exhibitors.

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"Heads I Win; Tails You Lose,"
Douglas's Contract With Sue Carol

SOME weeks ago I made reference to Sue Carol's contractual relations with Douglas MacLean. My remarks brought forth a letter from a studio official, who does not wish me to use his name, who stated that while I had not expressed myself very definitely, he wished to take issue with what I intimated were my views of the case. People who sign contracts and try to wiggle out of them are welchers, this official writes, and they make him very tired indeed. MacLean, says my correspondent, gave Sue Carol her chance; he signed her on a long term contract, agreeing to pay her every week, before anyone had heard of her; he gambled on her future and because he is winning, Sue tries to break away from him, and I aid and abet her. The Spectator, my correspondent writes, should not always presume that the employer is wrong in any dispute with an employee, and that in this case, if it were an unbiased publication, it would be on the side of Douglas MacLean. Let us see. "He gave her her chance," is applied to the Carol-MacLean case as it is applied to every such case. Motion picture producers have the slave-trader mind. If by some blunder an unknown is cast in a part and becomes one of the hits of the picture, the unknown is put down as an ingrate if he or she does not immediately sign a contract agreeing to work forever for the maker of the picture at whatever salary he pleases to name. If the complaint is made that the salary is too small, the producer trots out the old stand-by: "I gave you your chance, didn't I? Where's your gratitude?" Let's see how much Sue owes Doug. More as a lark than for any other reason, Sue played a small part in a picture. Guy Coburn spotted her and after many long arguments persuaded MacLean to sign her for the female lead in Soft Cushions. Coburn told Doug that Sue would get somewhere, so Doug, knowing nothing whatever of Sue's ability, told her she could have the part if she would sign a five-year contract with him. She knew nothing whatever about contracts or about anything else pertaining to motion pictures. Doug advised her to do it if she wished to get along—and handed her the contract to sign. She wanted to take it home and show it to her mother; he said she had to sign it right there and then or pass up the opportunity to make a name for her.

MICHAEL CURTIZ

Directing Next:

"MADONNA OF AVENUE A"
With Dolores Costello

Story: By Mark Canfield

Warner Brothers Production
self as his leading woman. There were several closely typed pages in the contract, and no time was given to Sue to read them. The impression was given her that she merely was being asked to do what anyone would have to do to get a start in pictures, and Sue signed the contract without reading it. By the salary terms she would be getting in five years about half what she is worth now. And in case you feel that Doug took a chance when he agreed to pay her anything, it would interest you to know that there was a clause in the contract which said, in effect, that if Sue did not make a hit in Soft Cushions Doug could tear up the contract, but that if she did make a hit, she would have to work for him for five years. That's how much of a chance he took! Now he wants one hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the contract. Let's see how that would work out. Say for the next three years Sue is worth fifteen hundred dollars a week. The producer who bought her contract at Doug's price, would charge one thousand dollars a week against Sue's overhead and pay her the remaining five hundred. And Doug for the same three years, would roll over the boulevards in comfortable cars while Sue would be kept busy night and day earning for him the thousand dollars each week that made the comfortable cars possible. If MacLean has risked a dollar on his judgment, I would not begrudge him his heavy winnings. But not only did he not risk a dollar, but he did not even risk his judgment. The whole business principle underlying the transaction was, from Doug's standpoint, "Reads I win; tails you lose." And for five years almost all that Sue Carol earns must go to him because he refused to let her take the contract home and consult her mother.

* * *

It Entertains and Also Satisfies Our Curiosity

NEWSREEL will show us a steelworker strolling along a narrow metal strip at a dizzy height and an accompanying title will tell us what a hero he is. Nothing is said of that other hero who climbs to the same dizzy height to photograph the man whose regular business it is to work that far above ground. All of us have seen hundreds of shots in newsreels that made us wonder more about the men who made them than we did about what was photographed. There seems to be a simultaneous decision on the part of our leading motion picture producers to explain some of the things we have been wondering about. The newsreel cameraman, hitherto an unsung hero, is coming into his own. Now showing, in the making, and in the offing there are a dozen pictures about him. I have seen but one of them, and a rattling good picture it is. Hot News, directed for Paramount by Clarence Badger, and starring Bebe Daniels, should please any audience. Its theme is good screen material because it is something familiar to all motion picture audiences, and something about which the audiences know nothing. Merely as a satisfier of curiosity Hot News will have value. But in addition to this feature, it has one of those excellent and exuberant performances that Bebe Daniels knows so well how to deliver, quite satisfactory work by other members of the cast, many thrills that thrill, a satisfactory production, and good photography. It opens cleverly. The first shot is one of a fishing vessel battling heavy seas, the camera apparently being stationed about midship, which put the cameraman in the very middle of the dangers he was photographing. There are several shots of this sort, and finally the story emerges and takes shape. It is a physically active and pleasantly sentimental romance between Bebe and Neil Hamilton. Hamilton was an excellent choice for leading man, even though I do not agree altogether with his characterization. The newsreel cameraman of my conception is a cool fellow who moves slowly and never gets excited. There is too much of the movie actor in Hamilton's performance. The story pursues its way vigorously and excitingly, with a mixture of comedy, melodrama and farce, until Paul Lukas, a splendid actor, is arrested for stealing a jewel and Bebe and Neil are happy in one another's arms. The picture takes itself none too seriously. Bebe and Neil climb to the top of the Statue of Liberty to photograph a dirigible, a wasted effort, for when the sky is the background it makes no difference how high up the object photographed happens to be. There are several little things like that. But the picture is an entertaining one. Bebe is a delight. She and Hamilton have a rough-and-tumble fight that is supposed to be a dance, and it is one of the funniest things that Paramount has given us this year. Bebe does a lot of the Fairbanks stuff, and it always is a delight to watch her at it when there is a reason for it as there is in this picture. Badger directed with his usual facility for telling a story of the sort. He does not overdo the close-up habit, and commits none of the faults that are so common until the final fade-out is reached, when he rings down the curtain on a close-up of Bebe and Neil kissing. If I were a director I would be ashamed of myself if I could not think of something more original for a final fade-out than a close-up of a clinch. Throughout Hot News Badger shows considerable originality, only to close his picture with something that every director has used since Griffith inflicted films with the close-up curse. He has one shot, though, that I like. He wanted Bebe to overhear a conversation taking place in the room next to that in which she was waiting. Most directors show us characters hearing through heavy doors. Badger shows us the door between the two rooms being closed, but the latch does not catch, and the door swings open far enough to make it reasonable that Bebe could hear what was said in the next room. Very simple, but not done often. Hot News will please the Daniels fans, and no exhibitor need fear it as pleasing summer diversion.

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Collection of Old Stuff Without One New Thought

A CHANGE of story material is not what is needed to give pictures wider appeal. I see many pictures that are pretty bad, but I don't think I ever saw one with a wholly impossible story. Invariably the picture lacks merit because of the manner in which the story is told, and not because there were no possibilities in the script. Let us take as an example the most modern specimen of screen art that can be selected—a picture not yet released. Love Over Night recently has been completed by Pathé. It was produced by Hector Turnbull, who gave the authors the idea for the story; was directed by E. H. Griffith, who has some satisfactory pictures to his credit, and has Rod La Rocque for a star. Turnbull has been a picture executive for so many years that by this time he
should know how to turn out one picture that at least would have some appeal to people of intelligence. Love Over Night has no such appeal. It is the kind of picture that keeps the mentality of the audience at a low level, for no one whose mind has been developed above a sub-adolescent state could derive any intellectual satisfaction from the manner in which the producer and director have related the experiences that occur to La Roque and Jeanette Loff. The fact that there is not a single new idea in the story did not necessarily constitute a handicap when the picture was begun. It offered many opportunities as a new story for deep touches and a virile, spontaneous treatment that would make the picture bubble over with gaiety and amusement. What we get, however, is just another movie composed of almost all the things that movies have been doing from their inception; a narrative that could not carry conviction to the dullest mind, told without inspired direction and acting. I don't know whether the picture is offered as a comedy or a farce. A detective (Tom Kennedy) is endeavoring to arrest Rod. Tom believes Rod is hiding beneath some bedclothes. He does not lift the covers; he "builds" the situation by doing things that no sane detective would do, and when the treatment, not common sense, calls for it, he raises the covers and finds that a cat had caused the movement that had made him suspect that Rod was hiding in the bed. The scene is handled in a way that could add nothing to either a comedy or a farce. Rod is fleeing with Jeanette. He carries her when much better progress could be made with her afoot. With a squad of policemen after them in a scene that was supposed to get suspense from the fact that they did not have a second to spare, Rod and Jeanette turn before entering a taxicab, face the camera and calmly talk about something, completely dispelling from the mind of the audience any idea that the hero and heroine are in any danger. In an early sequence Rod escapes in a taxi and Tom Kennedy immediately gives chase in another. In a later sequence Rod again escapes in a taxi. There are other taxis handy, and many private cars with chauffeurs available to give chase, but this time Tom stands in the middle of the road and tears his hair.

If Love Over Night had been produced for a few thousand dollars on Poverty Row we might excuse some of its faults, although I have not seen a Poverty Row production that is as bad as this Pathe picture. Turnbull no doubt had a reasonable allowance of both money and time, and he had plenty of talent available, yet he turns out a picture that is totally devoid of merit. Frankly, I can not understand the reason for it. I can not see why anyone with half the experience Turnbull has had can not make an entertaining little picture out of the material there was in Love Over Night. It may have some appeal for childish minds, and the Pathé people no doubt will sigh and say that they must keep their pictures down to the low audience level. This one could have been raised to a level that would have amused intelligent people without sacrificing any of the appeal it now may have for half-wits.

* * *

Al Santell Makes One Without Standard Parts

HOLLYWOOD is inclined too much to measure all pictures with the same yardstick. It almost has made the screen an art with standard parts—menace, conflict, love interest, and comedy and dramatic relief, at regular intervals, and placed thus and so, being considered as essential to all pictures, no matter how widely the stories differ. When we get a picture that refuses to use the standard parts the critics compare it with those that do, and find fault with it. I read many reviews of The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come and all of them agreed that it was a poor Dick Barthelmess picture. When a film that I missed seeing before it was released, is condemned generally by reviewers, I pass it up, for there are enough new ones appearing to keep me busy. I had no intention of seeing this Barthelmess picture, for I presumed that all the adverse criticisms were justified, but when I found it showing near me one night recently when I had nothing else to do, I viewed it and thought it one of the finest things that Dick has appeared in. What it lacks in standard parts it makes up in beauty of sentiment, superb photography, charming atmosphere and fine performances. The story is old fashioned perhaps, but so are the hollyhocks that are induced by the morning breeze to nod at me as I write, and the honeysuckle that sends its perfume to me on the air that stirs in my garden. The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come is like the hollyhocks, and the honeysuckle, the mignonette and lavender. Its sentiment is homey, clean, and sweet. Barthelmess gives us a character study of a mountain boy as only such a splendid artist can. I think he is the only actor we have who could do the part justice. He had a thorough grasp of the character and gives an understanding performance that is delightful to witness. All the acting is of a high order, worthy characterizations being to the credit of Claude Gillingwater, David Torrence, Nelson McDowell, Gardner James, Victor Potel, Walter James, Molly O'Day, Doris Dawson, Eulalie Jensen, Martha Maddox, and several others in small parts. There are a number of colored people in the cast who acquit themselves creditably. Molly O'Day, as Dick's mountain sweetheart, is splendid, and Doris Dawson, new to me, is a cute younger whom I hope to see in many more pictures. Al Santell's direction is of a high order where real skill was required, but he was careless with several small details. He shows a keen regard for the pictorial possibilities of groups, but betrays a lack of system in his use of close-ups. The composition of some of the exterior scenes is strikingly beautiful, and the whole picture is a succession of artistic treats. In a night sequence we have a rainstorm of the exaggerated intensity that characterizes all screen rains. I do not understand why some technician does not invent some doohickey to put on hose to provide

John F. Goodrich
6683 Sunset Boulevard
GLadstone 6111
a shower that looks like a shower, not a deluge. The volume of falling water in The Little Shepherd would have washed the mountains into the valleys. During this sequence Molly O'Day sets forth on foot to warn Dick of an attack by a body of horsemen. Molly starts after the horses have dashed away. Every time we see them they are galloping furiously, but Molly, stumbling along on foot, gets to Dick first. Perhaps she took a short cut, but no mention of it is made. During a fight Dick takes shelter behind a tent to escape the bullets of his attackers. It may have been a bullet-proof tent, but no mention was made of that, either. After all the good taste that was displayed throughout the production, it is too bad that the final fade-out was a huge close-up of a kiss, which, as I have pointed out frequently, is the most vulgar and disgusting thing the screen does. Even if it were not, the same fade-out has been used so often that no good director should resort to it again.

* * *

This Paragraph Is Particularly Catty

ONE thing that I can count on regularly is a long letter of abuse, principally of a personal nature, from F. Hugh Herbert—the Herbert who writes laughless comedies for Metro, not the one who wrote dialogue for the Warner talking pictures and who now is doing the same thing on the Fox lot. In his latest vituperative missive, the Metro Herbert takes me to task severely for my occasional use of the designation, "Mrs. Spectator". Herbert wants to know what I would think if Mr. Zukor referred to his wife as "Mrs. Paramount", or if Mr. Mayer referred to his as "Mrs. M.-G.-M." I am not going to argue with Herbert, all of whose letters are as silly and trivial as the comedies he writes, but I think that this one glimpse of his mind process is interesting for the light it casts on the reason why Metro comedies are such puerile things. I do not know if Herbert gets one of those ridiculous salaries that the industry pays—paying him a salary at all is quite ridiculous enough—but whatever he gets is for his services in writing comedy that will appeal to people of intelligence, and the presumption must be that he has a sense of humor, even though what he writes establishes a contrary fact. It must be this suspected sense of humor that he sells to his employers, yet he can see no difference between "Mrs. Spectator" and "Mrs. Paramount". I conduct a small, intimate, personal journal which brings me close to my readers; Zukor heads an enormous organization that stands between him and personal contact with any of his customers, yet this poor fish out on the Metro lot thinks that if it be all right for me occasionally to quote "Mrs. Spectator's" opinion of a picture, it would be quite as appropriate for Zukor to cable his Paris office that he and "Mrs. Paramount" would arrive on a certain date. Herbert's comedies give evidence of having sprung from exactly that kind of comedy sense. To Herbert also has fallen assignments to write sophisticated comedies. The chief quality of such a comedy is the good taste it reflects. In his latest letter to me Herbert states blandly that he watched me all the time I was at dinner at a restaurant, and from his seat at an adjacent table listened to my snatches of conversation with the waiter, who, by the way, proved to be quite an intelligent fellow who interested me with a recital of the manner in which the restaurant secures, cuts and serves its steaks. Herbert's comments on my relations with my waiter reveal him as one of those unfortunate who are so totally lacking in qualities that can be gained either by heredity, deduction, or observation, that they think it is an exhibition of poor taste to be on friendly relations with a waiter or any other kind of servant. Because I never have been able to see any virtue in any of Herbert's work that reaches the screen, he writes me his letters of personal abuse. It is a situation for interesting contemplation. A great organization pays this man a salary to turn out work based on a sense of humor, and reflecting gaiety and the best of taste, yet his letters prove him to be totally lacking in any idea of humor, so totally devoid of any knowledge of what constitutes good taste that he boasts that he watched me and listened to remarks not intended for him, and so narrow-minded that he resents my honest criticism of his work to the extent that he regularly insults me through the mail. But I am grateful to Herbert. I had to write one paragraph this morning. It is a hot morning outside my walled garden; I had nothing to write about, and was on the point of phoning some studio to show me a picture, when Herbert's letter came along. Fine! I stay in my garden and write my paragraph. And as soon as I finish it I will slip into the pool and swim around, and feel grateful to Herbert.

* * *

Will Hays' Idea of Weighty Utterances

THE czar had arrived. It was at the time of his last visit. All Hollywood was talking about talking pictures. The Spectator telephone rang. Mr. Hays was among his subjects, was the tenor of the message, and was pleased to mutter something about sound in pictures; would The Spectator send some fleet person to the office of the great man and get an authorized copy of his conclusions? Will Hays gets one hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year from producers for thinking in terms of motion pictures. Such high priced thoughts must be taken seriously. The fleet person was despatched forthwith, and he came back with the pearls of wisdom. As far as I am concerned, what Hays thinks about anything does not interest me, for I never have known him to utter a thought that was not as shallow as his explanation of his connection with the oil scandal. But who am I that I should close my columns to the comments of such an authority on all that pertains to the screen? Months previously sound had passed the stage when platitudes concerning it might hold our interest, and the time had come when even the dullest persons on the lots were saying something constructive about the great revolution in pictures. And what did our great man have to say? Listen. "The development is as yet in the formative stage, of course, but there is no doubt about its future. It will be universally adopted—that is, it will be used universally to the extent that it is used. Sound will be dramatized when such dramatization adds to the total dramatic value of the picture. Great new interest will be created, probably great new audiences. George Bernard Shaw to-day lectures in America. Mussolini has been making speeches in New York. The Prince of Wales will soon speak in Los Angeles. The motion picture has always brought the remotest outposts of civilization to Main Streets every-
where. Now the greatest personages will be heard, as well as seen likewise, everywhere. Think what this means historically to posterity. Think what it would mean to us to-day to hear as well as see Lincoln speaking at Gettysburg. Great values, too, are involved in connection with educational and scientific films. Again it is demonstrated that no story ever written for the screen is as dramatic as the story of the screen itself. Did you ever in your life read such absolute rot? There were many problems arising out of the advent of sound that Hollywood was considering seriously, and this platitudinous egoist, who is paid an absurd salary to bestow upon the industry an integrity that he himself has lost, lands among us, breathlessly notifies the papers that he has something momentous to say—and feeds us utterances that have not in them one thought that would do credit to a mature mind. And take this: "—as well as seen likewise!" There's a gem of literature for you! I hope Will has rewarded substantially the man who first said, "No story ever written for the screen is as dramatic as the story of the screen itself." If the original owner of that thought had copyrighted it, Will would be speechless. He can't open his mouth without saying it. There was a time when I thought I'd scream if he quoted it again, but I have reached a point where I would regret its passing from his speeches, for there would be nothing left to appeal to my sense of humor.

SOME months have elapsed since Vanity Fair carried Jim Tully's dirty and cowardly attack on Jack Gilbert, but I still am receiving letters asking me why I do not comment on it, the writers apparently being under the impression that The Spectator's position is in the front line to repel any attack on the personnel of the motion picture industry. I do not so regard it. But I can throw an interesting sidelight on Vanity Fair. I happen to be in a position to know that it does not want the truth about Hollywood. It employed me to write a series of articles, and I submitted the first, which presented some truths about producers and their methods of making pictures. You should have read the letter Vanity Fair's attorney wrote me about my article. One of my incidental statements was that Frank Lloyd was going to direct Jack Barrymore, which, at the time, was true, although later the director was changed. The studio had made the statement that Lloyd was going to do the job, and every screen publication on earth had published it, but it was one of the hundred or so facts in my article which the attorney seized upon and demanded that I support with evidence that would stand up in a court of law. Can you imagine me trotting about Hollywood making an ass of myself getting a lot of people to make affidavits that Frank was going to direct Jack? I told of the amount of money Metro had squandered on The Mysterious Island, and the meticulous attorney wanted another bunch of affidavits to support that charge. Of course, the whole idea back of the attorney's letter was to give Vanity Fair an excuse for not printing the articles it had ordered. It must have been prepared for my invitation to it to go to the devil, which invitation it received in the return mail. Producers, you see, represent Big Business, and Vanity Fair respects Big Business too much to publish the truth about it. It does not respect screen actors, and would rather lie about

them than publish the truth about their employers. It engaged Tully to lie for it, a wise selection for the job. A congenital lowbrow, with a queer, distorted thing that functions as a brain, enviously regarding possessors of graces that he has been denied, by instinct a character assassin, and in action a coward who hides behind, "I have been told," Tully was exactly the kind of man for the kind of paper that Vanity Fair is. His cowardly and gratuitous attack on Gilbert was the expression of his anger at nature for making him so unlike Jack. I would be interested to know what comment Vanity Fair's fussy attorney made when he read the Tully article. But I must say for the publication that it is no tightwad. It paid me for the article that it did not publish, and it let me sell it to another paper. I have respect for its business principles, but none for its moral character.

* * *

WHEN the New York critics saw Tenderloin they didn't like it. The Warner boys took the criticisms to heart, sent the film back to the cutting-room, made some retakes, Vitaphoned some more sequences, and sent the whole thing out again in the form in which we saw it at the Warner theatre in Hollywood. It's a pretty good picture now, and aside from its entertainment value, is valuable to the industry as an argument for all-sound pictures. It is idle now to discuss the best method of making partly-sound films, for in a very short time we won't have any, but if any producers still are thinking of reproducing only a portion of the talking in sound I would suggest that they put all of it at the tail end of the picture, and that when they once start, they keep up the talking until the end. After the sound sequences in Tenderloin the silent ones seem unreal and flat. These hybrid pictures won't do because they do not square with

**IT IS INEVITABLE**

that spoken laughs in talking picture must adjust themselves to audiences of widely varying mentality and culture. In order to click, these laughs should hit an average standard of humor, and be neither too highbrow for the provincials or too provincial for the highbrows. This sounds simple but is rather difficult of accomplishment. My many years of successful writing experience in the field of vaudeville, musical comedy and burlesque has given me the necessary "audience hunch". My services are available by the week or picture.

JAMES MADISON

(Scenarios — Gags — Titles — Talk)

323 North Citrus Ave., Los Angeles ORegon 5627

Winifred Dunn

Writing for

First National
reason. If the first sequence can be done in sound, the second, and every succeeding one, can be treated in the same manner; if we hear the fine voice of Conrad Nagel, why are we denied the equally fine voice of Mitchell Lewis in the same picture? Such thoughts as these come to one as he views Tenderloin, and interfere with his consideration of it as screen entertainment. I find it a difficult one to criticize, for it is neither a talking picture nor a silent one. In those features that are common to both it has much to recommend it. The direction of Michael Curtiz leaves little to be desired; the production is on an ambitious scale, and the photography is excellent. Both Dolores Costello and Conrad Nagel give excellent performances, and competent acting also is provided by George Stone, Mitchell Lewis, Pat Hartigan, Fred Kelsey, Dorothy Vernon, and several others whose names I do not know. As was the case with the other sound pictures that I have seen, the voices of all those who spoke before the microphone were clear and distinct, supporting the argument in a recent Spectator that screen actors need not fear the advent of sound.

* * *

WHEN I started The Spectator, I was assured by many people that it would not succeed because screen people did not want frank criticism of their work. They would resent it, I was told, and it was predicted that before a year was out I would have no friends in Hollywood. One of the pleasantest things about the career of the paper has been the emphatic manner in which these prophecies have proven untrue. The Spectator has been an extraordinary success, and those whose work it has criticized adversely are among its staunchest supporters. It has been a pleasant job for me because until a couple of weeks ago I did not encounter one director or actor who resented anything I wrote. But at last I have encountered one—Joe von Sternberg. Two years ago mine was the only voice in Hollywood raised in his behalf. At a time when he had only two box-office failures to his credit I claimed that he had the makings of a fine director. When he made The Last Command and Underworld I praised his work warmly. When I viewed Drag Net I thought its direction was terrible, and said so. I still am of the same opinion. And now Joe won't speak to me. Fancy that! I am disconsolate. Joe is known on all the lots as the most conceited person in pictures. He honestly believes that he is above criticism. He told me one time that he knows all about pictures, thus acknowledging that he is the only man in the world who knows all about anything. He is the unfortunate possessor of a complex that is the only thing that will interfere with his steady rise as a director. The sorry exhibition of his skill that he gives in his direction of Drag Net does not lessen my respect for him as a director, and I believe that he will give us more good pictures, but his tremendous supply of egotism will keep him from becoming great. He is an objectionable little person, but I hope his next picture will be an outstanding success. I yearn for the pleasure of praising it warmly. It would appeal to my sense of humor. Poor little Joe hasn't any.

* * *

WHEN this year started The Spectator announced that it would present a gold medal to the director who gave us the best love scene during 1928, and one also to the director who gave us the most original and appropriate fade-out during the same period. I see a majority of the principal features and thus far this year I have not seen one love scene or one fade-out that I consider is a contender for one of the medals. Directors continue to pour their love scenes from the same old mold and to adhere to the same old clinch ending. I have been told of two or three endings that directors have attempted, and which might have run a race for the prize, but they were ruled out, two of them after being shot, by producers who refuse to see any virtue in anything that has not been done before. Another director told me ruefully that he had planned to capture the medal for the best love scene. He shot the scene in a way that he knew would appeal to me—a deep medium shot which retained the romantic background, and to preserve the suggestion of privacy

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that I maintain should surround a love scene, he kept the backs of the sweethearts to the camera. He was proud of the scene, and in the projection-room awaited the congratulations of his producer and supervisor. "We pay that guy eighteen hundred dollars a week for his face," said the producer, "and we want his face, not his back, on the screen. And the bigger you make the face, the more we get for our money." "And the same thing goes for the girl," chimed the supervisor. "Shoot it over again and give us close-ups." If I don't see a satisfactory love scene on the screen by the end of the year, I may present the medal to this director for his good intention.

MAY I put in a word for avoirdupois? Molly O'Day, if we may judge from what we see in the papers, is afflicted with it, and there is tragedy for her and for those who employ her in the fluctuation of the scales. In short, Molly's weight is news. But why harrass the poor girl? Let her get plump. There are plenty of nice plump girls in the world, and there is no reason why they should not be represented on the screen. Molly is a clever girl. She is an excellent little trouper, but she is not being assisted in keeping her mind on her work by the undue importance that is being given her weight. How does anyone know that a plump girl who can act would not be popular with the public? No palate can stand a steady diet of any one thing. The screen heroine has been a svelt creature since there have been pictures. Why not a change? If I were a producer, I wouldn't be afraid to take a chance with a plump girl if she had sufficient acting ability to keep the attention of the audience from wandering from her art to her avoirdupois. I have no way of knowing if the stories of Molly's expansion are true, for I am not acquainted with the young woman, but if they are, I would advise her to keep striving to be a better actress and it won't make so much difference if she turns out to be a plump one.

A SEQUENCE in some picture I have seen recently—I can't recall which one it is—has a number of cuts in it showing an automobile traveling along a street. There are a few feet in the first cut, followed by at least one hundred feet of the main scene. In the next cut to the street the automobile is shown in the same block in which we first saw it. In the interior scene the action indicated that possibly a quarter of an hour elapsed, during which time the motor apparently made no progress whatever. You see the same thing in many such sequences. Forty or fifty feet of an auto traveling along a road are taken, and the cutter is limited to the one strip of film when he inserts several cuts of the road scene. Some day a brilliant genius is going to shoot the automobile in several different streets, and each cut to it in the picture is going to make it look as if it kept on traveling while other action was taking place. It will be quite a novelty.

HUGH Lafferty I have known, baby, boy and man, for thirty-nine years, which is his age. He has been visiting me. He's a railroad engineer—bridges, tunnels, and things like that—and has fixed tastes in screen entertainment, which he discusses intelligently. He has his favorite players and runs off their names as glibly as a casting director. He thinks that Lionel Barrymore is a better screen actor than Jack, that Janet Gaynor has a spiritual quality, not only greater than any other actress, but of an entirely different kind, and that Louise Fazenda stands at the head of the women whose business is to produce laughs. He believes that among the young fellows, Charlie Farrell will go farthest, but that Dick Arlen and George O'Brien will press him closely. After about an hour of this kind of talk, I told Hugh that in Hollywood we rated the director as of more importance than the actor, a rating with which the director agreed, and I asked him to name as many directors as he could. Here is his list, given after due deliberation: Zukor, Sutherland, Considine, and Griffith. "It will please Eddie Sutherland to be included in your weird and limited list," I remarked. "Well," said Hugh, "you see, my mother's name was Sutherland."

MOST of the arguments against the use of sound in pictures will not stand analysis. Harry Carr wrote in the Los Angeles Times a few weeks ago: "If they are going to turn movies into dialogues, it naturally follows that most of the charm of the movies will be gone." Scores of other writers have taken the same stand. Carr goes so far as to assume that dialogue will take the place of "the cliff-jumping, train wrecks, etc., etc.," thus depriving audiences of the thrills that the screen has given them. All such arguments apparently are based on the assumption that to the extent that producers adopt sound, they will lose their common sense. The mission of the sound picture will be the same as that of the silent picture: to provide entertainment. Where charm is possible, we will have charm, and producers will not sacrifice
it to dialogue. The only way the stage can give us a train wreck is to have a character describe it. The sound picture will give it to us in all its realism, allowing us to hear the thunder of the impact, the hiss of escaping steam, the shrieks of the victims, and everything else that will help to make it more horrible. Instead of depriving us of thrills, sound pictures will give us a more vivid idea of what a thrill is. With sound we will have better pictures, not poorer ones.

COME to think of it, Johnnie Considine generally manages to give us a good picture. So does Winnie Sheehan. The Irish seem to be coming into their own in the industry. We have no one who does such daring things as Considine does. He's young yet, but he has given several people the initial boost on their climb to success. He gave Clarence Brown his first big picture, started Lewis Milestone and gave Sam Taylor his first dramatic assignment. He made a comedian out of Louis Wolheim, famous on the stage as a heavy, and discovered both Gilbert Roland and Don Alvarado. George Marion Jr. wrote his first titles for Considine, who also gave Hans Kraly his first opportunity to write for the screen. Wm. Cameron Menzies, the man responsible for the artistic sets that distinguish United Artists pictures, was another discovery of Considine.

SHOWING a shadow on the screen when there is no reason for not showing the substance, always has appealed to me as a rather childish trick. Michael Curtiz resorts to it frequently in Tenderloin. He several times shows a parade of shadows which finally are succeeded by a parade of characters. These shots would be all right if the shadows themselves had dramatic significance, but they are all wrong when there is no drama in them, the reason for them being purely pictorial.

EVEN, so it seems, seems to agree that New York is the greatest "boob" town on earth. Close contact with Jimmie Walker, whom it selected as its mayor, is the strongest proof that yet has been advanced in support of the charge.

WHEN I reviewed The Man Who Laughs a couple of months ago, I criticized it for a lavish expenditure on a set that appeared on the screen for only a couple of seconds. It showed an elaborate bedroom of a French

king. I take it back. The set cost less than one hundred dollars. Universal used a portion of an old set built originally for The Hunchback of Notre Dame, consequently I must retract my charge of extravagance and give credit to the producers for practicing economy.

* * *

NOT as an indication that The Spectator is going into politics, but to get it in before it becomes so obvious to the whole country that it would do the prophet no honor, I would like to predict that Herbert Hoover is going to be elected president by an enormous majority. You'd feel sorry for me if you knew how much I feel the urge to argue it out at length. But it's The Film Spectator.

* * *

THE titles in Bringing Up Father bristle with mistakes in punctuation. There are several questions with no interrogation marks after them, but the prize for illiteracy may be awarded to a title which reads: "I'd like a word

ONE AFTER ANOTHER

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Management of LICHTIG and ENGLANDER
with you in private?" Just why Metro goes to such
excessive lengths to show its ignorance of the use of the
English language always has puzzled me.

* * *

Up to the hour of going to press Joe von Sternberg
still was mad at me.

CROWDED OUT OF ADVICE NUMBER

Dear Mr. Beaton:

In answer to your letter of June 5th, your idea is cer-
tainly a new one and therefore worthy of attention. I
have always admired your independence in stating the
facts in regard to moving pictures no matter how many
enemies you made—when the truth is spoken, an enemy
is an endorsement. My general criticism of pictures to-
day is that there is a lack of genuineness, and there is
too much evident artificiality—too much studio. The other
night I saw the pictures taken on Mr. Putnam's trip to
Northern seas that were as refreshing as a sea breeze,
owing to their honesty. The little schooner has a rough
voyage through heavy seas, that is vividly shown, and a
pleasing contrast to the toy ship that would appear in
the studio production. An Eskimo harpoons a two-ton
walrus and plays him as easily as he would a trout. A
polar bear is lassoed and the fight that ensues is marvel-
ously vivid. After a fierce struggle, the bear bites the
rope and escapes. As he climbs on to a cake of ice to
rest after the encounter, there is a natural simplicity
about it that is charming. Again, the breaking up of the
ice and the schooner's eventually reaching open water is
graphically shown. Fundamentally, I have always claimed
that a well-directed picture needed little in the way of
sub-titles or script. The commercial side claims that the
words help padding the film in an inexpensive way; but
the loss from an artistic standpoint is tremendous. I
hope you will find the trout if not the walrus.—Thomas
W. Slocum.

—June Collyer.

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"HEAR YOURSELF, AS OTHERS WILL HEAR YOU."
August 18, 1928
THE FILM SPECTATOR
Page Seventeen

Dear Welford,

In reply to your letter asking me how I would run the spectator if I were the editor, I think:

It is always so nice to be asked your advice. It's human to simply adore it so I offer it here though you have fear will be human and merely ignore it.

Now were I the creator of your movie spectator I venture this since you invite it I would change the whole "run" fire both you and your son and revamp and rehash and rewrite it.

I would be like the reformers pan all the performers they would fill my whole soul with abhorrence but I would praise without stint though this is only a hint that paragon Grant, first name Lawrence.

On directors technicians writers gagmen musicians I would level my heartiest strictures but producers got bless 'em I'd keep in with the mannon of pictures.

I've had a horrible time with most of this rhyme but more with correct punctuation so I leave that to you placing "capitals" too for that is your chief occupation.

Then I think twenty cents is too great an expense the spectator should circulate gratis but I bring to conclusion this doggrel effusion for I hear you say Lawrence jam satis.

—Lawrence Grant

While you while away.

* * *

THE LAZY hours.

* * *

HORIZONTAL by the brook.

* * *

CONSIDER curiously.

* * *

THIS TIMID recommendation.

* * *

FOR THE bigger and better SPECTATOR.

* * *

ROPE OFF and encircle.

* * *

EVERY motion picture set.

* * *

INCLUDING THE actors thereon.

I thank you.

—Paul Fejos.

Motion Picture Aeronautics
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OXford 3753

TOM REED

F. de Miollis
Accredited Correspondent of "LE FIGARO", of Paris

Technical Advisor on All Matters Pertaining to NAPOLEON

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THE VOICE OF SPRING
By GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN
WHAT THE SPECTATOR POET THINKS
IS THE MATTER WITH YE EDITOR

In through the window softly a voice
Breathes as the croon of a dove.
O listen you must; not yours the choice;
Winter is past; alluring the voice
That heralds the dawn of Love.

Soft o'er your senses each dulcet tone
Ripples—a purling brook.
O awake is remembrance: the joys you've known;
The love of your youth, her tresses wind-blown,
And the joy of the kiss you took.

Ah, dear is the voice that makes you oblivious
To the ceaseless erosions of Time;
That appeals to the youth of you, lovingly frivolous,
Tasting adventure and finding it glorious—
Mere living an adventure sublime.

You savor the fragrance of an elixir, supernal,
Distilled from the wine of desire.
O alive are your pulses; this quickening, vernal,
Part of the plan of the power Eternal,
Enkindles a smoldering fire.

P. S.—Hope you catch a lot of fish. —G. F. M.

Reviewed in this Number

BATTLE OF THE SEXES—
A United Artists picture. Directed by D. W. Griffith;
from the story by Daniel Carson Goodman; adaptation by Gerrit J. Lloyd.
The cast: Jean Hersholt, Phyllis Haver, Belle Bennett, Don Alvarado, Sally O'Neill, William Bakewell, John Batten.

FORGOTTEN FACES—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Victor Schertzinger; associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; adapted by Olive H. P. Garrett; from a story by Richard Washburn Childs; screen play by Howard Estabrook; photographed by J. Roy Hunt; editor-in-chief, David O. Selznick; assistant director, Russell Mathews.
The cast: Clive Brook, Olga Baclanova, Mary Brian, William Powell, Fred Kohler, Jack Luden.

HOT NEWS—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Clarence Badger; associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; story by Monte Brice and Harlan Thompson; adaptation by Lloyd Corrigan and Grover Jones; screen play by Florence Ryerson; photographed by William Marshall; production supervision by B. P. Fineman; assistant director, Paul Jones.
The cast: Bebe Daniels, Neil Hamilton, Paul Lukas, Alfred Allen, Spec O'Donnell, Ben Hall, Mario Carillo, Maude Turner Gordon.

LITTLE SHEPHERD OF KINGDOM COME—
A First National picture. Directed by Alfred Santell; story by John Fox Jr.; adaptation and continuity by Bess Meredyth; produced by Henry Hobart; photographed by Lee Garmes.

JOHN PETERS
CHARACTERS
GLadstone 5017

John Waters
DIRECTOR
ORegon 7767

Howard Bretherton
Director
In Production
"THE REDEEMING SIN"
Starring
Dolores Costello
A Vitaphone Feature

TOM TERRISS
Director of Pictures in
Russia, Germany, England,
Spain and Hollywood
Actor and Producer of Plays in
GLadstone 4161
TENDERLOIN—
A Warner Brothers picture. Directed by Michael Curtiz; from the story by Melville Crosman; scenario by E. T. Lowe, Jr.; photographed by Hal Mohr; assistant director, John Daumery.
The cast: Dolores Costello, Conrad Nagel, George Stone, Dan Wolheim, Pat Hartigan, Fred Kelsey, G. Raymond Nye, Dorothy Vernon, Evelyn Pierce.

WHERE BRITISH FILMS FAIL
By George R. Roscoe (London, England)
WHAT America thinks of British films is a subject that receives little attention this side of the Atlantic.
What a small body of English people, with more prejudice than soundness of judgment, think of American films, is only too well known. It is perpetually aired both in the trade and "lay" press.
The overwhelming number of "Yes" men in the British industry, have done much to make its failures.
In this connection therefore, one of the most surprising statements that have yet appeared is the admission, recently published in an English trade paper, that technically British pictures are inferior both to American and German productions, and that it would be wise to enlist the aid of experts from either country.
I have repeatedly pointed out in reviewing British made pictures that the lighting, photography, and camera work is careless and slovenly. It is possible to identify any British made picture by its crude photography. But mine was practically a voice in the wilderness.
Exteriors can scarcely ever be used in England owing to the bad photographic qualities of the climate. This is probably one of the reasons why stories with a continental location are so popular with British producers. Practically all the most successful British pictures have had a foreign location. Outstanding examples are The Constant Nymph", "Moulin Rouge", and the Coward plays; and the majority of the Betty Balfour subjects have been set either partly or entirely in continental locations.
Yet with the exception of a few films handled by foreign technicians, not even the favorable atmospheric conditions made any great difference in the quality of the film. Interior sets are, in practically every instance, badly lighted and photographed.
American studios have spent fifteen years in experimenting with and perfecting photography and lighting, and Germany has devoted at least ten years to the subject. America has had the advantage of a very large financial backing, Germany the asset of being one of the greatest—if not the greatest—scientific nation in the world. Britain is joining in the march with neither of these assets.
I have no prejudice against the films of any nation, but the boosting of inferior photoplays into super status simply because they are made in England is as stupid as it is nearsighted. British films need American markets very much more than America needs British markets. Practically every big American producing concern has by judicious buying its ready made market in a large Lon-
There will soon be another good “talkie” to talk about!

Meanwhile at the best theatres

JOHNNY HINES has “The Wright Idea”

A FIRST NATIONAL PICTURE

B & H ENTERPRISES, Inc.
C. C. BURR, Managing Director
assertion. Mr. Nagel fails to back his assertion with anything but very general and inconclusive arguments, most of which are easy of refutation.

That the talking picture has not been warmly received by the picture industry and those in it, is surely no argument in its favor, for who is better able to judge of its merits than these very people? And the effort to belittle their intelligence by implying that they do not know a good thing when they see one, is too much along the lines of "Intelligentsia" criticism to be of constructive value as an argument.

Again, the human mind—if blessed with a modicum of intelligence—does not resent anything because it is new. As a matter of fact, it is prone to swallow it, hook, line and sinker. But this does not mean that this same mind will accept a thing still in an experimental stage as a "fait accompli" and if it fails to work out under development, they will reject it. At present the attitude of the public is "show me".

Another argument—with reverse English—in favor of the talkie. Mr. Nagel states that silent pictures will always be made to supply the foreign markets, and because the talking picture is too costly for popular production. Does he not see that these are the two most powerful arguments yet advanced against the talking pictures? It is an almost foregone conclusion that the producers, whose reason for producing pictures is, and always will be, the money in them, will not continue to produce costly pictures for the entertainment of the few. Also, the statement that the producers care nothing for the foreign
market, may be amended to read, that they do not care for it any more than for their right eye.

I think Mr. Nagel mistakes natural curiosity for enthusiasm, in his description of the reaction of the audience at a talking picture, and his statement that dialogue brings life to the picture, might well come from a blind man. I would ask him if he ever saw Seventh Heaven and if he considers it needs dialogue to make it live?

The brain reacts far more quickly to visual impressions than to aural ones, for the simple reason that what the eye sees is almost simultaneously interpreted by the brain, while sounds, especially words, require an appreciably longer period for interpretation, which depends on the intelligence of the hearer. Moreover, the thrill obtained from action is never equalled by that derived from words. Most of us could read of the revolting slaughter of Hickman in Twenty-two Minutes, or the pathetic composition of fumes, but how many of us could have watched it?

As to Mr. Zanuck’s contribution, I think he fooled you, and slipped a good publicity stunt over on you for his company. Also it contains about as much truth as the average publicity article.

With the exception of the Jazz Singer, ninety percent. Jolson—all the pictures he names are distinctly mediocre, while every review that I have read of The Lights of New York brands it as one of the worst pieces of “fromage” ever made.

And we would have him remember that no one save producers and press agents regard box-office records as a criterion of excellence. As Mr. Zanuck states, the talking pictures are to save the lives of his own and other producing companies, it only goes to prove that these companies should be making concrete instead of pictures.

Pictures have received the whole-hearted support of the public, as silent pictures. If they do not continue to do so, it is the fault of the producers alone.

F. ELY PAGET.

My views on the above letter are that Mr. Paget is wrong in all his conclusions.—W. B.)

THE FIRST SOUND PICTURE

Dear Sir:

In your issue of The Spectator of June 23rd, you say you would boast that you saw the first oral picture ever produced.

Let me to inform you that it is not the first oral picture ever produced, by a long shot. Two years ago last December the DeForest Phonofilm Company produced a one act melodrama called “Retribution,” which was equivalent to two reels in length, running thirty minutes. It was entirely a “talking” picture, no sub-titles.

The story was by Hans Alene, in collaboration with Arthur Donaldson, a well-known actor, who played a protein part—five characters. Others in the cast were equally well-known, Aubrey Beattie, Wm. Cameron and myself. The director was Mr. Phillips, who came from England to direct. The same players also put on another picture—a “talker”—for the American Bell Telephone Co. depicting Prof. Bell testing his first phone in his laboratory, and later showing it to Don Pedro, Emperor of Brazil, at the Centennial in Philadelphia, in 1876. This picture followed almost immediately after the DeForest production, filmed by a different process, however, large disks being used instead of film. This latter picture was part of the company’s exhibit at the Sesqui-Centennial in Philadelphia.

New York.

WM. B. CALHOUN.

UNABLE TO ACCEPT OUR VIEWS

My dear Mr. Beaton:

Your comments on pictures are interesting, always, even when one doesn’t agree with them. What you have said lately regarding talking pictures is especially so, even though I find myself unable to accept your views.

I admit, of course, that sound-films are an important step in advance, but I cannot agree with you that they are going to revolutionize the industry. For “specials,” and near-specials, sound-synchronization is truly an advantage (or would be if English were a more universal language); but the production costs of making a talking picture at the backbone of the industry—such a change is almost inconceivable. This is not due to any one cause, but rather, on account of a combination of them. The producers, of course, would be reluctant to go to the extra expense necessitated by the addition of sound; but that alone is no great obstacle. That the voices of established favorites might be unsuitable, is also unimportant, for there are plenty of actors with good voices, to replace them. But it is when you consider the small exhibitor, who, like the program picture, is the real support of the industry, that you encounter a real problem.

The average small exhibitor, like most small businessmen, is most conservative, probably because he can’t afford to be otherwise. While it’s almost impossible to derive much shoestring, or less. He cannot afford to invest in anything uncertain, or likely to become useless to him. To date there are, I believe, three basically different systems of sound-films, with more coming. Granting that their amplifying apparatus is interchangeable and that the contracts would permit the use of one amplifier for all three, there is still the fact that our exhibitor could not afford the bare cost of the installations. He is not making enough. His expenses are high, and the income small. Credit? It’s already stretched perilously near its limit. Raise the admission fee? Don’t suggest it; he’s had to do it often enough, when he was forced to play a special (they don’t draw overly well on Main street), either to produce them, or, in the event of failure, lose a part of his money either case, his public grumbled, or, worse, stayed away.

A nickel is still respected in the “sticks”, and a 10 cent increase in the local theatre’s charge is of more moment than all the small-farm legislation ever written. I recall a report of a personal survey made by a president of the Michigan State M. P. T. O. A., which concluded with the fact that even for the average gallery exhibitor could be nothing more or less than a philanthropic farce. It certainly was not, could not be able to make anything like a living! Could you expect such men to invest several thousand dollars apiece in two or three sets of complicated, new equipment, whose ultimate value is entirely problematical?

Thus as pointed out by a correspondent in a recent issue, the foreign field would be ruined by the extensive use of such devices. At a time when the rest of the world is straining every effort to surpass the American film industry, such a step would be suicidal. Your suggestion of translation by doubles seems rather far-fetched, and presupposes a cosmopolitan mentality quite lacking in the average audience. Ignoring the fact that the foreign audience wouldn’t understand in other than the domestic, and that it is just being won to the conclusion that the films are really deserving of serious consideration, the fact remains that to have a speaking film translated, without changing, or at least approximating the lip-movements, would give a most ludicrous effect. Audiences will stand a great deal, but not such a blantly ridiculous thing.

The quick passing of the earlier attempts at “talkies,” which were badly synchronized, as a rule, bears witness to that. Incidentally, consider the difficulty of trying to translate a given speech in English into, say, German or Russian, giving even nearly the same shades of meaning, and taking the same time! Or, fancy having a character coming out speaking quite perfectly, yet his lips had finished moving! It would rob the screen of all atmosphere of realism, or actuality, which is one of its chiefest charms. It would do more to kill the screen art than all the imbecilities of ignorant producers, zealot censors, and immature, highbrow journalists ever could.

Undoubtedly, sound-films have their place. The industry should endeavor to big enough to hold them. But their importance should not be over-estimated. Once technically standardized they will have their own special niche. For newsreel, novelties, accompaniments, and domestic feature-production they will never be displaced. But I cannot agree with your statements that they will revolutionize pictures. If they try to, I fear they’ll come nearer to killing them!

FILLIAM STULL, A. S. C.
JEAN HERSHOLT

AL COHN

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For Universal
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Demmy Lamson Management

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A LUBITSC H PRODUCTION
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by HANS KRALY
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In

"The Magnificent Flirt"

A Harry d'Arrast Production

Now Playing

West Coast Boulevard Theatre
What Good Is Joe Kennedy Doing, Anyway?

Schenck Has Strange Ideas About Sound

Brady et al Are Going to Lose Some Money

Hold-Up Number Is Growing Fat

FOUR WALLS
CRAIG'S WIFE
THE COSSACKS
JUST MARRIED
MIDNIGHT LIFE
HEARTS OF ROMANY

CELEBRITY
THE TERROR
THE TOILERS
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Joe Kennedy Doesn't Know It Is An Art

(The three following paragraphs, dealing with the activities of Joseph P. Kennedy in pictures, were written and in type before the announcement was made that the Boston banker had severed his connection with First National. I make this explanation as I would not have any of my readers imagine that I was emboldened to discuss him only when he had lost some of his power. In any event, in the following comment I treat Kennedy more as a type than as an individual.)

RICHARD Rowland, in his swan song after thirty years in pictures, says that the two great problems facing the industry are the high negative cost and too many theatres. Rowland proceeds to intimate that Joseph P. Kennedy, with some help from others, will solve both these problems. Other people seem to hold the same view, that we can expect great things from Kennedy, and the importance that film publications of the East attach to him is reflected in their faithfulness in recording his every word and movement. Kennedy is the type of man that pictures need. He is young, alert, energetic, clean, and has a sound knowledge of finances. He enters a business that is a peculiar one, an industry that manufactures art. The excessive negative cost, which all agree is the main affliction of the industry, is merely another way of expressing the fact that the art is costing too much. The first duty, therefore, of a bold crusader like Kennedy should be to strike at the roots of the main trouble and find out why the art product was being manufactured at a price that made reasonable profits impossible. To do this he would have to study the art; he would have to learn first how pictures are made, and why they are made that way, before he could consider with complete intelligence any problem that the picture industry presented to him. We, of course, must presume that Kennedy is as aware of that as we are. For over two years we have read what the energetic young banker has done in the way of merging companies and acquiring control of organizations that had no common point of contact before his appearance on the scene. He has done a lot of this, but what good it has done anyone is not apparent. That the industry was in a bad way has been apparent for half a dozen years, but I do not recall anyone having suggested that it needed mergers to cure it of its ills. The only thing it has needed, or needs now, is an improvement in the standard of its output. The present pictures have no ills that better pictures will not cure. They will cure even over-seating, for it is not lack of population that is causing empty seats; it is lack of entertainment quality in the pictures the theatres are forced to offer. Kennedy has been held up as the man who was going to show us how the business should be run, the man who had studied the business—this business that deals with art—and knew what it wanted. Edwin Schallert interviewed him during his last visit to Hollywood, and this is what Kennedy said to him: "Art is the other fellow's game; business is mine, and I'm not mixing them—at present." Thus after more than two years in pictures Kennedy acknowledges that he knows nothing about them, but the presence of the dash before the last two words may be an intimation that when he has merged everything mergeable he will go back over his course in an effort to find out if what he has done has been of any value to anyone. So far in his activities Kennedy, a decent chap, a fine type of young man, and with the best intentions in the world, has not to his credit one action that will be of permanent good even to the people with whom he is associated, much less to pictures generally. His presence in the industry merely has added one more to those in it already who have no notion whatever what it is all about. Half of every dollar that Kennedy's associates are spending for pictures is being wasted and he has not the remotest idea how it is being done. He acknowledges his

Hold-Up Number Getting Along Fine!

THE weekly Film Spectator is going to weigh quite a lot at birth. The first issue is to be the Hold-Up Number, and the manner in which screen people are allowing themselves to be mulcted of various sums on the pretense that advertising in it will do them some good, shows promise of producing an initial paper that will be quite pugdy. I repeat what I said in the previous Spectator, that I can't imagine how the advertising in my Hold-Up Number can do advertisers any good, but that fact does not perturb me in the slightest. Confidently, I am more interested in the bulk of the number than I am in its morals. I think I am keeping within the law, but this is an election year and if the authorities proceed against me I will switch Joe Schenck and Louis B. Mayer, and the three of us will deliver the entire vote of the motion picture industry to the prohibition ticket. That threat should be sufficient to secure me immunity.

Every mail brings me in a batch of orders for space, accompanied by checks, and my banker is expending upon me a degree of cordiality that is startling. Bankers don't care how you get it, as long as you put it in.

One thing that pleases me about the inflow of checks is that the idea of a weekly Spectator pleases those who have read it as a bi-weekly. This display of confidence in the publication is something that entails upon it the obligation of living up to it. It will endeavor to merit the confidence.
ignorance when he says that "art is the other fellow's game." When Kennedy realizes that art is his sole business, when he gives attention to how pictures are being made and realizes the shocking waste that attends their making, he may be able to accomplish the great things that are expected of him.

Kennedy Overlooking Some Obvious Truths

ExTRAVAGANCE and inefficiency always go hand in hand; likewise economy and efficiency. When we have economical pictures we will have better ones. Thus the two ills of the industry will be cured with one treatment. Since the inception of pictures they have been dominated by people who have looked upon them solely as something to exploit. Salaries beyond all reason were paid to executives who knew nothing about the motion picture art, but who had to do something in an effort to make the salaries look reasonable, consequently they mussed up everything the skilled picture people did, and under them inefficient and most grotesquely extravagant methods were fastened upon the industry and became a part of it. The salaries are just as absurd to-day as they have always been, and so thoroughly have the majority of people in pictures learned only how to make them inefficiently, that it will take a long time, even with a Kennedy leading the crusade, before conditions can be improved. But the trouble is that Kennedy can not lead the crusade, for he can see nothing at which to lower his lance. Not knowing how pictures are made, it obviously is impossible for him to cast any light on how they should be made. And he is becoming a big figure in an industry whose only business is the making of pictures. If I were to tell Joe Kennedy that the perfect script would strike at the root of every ill that afflicts pictures, that it would lead to big dividends for the shareholders of the companies he is shaking so violently, and finally produce smiles on the faces of the bankers who now are wondering why they went into pictures—if I were to present to this Boston banker a true statement of the value the perfect script would be to the industry, he would tell me that it is art, which is the other fellow's game and he would continue to merge with renewed energy. If he consulted production staffs about the perfect script, it would be demonstrated to him that while it is a nice thing to talk about, it is impractical because it would stifle inspiration. Every month I see perhaps a score of pictures without an inspiring moment in one of them, yet we must deny ourselves the perfect script on account of the possibility that some day one of the directors of these pictures might have an inspiration if it were not there to stifle him. And Kennedy could not meet such an argument, because business is his game, not art. Not until he realizes that art is his game, not business, will he be of the slightest good to himself or his associates. When he learns enough about the art not to be fooled by any argument against the complete planning of a picture in advance, and when he applies this knowledge practically, he will be in fact as great a figure in the industry as he is now by reputation. And I will say this for him: I think he'll do it. If in the meantime his companies do not succumb to the rough treatment he is according them, the chances are good that he will prop their now trembling frames into a fair degree of rigidity. If the industry had started with perfect scripts and had developed people who could prepare them, it probably could have continued to stagger along even under the terrific burden of the unnatural salaries it has paid, and it would not have needed sound which has come so opportunely to revive its dwindling favor with the public. On account of the lack of proper scripts, scores of millions of dollars, which should have gone to shareholders in the form of dividends, have been thrown into the refuse cans in cutting rooms. The practice still continues. The advent of sound offers an opportunity to the industry to turn over a new leaf, but there is nothing to indicate that the producing organizations are aware of it. Sound pictures apparently are to be made as absurdly as the silent ones have been made, and wastefulness, inefficiency and incompetence will continue to rule. Nothing is more feasible than the perfect script, and there is nothing that the industry needs so badly, but those who rule its destinies will continue to disregard these obvious truths.

Something Even a Banker Should Be Able to Grasp

The screen will achieve success as an industry only in the degree that it attains perfection as an art. That is so obvious that it should be apparent even to a banker whose vision usually can not reach beyond the dollar mark. When a director pleads with a producer for the retention in a picture of a certain sequence because it is artistic, the producer decries art and says that making motion pictures is a cold-blooded business proposition. When a banker asks the same producer why it costs so much to make a picture, the producer points out that the film business is an art, that it is unlike all other businesses, and that waste can not be avoided. When you mention "art" you scare all other bankers as Joe Kennedy has been scared by the word. They think it is something whose mysteries are plain only to the gifted people who stand at the head of the producing organization. In the history of American finance no set of bankers has been fooled as completely as those who are backing the motion picture industry are being fooled. In his annual report to his organization, a report written purely for the benefit of bankers, Will Hays says that, "advance reports from a nationally-known firm of accountants making a survey at Hollywood confirm that the production end of the business gets a dollar in value for every dollar spent." When Hays wrote that his mind was playing him the same tricks it played when he was on the witness stand in the oil inquiry. Any man connected with pictures who does not know that half of every dollar spent on production is wasted, is an idiot, and any such man who makes a state-

In the Next Spectator

Further comments on the usefulness of Joseph P. Kennedy and his kind to motion pictures.

We suggest to the Academy that it gives heed to the interests of the majority of those it represents.

Conditions under which Spectator's advice should not be taken.

Other general comment and reviews of The Godless Girl, Oh, Kay!, Submarine, First Kiss, The Fleet's In, Cossacks and others.
ment to the contrary, as Hays does, is either an idiot or a liar. But the bankers believe the statements, and keep on putting up their money. When they ask why it is necessary to eliminate so much of a picture after it is shot, they are told that it is done for art's sake, that waste is an inherent part of the business. The truth is that there is no more excuse for waste in the picture business than there is for a corresponding waste in the boot and shoe business. Naturally those surrounding Kennedy are not going to tell him that. They have learned to make pictures only by the wasteful method and are honest in their belief that it is the only way that they can be made.

Kennedy can not consider the matter intelligently because he regards the making of a picture as an art, and he boasts that he is ignorant of art, because it is "the other fellow's game"! No doubt it has been demonstrated to him to his satisfaction that when a seven-reel picture is desired, at least a dozen reels must be shot. Yet it is not necessary to shoot more than seven reels for a seven-reel picture. A properly prepared script would call for the exact footage required, and the story would be told perfectly within that footage, thus providing better art and great economy. Every foot of film that remains on the cutting-room floor is a tribute to the incompetence of the makers of the picture. The fact that directors are allowed to shoot without restraint and trust to luck to make a picture out of the miles of film, is what is the matter with the movies. Besides being a criminal waste of money, it also is an artistic crime because it is a system that will not produce good pictures. If bankers, who really have the whip-hand, would inquire into the artistic end of the business, they would discover that there is nothing mysterious about it, that mortals with ordinary brains can run it, and that if a picture were planned as carefully as it should be, it would be a much better picture and cost half what it costs by the present prevailing method.

Joe Schenck Has
Some Strange Ideas

JOSEPH M. Schenck was interviewed by Cinema, London, about talking pictures. "The danger is," said Joe, "that the public may be poisoned by talkies." That is an extraordinary statement for a showman to make—that there is danger of the public liking a form of entertainment so much that it will insist upon getting it. Wherein lies the "danger"? Joe should be glad that the public is demanding something that it is in the power of the motion picture industry to provide, for it was getting very tired of what it was getting. If Joe lives as long as the talkies do he will be too old to be interesting. The Daily Film Renter, also of London, quotes the head of United Artists as saying: "The essence of speaking in a dramatic form was that it should carry sincerity, and the mechanical nature of the reproduction robbed the utterance of the sincerity it needed to make the picture a success." The argument that such a defect would prevent talking pictures becoming universal is childish. The most enthusiastic champion of sound devices will go Joe one better and acknowledge that they have several other defects to-day, but making talking pictures perfect is a trivial task compared with solving the problems that arose while they were coming into being. There is enough brains in the engineering end of talking pictures to take the mechanical nature out of voice reproduction, even though there were not enough brains in the production end to realize that it can be done. But, to get back to the Schenck interviews; the wildest statement that Joe made to the London newspaper men was that talking pictures are a fad that will not last more than four or five months. That they will prove to be a fad is a matter of opinion, and on a subject that all of us know as little as we do about the ultimate application of sound to pictures, Schenck is entitled to his opinion as any of the rest of us are to a contrary opinion. Facts, however, not opinions, will determine if talking pictures will be a fad. If the public supports them they will not be a fad in the sense that Schenck classifies them, for there are some fads that go on forever, like Wrigley's gum gives promise of doing. It will take four or five years, not four or five months, to determine the fate of the new pictures, for not until that time has elapsed will there be enough houses equipped with reproducing apparatus to give the public an adequate opportunity to register its approval or disapproval. Even if Joe Schenck's opinion ultimately is proven sound, talking pictures in only four or five months will not even have begun to demonstrate that they are a fad. Then there is the financial side of the situation to consider. The group of bankers who control sound devices and television rapidly are gaining financial control of the motion picture industry. Joseph P. Kennedy is active in their behalf, and although he has declared publicly that a knowledge of what he is doing is no part of his equipment for doing it, his feverish, but aimless, activity is a manifestation of the bankers' anxiety to do something, even though they are not clear as to what they are doing. There are hundreds of millions of dollars to be made out of manufacturing sound reproducing equipment for the picture houses of the world, and these hundreds of millions can not be made unless sound pictures are made. When the same capital controls both ends of the business it is obvious that talking pictures would be forced upon the public even if it were reluctant to accept them, which will not be the case. When the picture interests of the bankers are placed in the hands of someone with more sense than Kennedy apparently possesses, and who will approach the business for what it is, an art, talking pictures will attain a degree of entertainment value that will make the public's approval a certainty, not a matter of speculation. It was not the attractive appearance of its phonographs that built up the Victor company; it was the quality of the entertainment the Victor people provided for those who bought them. The quality was so high that all of us had to buy phonographs. The quality of talking picture entertainment will be made so high that the public will pay for it. Within a year Schenck's organization will be making only talking pictures or no pictures at all.

Industry's Thanks Are
Due Billy Brady et al

AFTER Will Hays tells his organization the next time that no story that has been screened is half as dramatic as the story of the screen itself, I trust some member of his organization will rise and propose that gold medals be presented to those New York stage producers who so kindly are to spend their money to demonstrate to the motion picture industry that transferring a play
bodily to the screen, using a sound device to reproduce the dialogue, is an exceedingly silly thing to do. The film business is the luckiest one on earth and it is time it was taking official action to show its appreciation of its own good fortune. Conducted since its inception in defiance of all accepted rules of industry and finance, it blundered along for a quarter of a century and then began to sink under the weight of its accumulated stupidities. Exhibitors were complaining that they could not sell half their seats—and along came Sound. Immediately some of these unbelievably incompetent people who drew enormous salaries while they were driving the industry towards bankruptcy, turned their backs on all they had learned about stories during the past twenty-five years, forgot the technic that had been developed, ignored the hundreds of thoroughly trained artists already in Hollywood, and reached out frantically to the stage for plays, directors, and actors. They would have spent several millions of dollars demonstrating what any person with ordinary brains can tell them now: that the public does not want to see stage plays transferred to the screen, that it wants simply motion pictures with voices speaking the titles that heretofore have been shown on the screen in print. And when the blind and blundering industry was about to add this financial folly to the long list it previously had committed, Al Woods, Billy Brady, and some others who were supposed to have sense, decided that they would embark on the wild adventure, and refused to let our Hollywood magnates buy the plays that would have added a few more million dollars to the waste that the public already has had to absorb. The action of the New York producers, however unwise from their standpoint, is the best thing that could have happened to the motion picture industry at this time. It probably will force it to turn to motion picture stories, from which it never should have strayed.

For thirty years an industry that depends on literature has groped blindly along without developing a literature of its own. It has spent money with reckless disregard for sanity and economy and there is not to its credit one name that stands out as that of a great screen writer that the industry may call its own. In spite of its own incapacity, however, it has at its command many people who are skilled in writing for the screen, and upon these people it turned its back as soon as it became excited over sound. It is too bad that there is no way of getting into the heads of our production chiefs that no great revolution is coming with the introduction of audible passages into pictures. The public still will want just motion pictures. And they will have to continue to be directed by motion picture directors and acted by motion picture actors. The raid on the stage for directors and actors is one of the most absurd things the crazy industry has done. There are in Hollywood now more artists with fine voices and years of training before the camera than all the studios could keep busy if every one of them were making sound pictures and nothing else. Directors with experience only in producing plays will spoil more pictures than they will help. Producers have made pretty much of a mess of the motion picture business, but, even so, they had better stick to it and not get stampeded.

Sound Already Is Taken for Granted

WHEN I viewed Lights of New York some weeks before its public showing, I was engrossed with it as an indication of what the future held for talking pictures. I was aware that it was a terrible motion picture, but that did not disturb me, for all my thoughts were concerned with what had been done in putting conversation on the screen. When I viewed The Terror I found that sound did not intrigue me, and I regarded it only as screen entertainment. The earlier Warner Brothers pictures have worn the edge off the novelty of talking films and hereafter sound will have to stand up as entertainment and not as something new. The situation is peculiar. The public has responded generously to the first timid ventures the Warners made in experiments with sound, and through the box-office went a long way towards paying for the experiments. Warners entertained the public with their first weak and wobblng steps and the public paid for the entertainment. No other producer will have a similar experience or will be accorded a similar privilege. Paramount, Fox, Metro and the rest will have to come upon the screen with full-blown sound pictures which will be criticized as such and not as experiments. All the public’s tolerance has been expended upon Warner Brothers, and now there is none left, even for them. Other producers are making a frantic attempt to catch up to the Warners by holding back their silent pictures not yet released and putting little dabs of noise into them. “I could have been a lot better if I had thought of this sooner,” virtually is the message that each of these patched-up pictures will take to audiences. It is going to be ridiculous for Paramount to release Abie’s Irish Rose with a few talking sequences months after Warners have released pictures composed entirely of talking sequences. Fox seems to be the only studio that is not panic stricken. I have not heard of it trying to murder any good silent picture by poisoning it with sound that does not belong in it. In a few places where sound has been introduced in White Shadows the picture is benefited but in others the fact that it was forced on the defense less film is most apparent. The big studios would be better off if they would release all their silent pictures as such and give the public no sound until they were ready to release one hundred per cent. talking films. Picture patrons are paying for one series of experiments, and don’t think they’ll pay for any more. With the advent of The Terror Warner Brothers have their talking picture formula pretty well set, and they will have to proceed to make much better pictures or yield the place of leadership that they now hold. The Terror is in every way:

HELL’S KITCHEN
(title registered and protected) is my original story that dramatizes this notorious but colorful section of New York. It depicts the career of a gangster who becomes rich, respectable and respected, but the ghost of his past stalks him like a shadow. The principal character would admirably fit Emil Jannings, Jean Hersholt or any male star of virile personality. Offers from producers invited.

JAMES MADISON
(Scenarios — Gags — Titles — Talk)
323 North Citrus Ave., Los Angeles ORegon 5627
much better picture than Lights of New York, and from the standpoint of acting and voice reproduction leaves nothing to be desired, but it seems to be a case of the vista widening as sound advances. The Terror does better with sound than with any other picture has done, but it demonstrates more than any other picture does just what a lot there still is to do. The effect it will have on screen technic is something that will develop slowly, but the manner in which sound will be used is something that will have to be settled at once. In The Terror people stand in the middle of a room and talk. We hear every word distinctly. They run up a stairway that is devoid of carpet, and we do not hear a footstep. A man closes a door and we do not hear it; he advances a few feet and whispers, and we hear the whisper. Such things as these are among the problems that must be solved quickly, for they are too obvious to escape the alert mind of the public. But what remains to be done is trivial in comparison with what already has been done.

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It Demonstrates that Actors Needn't Worry About Voices

SINCE the talkies have become an engrossing topic of conversation I have maintained that the importance of the voice has been exaggerated greatly. The voice, after all, is an attachment that works automatically. When you on one corner ask a man to give you a match, and on the next corner ask a highwayman to spare your life, you do not concern yourself with the fact that you must put more fervor into your second plea than into the first. The situation in which you find yourself takes care of the fervor. It will be the same with screen acting when all pictures talk. There will be no place on the screen for elocutionists. The actor who can not feel a love scene enough to make it convincing to any audience, can not put conviction into his words because some elocution teacher has taught him how to pronounce the suitable words. All the screen actor need do to equip himself for the new condition of things is to develop the lower register of his voice and to practice speaking distinctly. The emotion he puts into his speeches is something that is felt, not learned at school. And as I say some other place in this Spectator, in a short paragraph written before I saw The Terror, good screen voices can be developed rapidly. May McAvoy's voice was not satisfactory in Lion and the Mouse, I imagine the poor youngster was scared stiff by the realization that her voice was going out. One evening recently I told her that she had nothing to worry about, for her voice had the necessary quality, and that it was not difficult to learn how to use it. Next day I saw her in The Terror. She certainly has progressed, which pleased me, for May stands very high on my list of favorites whose photographs adorn the walls of my library. Warner Brothers cast The Terror intelligently. They went after motion picture artists and did not commit the folly of raiding the stage as other producers are doing. In addition to May the cast is made up of Louise Fazenda, Edward Everett Horton, Alec B. Francis, Holmes Herbert, Matthew Betz, John Miljan, Otto Hoffman, Joseph Girard, and Frank Austin. The majority have had stage experience, but they are trained thoroughly in screen acting. Louise Fazenda surprised me most. I am told that she has never been on the stage, but she has a perfect voice, and uses it most intelligently. Otto Hoffman has appeared in a great many pictures without attracting attention, but his is one of the most notable performances in The Terror on account of the excellent use he makes of his voice, which demonstrates that sound is going to bring to the front much of the latent talent in Hollywood. All the voices heard in this picture are satisfactory as voices, but in future pictures they will have to be speeded up. They talk with unnatural slowness, which makes the story drag. Roy del Ruth's direction, for a first attempt at something new, is surprisingly good, but there is a suggestion of timidity about the whole production that no doubt will wear off rapidly. There are many traces of Joe Jackson's wit in the dialogue, indicating that he is destined to be one of the high lights of the new art. I was glad to see that the picture makes no attempt to change the volume of a voice when its owner moves from a medium shot to a close-up. The first duty of a sound picture is to bring every voice with equal distinctness to the last seat in the theatre, which is the one great advantage the sound screen will have over the stage. Viewers of silent pictures are asked now to take some things for granted. By a fade-out and a fade-in we transport a man in a second from his home to his office. We are so used to it that we overlook the fact that it is something that can not be done in a second. We will grant the same indulgence to the reproduction of voices in the same volume for close-ups as for long shots. It is something that we will become used to and is a valuable feature of sound devices that should not be monkeyed with.

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Too Many Close-Ups Make It Irritating

ONE thing that Jack Gilbert has to thank Metro for is the diversity of characterizations assigned to him. We have seen him as almost everything that a young man can be. And he is such an excellent actor that he is convincing in every role he plays. In Four Walls he is a gang leader, jailbird and lover, the last being the only feature that is common to all the parts given him. As usual, his performance leaves nothing to be desired. He is equally convincing as the crook, the repenting convict, the repentant mechanic, and the weak young man on the verge of returning to his life of lawlessness. But Four Walls is by no means all his. Joan Crawford is a big part of it. Several times I have urged Metro to feature Joan's brain instead of her legs, and in this picture this is done. She takes her place now among our leading young dramatic actresses, and her work should impress her employers with the fact that they need not be hesitant about assigning big parts to her. She has youth, good looks and intelligence, and that is all that any girl needs to be successful on the screen. That rare artist, Vera Gordon, who in the Advice Number urged me to feature the woman who plays Jack Gilbert's mother in Four Walls, is a critic of some discernment. The woman is worth featuring. I believe it would be quite impossible for Miss Gordon to give anything but a superb performance. In this picture Carmel Myers comes back to us in a role that is drab pictorially, but which permits her to remind us that she is a talented young woman. She has one big moment, the biggest in the picture, which she handles splendidly. Louis Natheaux, Robert E. O'Connor and Jack Byron are
thoroughly satisfactory. The story is an interesting one, although it wanders away from the theme that the first reels indicate will be developed. It is good entertainment as it is, but it would have been a better picture if the theme—"Four walls do not a prison make"—had been handled more sympathetically. There is much in the continuity to praise, particularly the businesslike way in which it tells the story. In one shot we see Gilbert being carried to jail in a patrol wagon which, by a dissolve, seems to land him in a penitentiary cell. We are spared the trial. No effort is made to introduce the characters, their discovery being left to the audience. This is as it should be, for no character is important to a picture until he does something important to the story, and when he does this something he is identified sufficiently. In many places in Four Walls there are evidences of capable direction by Bill Nigh. In the brief glimpses we get of ensemble shots we have only enough time to begin to appreciate the capable manner in which Nigh handles his crowds, and then we are treated to a long succession of close-ups that alone are responsible for the fact that at times the picture shows a tendency to drag. Four Walls is too good, the story too engrossing, the acting too excellent, the direction too intelligent, and the production too interesting to be spoiled altogether by an insane parade of close-ups, but I must credit the editing with doing its best to make the picture as uninteresting as possible. In a production handled so intelligently in every other respect, it is amazing that so much stupidity could be displayed in the selection of shots for the completed picture. Gilbert and Joan Crawford sit so near one another that a playing card could not be dropped between them, yet they are divided into individual close-ups. Perhaps a score of scenes that would have been much more effective in deep-medium shots, are subjected to the same jumpy treatment, which is wrong both optically and dramatically. With proper editing, Four Walls would have been a splendid picture. As I saw it, it is interesting, but irritating.

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Two Love Scenes Are Candidates for Medal

Two love scenes now compose the list of candidates for The Spectator's gold medal for the best such scene shown on the screen during the present year. One of them is in The Toilers, a Tiffany-Stahl production directed by Reginald Barker. In it Douglas Fairbanks Jr. declares his love for Jobyna Ralston. It is a beautiful scene, exquisitely acted and splendidly directed. Barker keeps his two characters in the same shot whenever they stand close enough together to make such a shot reasonable. At first they stand on opposite sides of a room and look at one another. This part of the scene is shown in a series of permissible close-ups. When the sweethearts move towards one another they are picked up in a medium shot, and thereafter the scene is played out with the full figures of both characters showing, which is a treatment that I have contended is the proper one for love scenes. Both Jobyna and Doug put much sweetness and tenderness into their acting. The other contestant is the scene in White Shadows in which Monte Blue teaches Raquel Torres how to whistle. Here is another bit of exquisite acting and direction. It is shown in a big close-up, which is as it should be as it is necessary to show the lip move-

ments of the two characters. I believe both these scenes will be among those I will have to ask the producers to let me look at again at the end of the year. The medal I am presenting for the most original final fade-out of the year still is going begging. Reggie Barker might be a candidate for that prize also if he had shown his fade-out in The Toilers in a deep-medium shot instead of in a close-up. Doug is helpless after being imprisoned in a coal mine, and Jobyna rides on the stretcher with him when he is brought to the surface, but the shot is so close that its novelty is obscured. The Toilers is an excellent little picture, being one of the best directed jobs of the year. It is strong in both comedy and drama, and all the comedy touches have the virtue of being parts of the story. Barker composes his scenes most effectively. Particularly impressive is this feature of his direction in underground sequences when the mine is on fire. He also makes liberal use of traveling shots which always appeal to me. And he does not use close-ups senselessly, as most directors do. There are four excellent performances in the picture. Harvey Clarke is amazingly clever in a character role. It is one of the finest bits of acting I have seen on the screen this year. It was obvious that he made a big hit with the audience of which I was a part. He would be a gold mine for any producer who would present him in a succession of strong character parts. Jobyna Ralston appeals to me in The Toilers as she does in all her pictures. She has the same kind of wistful appeal that has made Janet Gaynor such a favorite. As I have watched her work during the past few years I have wondered why her obvious fitness for strong featuring, if not for stardom, is not as apparent to producers as it is to me. The organizations that bemoan their lack of a Janet Gaynor might profitably consider Jobyna Ralston. In The Toilers young Doug Fairbanks gives an admirable performance, one that satisfies me that he has a brilliant future on the screen. In one sequence he innocently and gradually acquires a bun, and he acts it superbly, putting just the right amount of reserve into something that so easily could have been spoiled by over-acting. The whole performance is the best that the young fellow has given us and makes me enthusiastic about his future. Wade Boteler completes the quartette that is responsible for the acting treat that The Toilers gives us. When I see a picture as good as this one come from a studio that spends little money and works its artists up to the point of exhaustion, I wonder what the same director and cast would have done in a studio with plenty of money and a few minutes longer in which to finish the job. That Barker and his players could have done so well working as they did is much to their credit.

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Meet My Friend, Mr. Alfred Grasso

 Alfred Grasso is one of the few picture people I happen to know intimately. It is quite possible you never heard of him, but if you will stage a general screen intelligence test and enroll the entire population of Hollywood, I will enter Grasso and back him to the limit against the field. He's not very big, but he packs around more picture common sense than anyone else I know. When he is managing a production he knows just what each sack of stucco costs and where it should be.
unloaded; how the set built with it and its fellows should be lighted; what it is going to contribute to the drama of the story; and when the story is over he goes to the cutting room and cuts and edits the picture himself. The only thing he doesn’t know about pictures is how to sell himself to them. Born in this country of Italian parents, he inherited a love of all things beautiful, and this country contributed a lot of common sense not always characteristic of the artistic Latin, but not enough common sense to conquer an inborn shyness or to overcome the self-deprecation that makes him tongue-tied when anyone asks him what he knows about pictures. But if Louis Mayer turned over to me the job of running the Metro lot, or if any other of the big producers did the same astounding thing, the first thing I would do would be to send for Alfred Grasso; then I would get Dick Arlen, Tom Miranda and Dave Torrence to make up a foursome and I would settle some of the serious business of seeing how much money I could win from them at golf. As I apparently am the only person in Hollywood who knows Grasso well enough to put him in charge of a lot, and because at the moment I do not happen to have a lot, he has been left to his own devices and has made a picture almost all by himself. He wrote the story, adapted it, prepared the continuity, directed the production and did the editing and cutting. Having a lot of spare time on his hands, he handled all the business details of the venture, and as a final gesture persuaded me to punctuate the excellently written titles. The picture, Hawaiian Love, is not the kind of picture you would expect one man with a particularly pinched pocketbook to make. It is a picture that Paramount or Fox should be quite proud to have its trademark on. Or Metro might put it out as a companion to White Shadows. Because every dollar had to be stretched as far as possible, it was an exceedingly abbreviated company that went to the Hawaiian Islands. It included one actor, a man with one previous picture to his credit. When you view Hawaiian Love you will see several hundred people on the screen, and several excellent performances, but unless you happened to have seen the one picture in which this lone actor worked, you will not see one face that you or anyone else ever saw on a screen before. Grasso impressed into service a complete cast of natives, most of whom could not speak English, which was but one of the hundreds of difficulties that he had to overcome. There are some striking underwater scenes in the picture. There was no money for diving apparatus so Fred Weller, a member of the organization, contrived a covering for a De Vry camera, dived into the water with it, shot the swimming native as long as he could hold his breath, then came up for air and did the whole thing over again. As there is no laboratory on the islands, the company could not see the rushes, but when it got back to Hollywood it found that it had some great stuff on hand. Hawaiian Love is a very fine picture, an extraordinary scenic and an engrossing drama. Two native girls give excellent performances, and the lone actor, Lawrence Barber, is a thoroughly satisfactory leading man. The picture is a product of a bold adventure, a glorious result of an undertaking that only dauntless men would have attempted. But I regard my friend Grasso as the hero of it. I would like to see him go forth on other similar expeditions, but I would like still better to see one of the big organizations recognize him for what he is—a picture genius who can make good, no matter how difficult the task.

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Lowly Toothpick Plays Quite an Important Part

SEVERAL times I have referred to the lack of wisdom in featuring some eccentricity or idiosyncrasy in an effort to give definite personality to a character on the screen. In several pictures I have seen characters eating peanuts or popcorn continuously while they are in front of the camera. They keep it up until one disregards what they are doing and speculates only on what their per diem consumption must be. A new picture which I saw recently has a striking example of this evil. I went to see a preview of it because it was to accord me the first opportunity I had had for a long time to see Francis X. Bushman on the screen. Frank is one of the best actors we have. He should be a sensational success in the talkies. He has a magnificent voice, as well as a magnificent presence and ability to act. I went to Midnight Life, a Gotham production directed by Scott Dunlap, supervised by Harold Shumate, and written by Scott Dunlap and Harold Shumate, which makes it quite impossible for Scott Dunlap and Harold Shumate to dodge responsibility for any faults I may be able to find, however much they may protest about being held up as horrible examples. The picture is another tribute to the underworld phase through which the screen is passing, and by no means is the worst of the lot. Bushman is a detective of the variety that Bob Elliott introduced in Broadway. Frank plays the part excellently, and every scene in which he appears is directed capably. In fact, I have no fault to find with any of Dunlap’s direction. He is an alert and intelligent fellow. However, it is apparent from the picture that he and Harold put their heads together and tried to figure out something that would make Frank’s performance a positive knockout. One of them may have suggested ear-wiggling or looking cross-eyed, but whatever differences of opinion that may have arisen were composed in favor of the lowly toothpick. Not for one instant during the picture is Frank seen without it. Every time he speaks you see it wiggle, and when he smiles it shifts position. After about the second reel the toothpick was to me the whole picture. I am not arguing against it now on the obvious ethical grounds that the use of a toothpick in public is an unforgivable vulgarity which, apart from any consideration of motion picture technic, would offend the sensibilities of a greater portion of an audience; but I am interested in it as an example of what can be done in

ROWLAND V. LEE
Director
THE FIRST KISS
PARAMOUNT-FAMOUS-LASKY
The way of detracting from a performance when overdoing an effort to find something that would add to it. In making a motion picture there is only one thing that should be photographed—the story. Anything that is not a part of the story diverts the attention of the audience. An offending toothpick could have a proper place in this picture if the detective's penchant for it became involved with the story. I do not mean that personal idiosyncrasies have no place in pictures. They have, decidedly. The munching of an occasional peanut gives us a clue to the muncher's character. Theodore Roberts' cigar is part of his characterization, but he does not use it offensively. A nervous twitching of facial muscles can be part of the story that tells us the kind of life the character has led. But when we get an actor of the capability of Frank Bushman in a part that dominates the story, what can a toothpick contribute to the whole? Characterizing him as a lowbrow who is unfamiliar with the ways of polite society was no part of the story. If it were thought desirable to give him a touch to distinguish him from other detectives, why not do something nice, such as doling him up in evening clothes? On Frank such clothes would have pictorial value, something which the portrait of a toothpick can not boast.

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Tay Garnett Makes
His Bow as Director

TAY Garnett is an intelligent young man. No greater proof of the truth of that statement could be advanced than the fact that he shares with that other intelligent young man, John Farrow, the distinction of being the most persistent advertisers in The Spectator, now being on his third year of continuous space-buying. As a customer, Tay endears himself to me by his promptness in paying his bills. All our advertisers string themselves out between Tay, who pays on the first of every month, and Paul Schofield, who never pays at all. Tay has done good work for De Mille and Pathe as a writer, and recently became a director. I have seen his first picture, Celebrity, and there is enough merit in it to indicate that he is going to be a credit to his new profession. First he must get over his timidity. In his initial effort he relied too much on the conventions established by those who have gone before him. Clyde Cook hands Robert Armstrong a paper. While he is reaching for it, and for an appreciable time after he secures it, Bob keeps his eyes in a steady gaze on Clyde before dropping them to the paper. This is a screen habit that always has appealed to me as a stupidity. When A hands B anything in real life, B's gaze goes directly to the object handed to him. What possible reason could he have for looking fixedly at A, particularly when he has seen A every day for years, as the presumption is in this picture? Lina Basquette and Armstrong are walking together across a street. Bob throws up his arms, shouts, and falls half way through a manhole. Lina does not hear him, although he is not more than a foot from her. She misses him, and looks elaborately over his head before she discovers him. This is another old screen absurdity, quite as absurd as putting a character in Champ de Mars and having him look in all directions before discovering the Eiffel Tower. Garnett is a young man, and it is from such as he that the emancipation of the screen must come. He has the necessary ability, and no doubt will acquire the courage to strike out for himself and follow where his intelligence leads. The first thing he must do is to inquire into every hoary habit the screen has and to satisfy himself as to the reason for it. When he can find no reason he will find something that he should not do. The director is the one person behind the scenes who must lend his personality to his production, and he can not do this by planting his feet in the footmarks of those who have gone before him. A screen trick that was silly when it was performed first does not get its silliness rubbed off by repetition. I am aware that the director is not responsible for the harm that is done a great many pictures by the inclusion of old stuff that was born without reason and adhered to with less. Most of those who dominate production can not see virtue in anything not done before. This is true particularly in the case of close-ups, with which Celebrity is afflicted more or less. Too many producers judge the value they are getting from an actor by the magnitude of his nose when it is reproduced on the screen. The close-up may have been sane when D. W. gave birth to it, but it since has gone crazy. My interest in Garnett as a director should not mislead you into the belief that Celebrity is without merit. It is a nice little picture in which Bob Armstrong, Clyde Cook and Lina Basquette give excellent performances. It gave Armstrong his greatest chance and establishes him as an excellent actor. It always is a joy to watch Cook on the screen. We have no more sincere artist.

* * *

ARRIVING home early one morning during the fishing-trip days of my vacation I found a telegram that had been waiting for me for three days. It was from a friend with whom I had spent several notable months on the French and Italian Rivieras and asked me to meet him in San Francisco, from which port he was continuing on his way around the world. Unfortunately he was sailing at four o'clock in the afternoon of the day upon which I received his message. But five hours after I read the telegram in my home in Beverly Hills, I was sitting opposite my friend at a luncheon table for two in the Mark Hopkins hotel in San Francisco. Over the modern telephone in my home I had learned that if I would step into my more modern automobile and hustle to the Maddux Air Lines airport, I could catch one of their most modern three-engine planes. I did all this and dropped out of the sky to greet my friend whom I would have missed if I had tried any other means of reaching him. There was novelty in the thought, both going and coming—flew both ways—that I was ten thousand feet up in the air. Leaving San Francisco we looked down upon a bank of clouds we had pierced on our upward flight, and I don't think I ever saw anything more sublimey beautiful. But it was neither the thrills nor the beauty that occupied my thoughts most of the time I was in the air. The practical side of aviation was what appealed to me most. If I were a producer with a production costing me a few thousand dollars a day I would use nothing but planes for location trips. It would be an easy way to save money. The Maddux people have planes that will carry twelve passengers and soon they will have others that will carry more. It would not take much figuring for a production manager to compute how much money he would save if his company could
SPOTTING good voices for sound pictures is not a difficult job. A dark chapter in my past is that for eight months I was a radio announcer. At that time it was a fascinating occupation. I learned to detect good radio voices in ordinary conversations, not by listening to them coming into the control room, for it takes some time for candidates for broadcasting honors to overcome their fear of the microphone. Their nervousness is picked up by the microphone and is apparent to listeners-in. There is not any difference between radio and sound devices for pictures. Screen people should not be judged by their first appearances in front of the microphone. They must be absolutely at ease before their voices sound to the best advantage. The voices of a number of screen artists come to me as I write, there being a noisy party in progress in my swimming pool. I can hear Janet Gaynor. Her voice has exactly the quality that will make her a success in talking pictures. It has a rich and pleasing quality and she knows how to use it. Another splendid voice for recording is Mary McAllister's. It is placed in the lower register, which is what the microphone demands, and the enunciation is clear and distinct. Mary is a capable little actress, and if producers will take her tip they will give her a chance in the noisy drama. But to repeat what I had in mind when I started this paragraph, I want to urge producers not to attach too much importance to first tests. The first time I spoke over the radio I was scared stiff, and my voice must have betrayed the fact. I know scores of people whose voices were strained and thin when they first came to the radio station, but who developed into satisfactory broadcasters when they got over their nervousness. The other day I listened to Herbert Hoover's voice as it came over the radio. I was alone in a room with him when he made one of his first speeches to the microphone. He was exceedingly nervous and I had to whisper instructions to him; when he lifted a glass of water his hand trembled. Under such circumstances his voice could not have been natural. To-day he has a fine radio voice.

AN altogether pleasant comedy is Just Married, a Paramount picture directed by Frank Strayer and having in its cast Ruth Taylor, Lila Lee, Ivy Harris, James Hall, William Austin, Harrison Ford, Arthur Hoyt and Tom Ricketts. It is a comedy of complications, handled so deftly by the director that it is possible that everything might have happened. Every scene gathers comedy value from what has gone before it, and I predict that when the picture reaches the public it will be received with a continuous gale of laughter. The production establishes the fact that Ruth Taylor's pleasing performance in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes was not a flash in the pan. I liked her in that picture, and I like her in Just Married. She has an attractive screen personality and soon will gain recognition as having a definite place in polite comedies. Although not setting myself up as an authority on the subject, I believe Ruth knows how to wear clothes. She has an air of smartness that must be attributable to the possession of such a talent. This picture brings Lila Lee back to us. It is a shame the way the screen is neglecting this splendid little trumper. Both her art and her beauty have matured during the last few years, though she still looks young enough to play a miss in her teens. Paramount tried to make a star of her before she was ready for it, and now when she is ready, no one seems willing even to feature her. Both Hall and Ford give excellent performances as sophisticated young fellows, and Bill Austin is capital in the characterization that has made him popular. In Just Married George Marion's titles detract from the effectiveness of Austin's performance. Some of them are entirely out of character and many others are patterned after those which the same title writer attributed to this actor in previous pictures. Austin is talented enough to give varied performances, but all of them are brought to a common level by his spoken titles.

WHATEVER measure of success Camilla Horn has achieved in The Tempest, whatever degree of fame it has brought her, would have been Dorothy Sebastian's if Camilla had remained in Germany. The other day I had the unusual experience of viewing a long performance that never reached the public. When United Artists, for no good reason that seems to have been founded on artistic or economic considerations, substituted Camilla for Dorothy in the Barrymore picture, Johnnie Considine did a graceful thing in making up two reels of the action in which Dorothy appeared and presenting them to her. They make the most elaborate test owned by any girl in pictures. It is a shame that what I saw in the two reels was not included in The Tempest when it was released. It would have hastened the moment of Hollywood's realization of the fact that Dorothy Sebastian is one of the few beautiful girls who really can act. She would have made a more striking looking princess in the Barrymore picture than Camilla Horn. She has beauty, grace and an air of good breeding that are essential to the characterization of an aristocrat. And in addition to these superficial qualities, she has an intelligent grasp of drama. Dorothy will be heard from. When one looks at the two reels and realizes what an enormous sum of money it took to shoot all the action over again, he wonders anew at the grotesque wastefulness that is a part of the picture business. All the wild extravagances are passed on to the public to assume as a charge against its entertainment fund. To ask the public to underwrite the whim of a producer when it is as costly as the substitution of Camilla Horn for Dorothy Sebastian in The Tempest without giving the public in compensation something greater in the way of artistic expression, is an imposition on those who pay to keep the picture industry alive.

A LFONSE Martell is a screen actor who shares my conviction that there is a great deal of screen talent being overlooked in Hollywood. Martell has a number of other ideas, one of them being that the screen needs short dramatic subjects to fill out programs that feature full length comedies. He has made one such short subject, Hearts of Romany, and in it he is given fine performances by people who never have earned screen credit. Martell wrote the story, directed it, and plays the heavy. That it is a first effort is apparent in places in the picture, but as a whole it reflects considerable credit on the author-director. He has a strongly developed sense of composi-
tion, some of the scenes being of great beauty without losing any of their dramatic values. There are other Martells in Hollywood—gifted young men and women who are yearning for expression. Occasionally one breaks through, as Klein did with The Tell-Tale Heart, and now Martell does with Hearts of Romany, and because there is no one hanging over him continually, he puts on the screen some of the artistic ideas that are consuming him, attracts attention and is put to work in a big studio where a supervisor, whose idea of a good story is the one about the traveling salesman and the dressmaker, tells him just how a motion picture should be made. I hope Martell escapes this fate. But even if he doesn’t, he has Hearts of Romany to his credit, and that is something.

A CORRESPONDENT writes to chide me for being fooled into giving Dick Dix credit for pitching superb curves in the baseball picture, Warming Up. He says the cameraman is entitled to the credit for making Dix look like a pitcher. Then the letter goes on to state that, “you have set yourself up as an authority on pictures, but even your fine literary style can not conceal the fact that you know very little about them.” I am not aware of having set myself up as an authority, a distinction, in any event, that would have to be conferred upon me by those who read what I write, but to the impeachment that I am deluded easily by screen shots I plead guilty enthusiastically. In almost every picture I view I see shots that puzzle me, but I never try to solve the puzzles. I endeavor to see a picture as the audience will see it, and I make no effort to peep behind the scenes. I still think that Dix pitched the balls, because it looked that way in the picture and will look that way to the audience, but I don’t give a hang if he didn’t, and I don’t want to know how it was done. The only effect the critical letter has had upon me is to make me feel grateful to the writer for the “fine literary style”. I trust I will continue to merit his approval in that respect. Good workmanship even in betraying ignorance perhaps has some claim to being recognized as an achievement. At least I shall content myself with such a thought.

CARL Laemmle broadcasts the fact that he paid two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars for Broadway. Before the picture he makes from it reaches the public, a dozen others on the same theme will have appeared on the screens of the country. By that time Broadway as a story will be no more valuable to him than some original story along the same lines that he might have bought for five thousand dollars. No play ever written is worth for the screen half what Laemmle paid for Broadway. Suppose he had spent the money for original stories. If he had announced that he was ready to pay twenty-two thousand, five hundred dollars each for ten screen stories he would have attracted the best writers in the world and would have something for his money. But he prefers to pay the whole sum for one story, and the picture he makes from it will be out of date before it is released.

Because someone connected with it was not asked to an affair given by the Hollywood Association of Foreign Correspondents, Variety viciously attacked the organization, charging that few of its members were bona fide correspondents. This does not happen to be true, but even if it were, it does not alter the fact that the dinners arranged by the Hafco are among the most entertaining and most intelligently conducted that I ever have attended in any country, and no one can have a newspaper career as long as mine without his memory being dotted with public dinners, most of them frightful. I have attended two Hafco dinners and was impressed by the intellectualia and good taste they displayed. I know of no American organization that commands so much brains. The organization is a credit to Hollywood, and as long as the neighbors of its members are aware of this fact it makes little difference what the rest of the world is given to believe.

To all those afflicted with camera shyness I commend the method that Dick Arlen adopted to cure himself of it. Early in his career he had a deadly fear of the camera and it bothered him in his work. Finally he rented a camera and chartered an assistant cameraman. The two of them spent an evening taking the machine apart and examining the parts. Dick discovered that there was no doohickey in a camera that might jump out at any moment and jab him in the eye, nor any squint gun that might sprinkle him with acid. Every part looked quite harmless. When Dick went to the studio next morning he stuck out his tongue at the camera, and all his fear of it had vanished.

THE Morosco School of the Theatre has this in an advertisement which I find in a theatre program: “Movie stars and movie artists! The talking picture is here! If you have had no practical stage experience, you must be taught.” I give Oliver Morosco credit for being honest in his belief in what his advertisement says, but I hope
THE FILM SPECTATOR

September 1, 1928

THE Raider Emden is a very interesting piece of screen work. It was made by the German government as a permanent monument to the great work this lone cruiser did during the World War, but it is admirably impartial. There is nothing for anyone to object to in it. America never has seemed capable of grasping the possibilities for motion pictures in its own national history. Old Ironsides, which might have been a masterpiece along that line, was all smeared up with a love story. There are a very few notable exceptions to the general rule, but most of the historical epics have been pretty poor stuff. I don’t mean to say that The Covered Wagon and The Big Parade. I mean pictures which could glorify things which are by-words in America. The story of Nathan Hale, the exploits of Marion during the Revolutionary War, the various exploring expeditions would all make excellent material. However, this has nothing to do with The Raider Emden. The picture was short and there was scarcely a moment when the action didn’t keep the attention riveted to itself. Various composite shots were well handled and appropriate. I knew none of the actors, but the man who played the captain of the Emden has one of the most definite screen personalities I ever have seen. By all means see The Raider Emden if you want good entertainment.

Craig’s Wife was built on an impossible hypothesis, so the picture naturally was a failure. Even if the story had been good, I doubt if it would have been much better, because William De Mille’s direction was so ponderous and heavy. The whole thing moved too slowly. The impossible hypothesis is this: A woman dominates her whole family so completely that her younger sister, old enough, legally, to marry, is afraid to marry the man she loves, because the woman doesn’t approve of him. That may have been plausible about the time of the Spanish-American war, but in this day and age it’s impossible and really quite laughable. A person who tries to tell a modern girl whom she is to marry is in for something unique in the way of shocks. Another thing in Craig’s Wife which contributed to its downfall was the perfectly ridiculous way in which the police sequences were handled. A man kills his wife and himself. In her bag is a key which proves that she has been unfaithful to him, but the police make a frantic search for a man who was last seen with them. Dumb as police are, it is hard to imagine that they couldn’t understand that it was a clear case. The man knew he was the one they wanted, but he didn’t tell them right away as any sane person would have. He could have proved his innocence, and his name would have been kept out of the papers by the police. The whole thing was very illogical.

Mike Boylan claims to be a dog-lover, but he is willing to sell one that he has had for ten years. “Bobby”, a philosophical terrier with a suggestion of Lord Dunsirey side-burns, has been one of the family since he was born, but Mike told me the other day that the first person who came along and planked down eight million dollars could have him.

There seems to have been some misunderstanding. It was forty per cent. reduction that Joe Kennedy suggested to First National, not one hundred per cent.

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By Donald Beaton — The Spectator’s 18-Year-Old Critic

EARLE SNELL
Preparing Screen Story

“When The Devil Was Sick”
For Reginald Denny
Collaboration Gladys Lehman

TOM REED
John, a motion picture producer, decides to build a house. He gets high-priced architects to spend months of their time preparing the plans. After many conferences, the plans are perfected. John makes the builder of the house follow the plans exactly, even unto the last nail and hinge. Finally the house is completed, on time and within the cost limit set. It is taken as a matter of course that anyone going to spend that amount of money would make plans and follow them implicitly. The producer would be the first to say so, and he would present powerful arguments to prove he was right.

John Jones, motion picture producer, decides to produce a picture. He gets high-priced writers, and they work for a long time upon a script. Finally the script is perfected and given to the director, who looks at it as he would at a poor relation. Then he goes ahead and makes his picture, and the several thousand dollar script is never opened, except, perhaps, by the star, who wraps her gown in it while she is busy playing an English duchess. The producer, who has so flung arguments about not expending that amount of money without some plan, smiles sweetly and approvingly and says that motion picture making is an art, not a business, and can not be judged by the same standards. However, some one with an artistic or intellectual idea for a picture is turned down, and the same producer, because the producer wouldn't come to see it, and motion picture producing is a business with him, and he can't afford to be artistic. Give a producer enough time, question him adroitly, and he will express both views with equal positiveness.

When viewed in perspective, the fact that it was insane most of the time, Hold 'Em, Yale! was pretty good entertainment. I must have felt in a silly mood or something, because every one of the foolish gags and titles got a laugh from me—a very rare occurrence. The story was responsible for most of the faults, as E. H. Griffith's direction was quite satisfactory. He was responsible for several clever little touches. The titles sounded like John Kraft, although I didn't get the credits and can't tell. They were very funny, though. Rod La Rocque was starred in Yale and did highly satisfactory work, and his comedy was unusually good. The attractive Jeannette Loff again makes her part stand out. She has a good future ahead of her if she is handled correctly. Tom Kennedy gave a good comedy characterization.

Just Married is an interesting piece of screen work chiefly because it proves, to me at least, that Ruth Taylor is not one of those stars who go over big in one part and then never do anything else. And as a result, that the picture was a mildly amusing comedy of situations—some good and some not so good. George Marion did pretty well with his titles. All in all, the picture was fairly good entertainment. The settings were luxurious, and all the characters were well dressed. A rich setting, if it is handled by a man who knows how to make it look luxurious, is an asset. John N. A. H. N. N. N. J. N. E. N. who directed Just Married, did very well with his fashionable surroundings. I imagine that Just Married is one of those rare pictures which would go better in a theatre than it did in the projection room. However, we must get back to Miss Taylor, whose work was far more interesting than the rest of the picture. There is no doubt but that she has a very good screen personality, although it isn't the sophisticated one which apparently has fallen to her lot. She gives the impression of being a nice young girl rather than a woman of the world. As a comedienne of the Bebe Daniels type, she would become a big box-office success.

James Hall I like, because he gives the impression of having a sense of humor. William Austin again turns in a good comedy characterization. I'd like to see him as a heavy sometime, because I think he would make a very good menace. Harrison Ford and Lila Lee completed the cast.

Being a Cossack is lots of fun apparently, until a crowd of natty Turks gets hold of you and tries to make you become a Mohammedan or something. That was all I gathered from George Hill's Cossacks, except that Hill himself was unusually stupid about his close-ups. He even broke a fight scene into them. Otherwise, the picture was pretty good entertainment, although it was nothing but a glorified Western. Much wonderful riding and much fighting featured it, with The Big Parade scene where the girl runs after the soldiers thrown in for good measure. However, there was no time when one couldn't truthfully say he was bored. Things happened with creditable frequency, although the Cossacks themselves were rather inconsistent. They were shown as not caring anything for what the czar said; yet when he sent a courtier down to them to marry one of their women, they were overjoyed because they said it was a sign that the little father loved them. Quaint people, I think. If the torture scene had not come when it did, John Gilbert would have bounced right out of camera range. He kept getting more and more buoyant as the picture went on, until finally it was hard to keep an eye on him. Gilbert may have liked working in The Cossacks, but I think he got a bad break when he was given it. He has established himself as one of the best dramatic actors we have, and he is given what is really nothing more than a Western far as acting opportunities are concerned. Ernest Torrence has little to do, but he does it well, of course. Renee Adoree and Nils Asther are quite satisfactory.

Reviewed in this Number

Craig's Wife—

Titles—Dialogue—Editing

Alfred Hustwick
Formerly Supervising Title and Film Editor
Paramount West Coast Studios
With Paramount 1919-1928
Now Freelancing
Management of Lichtig and Englander
CELEBRITY—
A Pathé picture. Directed by Tay Garnett; produced by Ralph Block; from the stage play by Willard Keefe; adapted by Elliott Clasewson; scenario by Tay Garnett and George Dromgold; assistant director, R. McKillop; production manager, Harry H. Pope; photographer, Peverill Marley; art director, Mitchell Leisen.
The cast: Robert Armstrong, Clyde Cook, Lina Basquetté, Dot Farley, Jack Perry, Otto Lederer, David Tarell.

CROSSSES, THE—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by George Hill; from the story by Lyof N. Tolstoi; adaptation and continuity by Frances Marion; titles by John Colton; settings by Cedric Gibbons and Alexander Toluboff; wardrobe by David Cox; technical advisor, General Theodore Lodi; photographed by Percy Hilburn; film editor Blanche Sewell.
The cast: John Gilbert, Renee Adoree, Ernest Torrence, Nils Asther, Paul Hurst, Dale Fuller, Mary Alden.

FOUR WALLS—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by William Nigh; based on the play by Dana Burnet and George Abbott; continuity by Alice G. D. Miller; titles by Joe Farnham; settings by Cedric Gibbons; wardrobe by David Cox; photographed by James Howe; film editor Harry Reynolds.

HEARTS OF ROMANY—
Unreleased. Produced and directed by Alphonse Martell; story by Alphonse Martell; photographed by Gaston Longet and Ernest Smith.

HOLD ‘EM YALE—
A Pathé-De Mille picture. Directed by Edward H. Griffith; associate producer, Herbert Turnbull; from the play At Yale by Owen Davis; scenario by George Dromgold; cameraman, Arthur Miller; assistant director, Richard Blaydon; film editor, Harold Holeron; company production manager, R. M. Donaldson; costumes by Adriana.
The cast: Rod La Rocque, Jeanette Loff, Hugh Allan, Joseph Cawthorn, Tom Kennedy, Jerry Mandy.

HAWAIIAN LOVE—
A B-W picture. Unreleased. Direction, adaptation, continuity and cutting by Alfred A. Grasso; production supervisor, Fred Weller; cameraman, H. Lyman Breen; assistant director, Paul Stanhope; title writer, Edwin Meyers; location manager, Val Cederlof.
The cast: Lawrence Barber, Winona Love, Libby Keaunin.

JUST MARRIED—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Frank Strayer; associate producer, B. P. Schulberg; story by Anne Nowland; scenes by Frank Butler and Gilbert Pratt; photographed by Edward Cronjager, assistant director, Ivan Thomas.
The cast: James Hall, Ruth Taylor, Harrison Ford, William Austin, Ivy Harris, Tom Ricketts, Maude Turner Gordon, Lila Lee, Arthur Hoyt, Wade Boteler, Mario Carillo.

TEARFUL, THE—
A Warner Brothers picture. Directed by Roy del Ruth; from the stage play by Edgar Wallace; scenario by Harvey Gates; dialogue by Joseph Jackson and Francis Powers; titles by Joseph Jackson.
The cast: May McAvoy, Louise Fazenda, Edward Everett Horton, Alec B. Francis, Holmes Herbert, Mathew Betz, John Miljan, Otto Hoffman, Joseph Girard, Frank Austin.

MIDNIGHT LIFE—
A Gotham picture. Directed by Scott Dunlap; produced by Sam Sax; supervisor, Harold Shumate; assistant director, Eli Dunn; cameraman, Ray June A. S. C.; screen play by Scott Dunlap and Harold Shumate; titles by Delos Sutherland; production manager, Don Diggins; editor, Ray Snyder.
The cast: Francis X. Bushman, Gertrude Olmstead, Cosmo Kyrie Belkew, Eddie Buzzell, Monte Carter.

PASSION SONG—
An Excellent picture. Directed and produced by Harry O. Hoyt; photographed by Andre Barletier; titles by Camille Collins; assistant director, Helge Stur-Vasa.
The cast: Noah Beery, Gertrude Olmstead, Gordon Elliot, Washington Blue.

TOILERS, THE—
A Tiffany-Stahl picture. Directed by Reginald Barker; story and continuity by L. G. Rigby; photographed by Ernest Miller; titles by Harry Braxton; art director, Hervey Libbert; edited by Robert J. Kern; set dressings by George Sawley.
The cast: Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Jobyna Ralston, Harvey Clarke, Wade Boteler, Robert Ryan.

WHAT SOUND MEANS TO THE DEAF
My dear Mr. Beaton:
Your name has been given me by a Boston theatre manager as one who might listen to a protest on talking films. I am deaf, sixty-two, and a man. For as many years as the movies have been I have been able to get full and intelligent entertainment from them, as a deaf person can get in no other way. They have been a God-send and a saving in many ways for me in my affliction. I had to give up the theatre years ago. I soon found the nerve-racking effort to try to hear was too much for my strength, so naturally moving pictures seemed sent by a dispensation of Providence for such as I, and now we have the menace to the silent film of sound.
It is quite incomprehensible to me, as it must be to any thinking or half-way intelligent person, how anyone can consider such a thing an improvement on soundless movies. I know plenty of hearing people who hate the new fad and say it “spoils everything”, and I firmly believe if I could hear I should be of the same opinion. At best Movietone or Vitaphone is an imitation, and who with intelligence wants imitations? If they want to hear, let them go to the real theatre, the radio and the thousand and one other diversions they can enjoy without handicap, but let them leave the movies alone.
Mr. Dupont, director of “Variety”, says in the London Observer that he is not over-enthusiastic on the effect the
invention of sound will have on films from the artistic point of view. He adds: "New inventions, technical improvements, they all have their day." (I wish I could be sure that this was so.) "They are freely admired for their own sakes, and if they do not take their proper places... Suppose the talking film is perfected what will be the result? We shall have a perfect imitation of a stage play, and who is interested in imitations? The art of the film has had enough of technical advances. What it needs is time to adjust."

Very good, only I would make it a hundred times more emphatic.

An instance—my first attempt in taking in the horror, was with the "Lion and the Mouse," with those splendid veterans, Alec Francis and Lionel Barrymore, and the younger stars, May McAvoy and Buster Collier. What did I get from it? Nothing! For I heard no word that was spoken and was conscious of nothing but a total lack of inspiration. May McAvoy seemed a stick, and the whole performance was to me unspeakably dull and unintelligible. Now, I know it was not entirely because I did not hear. When the captions were on the screen there was nothing to them, no point or artistry. How can intelligent human beings think they are bettering the movies by using the device? How can they?

I have just seen the film of that exquisite production of Trelawney of the Wells—pure entertainment—perfect artistry. The films are a thing apart, they should not be mixed up with anything, but should stand alone. I have long considered the use in so many theatres of vaudeville and variety entertainment interspersed with the picture, and in many cases ruining the chances of intelligent appreciation and enjoyment of the latter, and I, therefore, consider the combining of these two forms of entertainment a great mistake. But the menace of sound is far worse, for it means the elimination of many of the finest foreign actors, and the impossibility of the majority of the English speaking people ever learning to talk correctly, though they can and always have acted superbly.

Can not a part of what I have written be published in some way so as to reach more people? I appeal to you because I have been told you are interested in this subject from every angle and that while you have decided ideas of your own you are always willing to listen to those of others.

I am positively appalled by the publicity the matter is getting. The fulsome and culminating eulogiums in the latest numbers of movie magazines are fairly sickening. I wish we could prevent them any more if there is to be so much and probably more of it. What do the people want? They don’t know, so why cater to this ignoble and insane craze for something new and different, for that is all it amounts to?

To revert to my seeing of The Lion and the Mouse: I sat through the performance, but I do not know the plot yet! Never having seen, to remember, the same stage play of the same name in my hearing days. The Movie-Looper News that followed was an utter horror with the faint (to me) and distorted sounds of people cheering, horses hoofs, sounds of bands playing. Will someone please tell me what is gained by having them? And the pictures had no pep whatever. I assure you, as pictures, they were distinctly inferior—then followed a jazz band. Why have an imitation jazz band when there are thousands of the real thing to be heard any day in all the theatres? Why? I say. It is no novelty only an innovation, and a shadowed one at that. Ye gods! But words fail me.

Will you please pardon me if I do not re-write this? It is very bad and illegible, I know, but I have a somewhat lame hand which sometimes refuses its office, so I have to let my hand-writing go. I am, therefore, counting on your patience, good heart and kindness. Is it too tall an order?

Brookline, Mass.

ETHEL M. STEARNS.

THE AMERICAN TOUCH

Dear Sir:

I have been told that The Film Spectator printed an article about The Last Waltz two or three months ago. They told me that this critic of The Last Waltz stated with amazement a certain American touch in this picture and came to some conclusions of film-political character about it. May I tell you that this American touch may perhaps be brought about by the fact that I am a born American from Chicago, though I have spent the years of my life in Germany and though my mother tongue became kind of rusty. Since four years I am one of the first directors of the Ufa and I have just finished my latest picture, Looping the Loop, which I hope you will see very soon. I haven’t yet directed a picture in my own country—1921 was the last time I was in America—but I hope the day is not too far away that I am coming home for good to work under the California sun.

Excuse me for telling you things that probably don’t interest you very much. The fact that you detected American traces in a picture I made so long ago and so far away from America made me so glad that I became a bit talkative.

Berlin, Germany.

ARTHUR ROBISON.

PLAY FOR THE WIRE, NOT FOR PLACE

Consider these:

"Resurrection",
"The Good-bye Kiss",
"The Racket",
"The Romance of a Rogue".

Just finished:

"The Lookout Girl"

All Winners at the Box Office

Edited and Titled by

TOM MIRANDA

ORecon 0308

At present editing a script

At liberty August 27th.
production should be able to comprehend the effects of technical blunders.

The Jazz Singer recently and, being a nurse, was provoked by the conduct of the doctor and nurse in the death-bed sequence. The old Cantor was dying of a broken heart. To begin with he was too callous to have a heart that would break. Any father (and he had not an ounce of feeling entitling him to the name of father) that would drive his child from home would have no heart. But he has a nurse in attendance. The Cantor falls asleep.

Now if that nurse were a good nurse, knowing that his life hung by a thread, wild horses could not have dragged him from his bedside; yet she leaves the room for no apparent reason, and refuses to allow his wife and old-time friend (and the cause of all the trouble) she allows in with only an admonition not to arouse her patient. This the son proceeds to do. Then, when the patient is dying, she sits with folded arms notwithstanding the fact that the doctor is in the room, but paying more attention to the singing of "Kol Niddur" than he is to the patient, who passes out with only his wife to administer to him.

Oh, how at variance with facts! Nurses and doctors do not conduct themselves in that way, and it is an outrage that the public should be given that impression.

M. T. LA PIERRE.

WAMPAS MAKES REPLY

Dear Mr. Beaton:

In an issue of The Film Spectator published July 21, 1928, Madeline Matzen makes certain charges against the Wampas in general, and the Wampas Credentials Committee and its chairman, Barrett C. Kiesling, in particular.

You have always been such a good friend of the industry and of our organization that the members of the Wampas are certain that this article would not have been printed had you been present. The contentions of Miss Matzen are so absurd that they would not merit a reply were it not that her statements are apt to breed misunderstanding and false impressions.

The members of the Wampas live by virtue of the amount of material about pictures and picture personalities they are able to get into the press of the world. It would be silly indeed if this organization sought to hinder anyone who might add to the total of published publicity. The Credentials Committee grants credentials to any writer who can show even a remote possibility of getting his material in print. Miss Matzen herself has held credentials for months.

The Credentials Committee functions for but one purpose: to keep "fake" correspondents from taking up the time of publicity men and the personalities they represent when that time should be devoted to writers who are legitimate representatives of established publications. An amazing number of people have sought admittance to studios, ostensibly to obtain data for publications, when their real purposes have been to sell anything from shoe laces to real estate or to work into jobs on the studio lots. In the past such "fakes" even went so far as to have fraudulent cards printed, stating that they were staff members of some publication. Since the appointment of the Credentials Committee such people have seldom gained entrance to the studios via the publicity departments, as credentials are granted only to persons showing definite proof of affiliation with some publication, or clippings of by-line material or other evidence that convinces the Credentials Committee that they have a fair opportunity of getting material in print, and are not seeking entrance to the studios as salesmen or job-seekers.

The Wampas objects particularly to the paragraph in which Miss Matzen states: "If you are a member of the Wampas (or their feminine contingent, 'The Wasps') you can be a legitimate publicist. If you are not a member of either of these unions you are a 'scab' or an 'illegitimate writer'". The Wampas never has made an attempt to freeze out non-Wampas members from motion picture publicity work. On the contrary, members of our organization co-operate daily with publicity men not affiliated with the Wampas, and we feel certain that non-Wampas members hold the most cordial feelings toward our organization. Furthermore, no effort ever has been made to restrict the newspaper and magazine writers with whom we co-operate to a selected few.

The Wampas has enjoyed a good name in the motion picture industry. It has no objection to honest, constructive criticism, but it does object to false, misleading and unfair statements.

The organization is sure that your sense of fair play will prompt you to give this letter as much publicity as that given, in your absence, to Miss Matzen's article.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

by CHARLES F. WEST, Secretary

DISAGREEMENT WITH MISS MATZEN

Editor Film Spectator:

In Miss Madeline Matzen's article on "Illegitimate Writers", in the July 21 issue of The Spectator, she makes the following statement:

"If you are a member of the Wampas (or their feminine contingent, 'The Wasps') you are a legitimate publicist. If you are not a member of either of these unions you are a 'scab' or an 'illegitimate writer'."

As a member of The Wasps may I say that Miss Matzen is evidently a very mis-informed young lady. Neither fan magazine nor newspaper writers are eligible for membership in the Wasps. Only women who have been actively engaged in motion picture publicity for at least six months may be admitted, according to our constitution and bylaws. And by publicity we mean exactly what Miss Matzen does when she parenthetically explains "publicist is merely a fancy name for the good old press agent." We mean employment in a studio publicity department or in exploiting individual clients through the medium of pub-

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PICTURE

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The Educational Screen treats the whole field from this broader standpoint. On the theatrical side, a notable service for the intelligent public is our regular department of the

Film Estimates

giving thoughtful judgments by a national committee on about 50 films each month, as to which are worth while, and which are not, for "Intelligent Adults", for "Youth", and for "Children".

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licency. We recognize the universally accepted fact that fan magazines and newspaper writers have always been distinct from "publicists" or "press agents," nor was I aware that any of them accounted themselves so until I read Miss Matzen's story.

At present there are two members of the Wasps contributing to fan magazines and one employed on a trade publication, but all were admitted to membership prior to these affiliations and while engaged in publicity work. Contract writers on the fan magazine staffs are no more eligible to membership in the Wasps than free lance contributors. For our own interests we are as anxious to cooperate with one as the other.

I believe that an organization of fan magazine writers was recently formed, but that is something quite as separate from the Wasps as from the Wampus.

Undoubtedly Miss Matzen's article was based on incorrect information rather than venom, and she will be glad to be acquainted with the facts of the matter.

JANE McDONOUGH

ABOUT VARIOUS THINGS

Dear Mr. Beit:—

Several months ago I wrote you complaining of the numerous typographical errors which appeared from time to time in The Spectator. In the same letter I offered you my services as a proofreader.

Since then your paper has been pretty well nigh perfect, and I am glad to see it so.

My wife and I enjoy reading The Spectator very much. But in a recent issue Mrs. Albert was very much offended at finding a word which she detects above all others. The word was "lousy." How such a vulgar sounding word could ever find its way into the contents of your great publication is beyond my comprehension.

Of course, you were referring to what Eddie Sutherland said about his picture, "Tilie's Punctured Romance." He said it was "lousy". But was it necessary to print the word he used? Is that word used among people of refinement and culture? Your publication just radiates with good taste, yet that word rather tended to be terribly conspicuous.

It might have been a proper English word. It may mean exactly what the word implies. But it seems to me that word is usually classified with other profane words. There is always a corrected word in the English language to take the place of slang or profanity. At least there is a better sounding word, which does not need to stimulate the imagination of things creepy and vulgar.

Speaking of Eddie Sutherland and his picture, I played "atmosphere" in the circus sequence, and Eddie certainly was a most likeable chap. I watched him carefully at his work, and sometimes he really seemed to be in a quandary. The actors appeared to lack efficiency and failed to take the work seriously on the set. No wonder the picture fell far below the expectations of the producers.

Your ability to pick out the faults and errors in pictures is remarkably uncanny. I often marvel at it. Your powers of observation are indeed very keen. A rather unusual gift for a hearing person.

Now that I have remarked about a hearing person, I almost forgot to tell you that I am deaf. Not hard of hearing, but stone deaf. Have been so for the past twenty-two years, after having lost my hearing at the age of five from whooping cough.

Now perhaps you will understand what I mean by a hearing person. A deaf man is trained to use his eyes, and his sense of observation as well as his sense of feeling becomes more acute. The deaf usually observe things the hearing people never would. And they are quick to see the flaws on the screen. Did you have the misfortune to see "Across to Singapore", an M-G-M picture with Ramon Novarro, Jean Crawford and Ernest Torrence? Jean Crawford was forced to accompany Novarro on a journey. He forced her aboard without even stopping to gather any of her belongings—nay, not even a tooth brush. She wore a lovely white frock at that time. She was thrust below. Fade out. Sub-title: (Something to the effect that six months later, after a hard journey, they pull into Singapore, etc.) Joan appears on deck in the same lovely frock, immaculate after six months (?) of hard usage on a sailing ship (mind you). Her hair was intact, her appearance was as if she had just come out of a beauty parlor. 'Tis remarkable the lack of imagination some of these directors have.

Another thing that I have always noticed on the screen, and which I have never known you to comment upon, is this: The hand-bags, grips, suit-cases and portfolios on the screen are handled in such a way that any person of average observation can see they are empty. Even porters at railway stations on the screen carry as many as four or five easily. Shades of Samson and Heracles!

I have sat in the waiting room of the Pennsylvania station in New York, waiting for my train to take me back to college after a vacation period, and I have noticed the
porters carrying the bags. If they are carrying two, the weight of the bags pull their arms downward, and their steps are short and quick. If they are carrying one, they lean over to one side to counter balance the weight with the free arm extended. The bag knocks against their legs as they walk, or against the leg next to the bag. But in the movies, they carry and handle the bags as if they were inflated with air.

May I offer you a suggestion? Would it not be a better plan for Donald’s reviews to be of different pictures than the ones you review? Or, if it is necessary for him to review the same pictures as you have, have them in the next issue from yours.

I am sure this letter has occupied much of your valuable time, but being as you seem to be, a man of system, you certainly devote some of your hours to reading your mail. All big men, no matter how busy they may be, are systematic.

In closing, allow me to extend to you my heartiest felicitations on your great little publication, and I hope to scrape together a $5.00 bill and become a proud subscriber for one whole year.

P. S.—I have three ambitions in life. To raise a son to be a chip off the old block; to subscribe to The Spectator and to be able to write English as well as you.

P. P. S.—Mr. Beaton, have you ever stopped to ruminate on the effect the “Talkies” will have on the thousands of deaf people who find the movies one of their sources of recreation? Not all the deaf can read lips like I can, and they would be unable to grasp the plot on a “talkie” without any titles. Did you ever think of this before? Nobody seems to have thought about it.

Another deaf boy (my pal and buddy), and I went to see “Glorious Betsy” and “The Lion and the Mouse” and enjoyed them because of our ability to read the lips. Lionel Barrymore is a fine lip talker. Some people talk throaty, and these are hard for the lip-readers. But we often wonder about the thousands of deaf mutes who have not been trained in the oral and lip reading method as we have. We shall see!

T. A.

CIVILIZATION
(In the Lobby of a Hotel Somewhere, Anywhere)
My Dear Beaton:
“Oh, would a power the Giffie gie us
To see usrel as ither see us”.

That is from memory and if it be not exactly according to Burns, you will understand it just the same, so why bother to check up on little things when life is so short? The face reflects the soul, so it has been said, and if that be true, then all we have to do to find out what we are like inside is to look in a plate glass mirror. I wonder if that were what was meant by Scotland’s bard, or were there plate glass mirrors in his time? It could hardly have been that because looks are so deceiving.

Here comes a dame who looks like a million dollars. But let the dye grow out, scrub off the rouge, strip, and the million dollars fade to thirty cents. Now comes a slouch hat, dirty necktie, threadbare, baggy clothes and he’s a sure enough panhandler or I never won on a favorite. But, to come out, he’s packing an elephant roll and has more real estate than any one man can properly handle.

The seeing power the Giffie might bestow is something deeper and far more searching than cold, material glass.

Even though we may not have the Giffie’s favor to see in others the hidden soul beneath the outward mask we can, at least, catch a mirrored reflection, and here is a place which mirrors many types and kinds of human life.

Some sink and slide and some move evenly and straight with upright mien, with dozens in between. A preacher or a gentle mother, a con man or a badger woman. An angel-face, demure, with a little sidewise glance that is, oh, so enticing. A cold face with a hard stare and questioning look that dares to come and have a party. A bustling to and fro, a hustling here and there and a loafing the time away. Why the hurry, why the waiting, whence, hence, what is it all about and who cares?

A varied assortment of human beings, varied in race and in breeding, thought and desire, health and sickness, forward ideals and confirmed habit—and the motion picture reaches them all. A hostelry has a set standard, conforms to that standard, and its patrons know to reasonable certainty what to expect and what they will get, but the motion picture has no standard, conforms to no standard and its patrons take what they get, anything and everything.

In the public schools there is at least the semblance of an effort made to have a certain standard of excellence in teachers and in teaching, which is something in the right
direction, but in the motion picture there is no public interest to establish and maintain a high and excellent standard, in spite of the outstanding, evident fact of the motion picture’s educational force and value.

The public buys, the public pays and the public is paying the debt for the ignorant, indiscriminate buying of foreign peoples for American citizenship, instead of collecting interest on purchase made by careful, intelligent selection. It is equally true that the American public will pay the debt or collect the interest on the influence exerted by the motion picture.

Do hardwood trees grow in the desert or flowers bloom in gutter slime? Would a dairyman run Longhorns with his Holsteins and expect a milk-producing herd? Would a hunter run street mongrels with his Gordons or Llewellyns and expect to breed bird dogs? Would a horseman run donkeys with his thoroughbreds and expect the get to be stake horses and derby winners?

The public buys, the public pays and the debt is never canceled. The public pays its debt in full with penalties attached, or the public builds up interest compounded to capital wealth.

The motion picture may be rated as an individual or corporation enterprise to get the money with which to satisfy inordinate greed; it may be rated as amusement to cater to whims and fancies; it may be rated as exhibition to gratify the lowest taste and coarsest humor; it may be rated as a fanciful and extravagant spectacle of empty, meaningless tales of illusion and delusion. If so, then let it ride as it is riding now.

The motion picture travels to every point within the country’s boundary lines; the motion pictures reaches all, from children to octogenarians; the motion picture has within itself a potential quality of force and power to cultivate refinement in thought and instill nobility in ideals, and without the slightest loss in wholesome entertainment.

The public rolls its own and makes its choice. The mining of ore is a small matter compared to the begetting of race. The manufacture of steel is of far less importance than the rearing of children. The building of automobiles has little of the worth in the upbuilding of character. The seeding and the growing of farm products is not by any means comparable with the planting of ideas and the development of thought.

The building of a nation is essentially the generating of a race and its development in physique and character. A nation endures and attains supremacy by virtue of fine ideals and lofty thought; a nation sickens and dies by reason of morbid dreams and practices. The motion picture is a medium that may be used for building and strengthening the nation’s polity or sickening it to death.

Because the vulture gorges on rotten carrion is that good reason why bob-white should not have grain? Because the weasel kills to suck hot blood, should the squirrel be deprived of its kernels? Because the wolverene’s fierce lust for porcupine meat is suicidal should the beaver foolishly play with quills? Because there are a few with suicidal lust who gorge on rottenness, is that good reason for the public to forsake a high regard for cleanliness?

The motion picture may be viewed as a mine for private exploitation by ignorant and lustful adventurous

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DIRECTOR

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Advertisers demand it because it will give them a better service.

Business judgment prompts it because it will put the publication on a sounder commercial basis.

As a weekly it can urge more effectively the adoption of the reforms it believes the picture industry needs.

The first number, which will appear in a few weeks, will be the only one in its history, as far as it can see now, that will accept purely complimentary advertising that it is sure will profit no one except itself.

The advertising rate for the initial number will be $100 per page, fractions of pages at proportionate prices.

Space is all the check of the advertiser will buy. As a weekly The Spectator will continue its policy of telling what it thinks about the industry and its output. Publishing the paper is a business proposition, and its idea of good business is not to permit business considerations to color its opinions. In the future, as in the past, the man or woman who refuses to advertise will be treated exactly as will the advertiser.

The new subscription price, to go into effect October 1st, will be $7.50 per year, $8.50 foreign.

Until October 1st, renewals or new subscriptions will be received for any number of years at the present rates of $5.00 and $6.00.

Irrespective of when your subscription expires, it will be extended for as many years as the size of your check indicates your desires.

Fill out the coupon now. If you delay it, you are liable to keep on forgetting until it is too late.

Read the announcement on page three, this issue.

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greed, or it may be viewed as a medium for public growth and progress under the direct control and supervision of constituted public authority.

JAMES BRANT.

**HE DOES NOT LIKE THEM**

My Dear Sir:

Your first enthusiasm regarding audible motion pictures I could not share, and I can do so even less now that I have heard more of them.

Surely, if any phonograph manufacturer had gone before the public with a product as crude as the present sound devices are, he would have been laughed or sneered into bankruptcy.

More than that, these sound devices are responsible for bringing vaudeville (and low grade stuff it is) into theatres that previously had the virtue of giving patrons their movies "straight"—the way I enjoy them most.

P. H. PARKE.

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Wild Dissension in The Spectator Office

HOWARD Hill is business manager of The Spectator. He has the comparatively easy task of keeping it going, while I have the tough job of writing it. When I told him that I was going to make it weekly he asked me where, in God's name, the money was to come from. I told him that I had no idea, that that part was up to him, but that if it would help any I would hold up the whole blooming industry and squeeze enough money out of it to keep the weekly going for at least a few months. The Hold-Up Number was born with that idea in mind, and the business manager stopped snorting around and became almost genial. But he's off again. There is no pleasing him. Before the last Spectator appeared he shook the proofs of my paragraphs under my nose and asked me how the hell—he swears dreadfully when he's riled—I could expect to sell advertising space in the Hold-Up Number to Joe Kennedy's friends while I was using up most of one number with a roast of Joe. Again I told him that I had no idea, that that was up to him. "Then," he said, still quite put out, "you have to write a lot of rot about Joe Schenck's nutty ideas about sound and have it appear in a Spectator just as we were rounding up the whole United Artists bunch for the Hold-Up Number. Have you gone crazy?" Once more I told him that I had no idea, but that if he'd shut his damned mouth—I shouldn't have said it, I know, but, you see, by this time I was getting fed up—if he'd shut his damned mouth I'd go to the United Artists lot myself and sell Joe, and Johnny Considine and Mike Levy a page each. "And that should hold you for a while!" I added icily. "Well," drawled Howard—he has an annoying habit of drawling—"if you would hold back your roasts for a while, you would make a lot more money. In the same issue that announces the Hold-Up Number you bawl out one of Hector Turnbull's pictures and roast Turnbull personally for making it the way he did. He's one of our good friends, spends money with us and would have been a cinch as a hold-up victim if you'd only reviewed someone else's picture." The only possible come-back to that was to justify myself by going into Hector's picture with a little more detail, but as long as anyone in the business remains alive there is a chance of my shaking him down for something, and I don't think I'd better repeat what I said to the business manager about that particular picture. Well, matters went along for a couple of weeks with Howard opening letters and taking out checks—keeping the checks and sending me the letters—and then he found the proofs of all the paragraphs in this Spectator except this one about him. "There you go again, you blithering idiot!" he ejaculated, as he wildly waved the ribbons of paper in front of me. "Harpo
ing on Joe Kennedy again just as I'd got things straighten
ed out after your last outburst! And you roast the Academy just at a time when we might get every member of it to take some space. Good heavens, man, haven't you any sense? Can't you muzzle yourself until after the Hold-Up Number comes out?" Howard is in the habit of stopping at my house on his way home from the office and depositing in my lap the accumulated griefs of the day. When he finished the speech I have quoted I told him that he made me sick and that he'd better go home to his wife and child. He said he wouldn't; that his wife and child were dining with her Aunt Sarah, that he hated Aunt Sarah's husband, and was going to stay and have dinner with me. He meandered out of the library and I heard him say something to Prudencio, my Filipino house-boy, about not putting so much ginger ale in it this time. Meanwhile I thought over what he had said, and to humor him I called him in and told him that I would go this far: that I would try to refrain from saying anything more about Joe von Sternberg until the Hold-Up Number had appeared.

New York Banker Wants Some Specific Information

TELEGRAM from a vice-president of a New York bank which figures largely in motion picture finance, punctuation not by the Western Union: "Greatly interested in your comments on Kennedy's usefulness to pictures. Hope to read more along same line and hope you will give us constructive suggestions regarding the methods we should pursue to acquire a knowledge of inner workings of motion picture industry which presents problems difficult for us to solve. Exactly what do you mean by a perfect script and how can it cure the business of all its ills?" Assuming that the oil industry of California wished, as an industry, to become a large borrower, any group of bankers approached for loans would engage an oil expert who would come to California, survey the business, and submit his report. The banks would be governed by the report. After two years of investigating the expert would not announce publicly that "Oil is the other
fellow's game; business is mine, and I am not mixing the two." Joseph P. Kennedy, a banker, is credited with being the representative of gigantic banking interests. He was thrust into the motion picture industry. Making motion pictures is an art, the only art that has mass production. After more than two years in the business Kennedy announces that art is not his game, meaning that he applies a banker's mind to it and not that of a motion picture expert. A stage producer puts on perhaps four plays in a year; Paramount produces seventy pictures in the same length of time. Instead of condemning Paramount for making so many poor pictures—the number is diminishing rapidly—we must praise it for making so many good ones. A banker can understand the financial management of Paramount, but he can not understand the tremendous difficulties it must overcome in turning out in so short a time so many works of art that will meet with the public's favor. The combined production of the two companies that have passed under Kennedy's control about equals Paramount's. I admire the frankness of his confession that he knows nothing about the business, but I fear for the welfare of the financial institutions that must rely upon his judgment in their dealings with the industry. To trust the interests of so great a production program to a man who confesses that he knows nothing about it, is a departure from a bank's usually safe and sane method of approaching a financial problem. The instability of Kennedy's companies was brought about by their failure to manufacture a product at a price that would yield a profit. That is the chief cause of the instability of any manufacturing concern. The first step towards a solution of the excessive cost should be an inquiry into the reason for it. Only a person who knows how motion pictures are made can determine why their cost is excessive. And any man of ordinary intelligence should be able to grasp the fundamentals of their making in considerably less than two years, the length of time that Kennedy has been creating a disturbance in the business without improving his acquaintance with it. My constructive suggestion, asked for in the telegram I quote, is that if bankers wish to learn something about the film business, they should employ someone who knows something about it, and act upon the report he submits. Above all, bankers should not be deluded into the belief that making pictures is a mysterious rite that only especially gifted people can perform. Common sense can be applied to it as it can be applied to the making of an automobile. But the combined assets of the automobile industry of the country would dwindle to nothing if it were run with half the waste that characterizes the conduct of the motion picture industry.

* * *

Dr. Kennedy Prescribes the Wrong Treatment

THE film business could cure all its ills if it would pause long enough to diagnose them. The Kennedy treatment by mergers will do no permanent good. If the Boston man were a doctor, instead of a banker, he scarcely would prescribe marriage to effect the double cure of a man with mumps and a woman with measles, nor would he put in attendance on either patient a nurse with mumps or measles. Yet that is the treatment he is applying to pictures. Unfortunately for pictures, the habit of wastefulness is fastened on them so firmly that it is not recognized as a weakness. Those who make them are honest in their belief that their methods are the correct ones. Pictures never will be made in a manner that will please those who patronize them as works of art until they are made in a manner that will please those who pay for them as articles of commerce. Money spent on footage that does not reach the screen lowers the artistic quality of that portion that the public sees. And the foot that is left in the cutting-room costs as much as the foot that is put in the can. Obviously the way to save the cost of the unused foot is not to shoot it, for if the script that calls for it be perfect, its elimination from the picture as released impairs the perfection of the production as a work of art. A picture should be made before it is shot, and the shooting should be merely transferring perfectly to film something that had attained perfection on paper. All eliminations and changes should be made before a shot is made. The industry will tell its bankers that this can not be done, but it can not give one intelligent reason for the statement. It recognizes the perfect script as a dream, and refuses to grant that it can be a reality. Under the present system the perfect script can not become a reality. Pictures will not achieve success either as works of art or articles of commerce until the system is changed. Kennedy could have been of signal service to the whole industry, and of great value to the shareholders of the companies employing him, if he had insisted upon at least one of the companies making the experiment of refraining from shooting a picture until it had been put in perfect form in the script, a form in which the story essentials had been reduced to the footage in which the picture was to be released. If he had used the despotic powers he apparently possesses and refused to accept any excuse for failure to carry out his orders, he would discover that the perfect script is not a myth, that it is a practical thing that would make better art and pay enormous dividends. But neither Kennedy nor anyone else with power to do so is insisting upon the experiment being made. No producer is in a position to declare that the perfect script is not possible until he has given it a fair trial. His sense of obligation to the shareholders of his company should prompt him to ascertain by test if it is not possible to make a better picture for less money by having the story prepared down to the last detail, the footage assigned to each scene, and the complete production on paper handed to the director to be transferred to film exactly as written. This must be done with sound pictures and would have been done with silent ones if the industry had not been obsessed with the idea that the director was a supreme being whose whims became mandates. In the past pictures have been expensive beyond all reason by virtue of the power given directors who lacked the ability to exercise it with either economic or artistic wisdom. The preparation of stories for the screen has been taken out of the hands of story-tellers and given to directors whose efforts should have been confined to the comparatively easier task of bringing to life the scenes as the authors wrote them and not according to his own conception of them. This exaggeration of the importance of the director has led to the shooting of surplus footage, the erection of sets that never reached the screen and the salaries of artists whose work never got beyond the cutting-room. During the history of pictures scores of millions of dollars have been sacrificed to the conviction of the industry that the perfect
In Any Case, We Don't Want Noisy Bankers Poking Around

The banker who telegraphs me will please give me credit for taking his request seriously. I have been so serious about it that one might get the impression that I thought the bankers who have become involved in motion picture finance really are making an honest attempt to learn something about the business. As a matter of fact they are concerned with only one thing: how to get two dollars back for every dollar they put in and leave the sack for someone else to hold. If Kennedy can mess up two tottering companies, merge them into one with a balance sheet made imposing by the inflation of the value of the merged assets, the bankers can get from under by unloading the company on the public and any subsequent tottering will be a matter of no concern to them. But, again to take the bankers seriously and ascribe honesty to their motives, I would like to point out to them that the industry can contract no financial ailment that a good box-office picture will not cure. Nine or ten years ago there were times when Universal was hard pressed for enough money to meet the pay-roll. The financial giants of Wall Street would meet and ponder over the situation, and while they were pondering along would come a Traffic in Souls or a Beast of Berlin and settle all the financial problems in a way that would make them stay settled, which is something that can't be said for the Wall Street method of financing. The film business has only one healthy source of revenue: the box-office. If Eastern bankers are approaching the industry honestly and with a desire to be of benefit to it, they should give all their attention to the study of the manner in which the product of the industry should be made in order to attract more money to the box-office. After over two years of excessive activity in the industry, Joseph P. Kennedy confesses that he has given no attention whatever to the one thing that should have occupied all of his attention. His sole artistic adventure is his bringing together of Gloria Swanson and Eric von Stroheim as star and director. When Joe recovers from the effect of this move he is going to be a much wiser young man, and before he is done with it he is going to get some other director to finish the picture while he makes a bewildered effort to tell his banker-backers where all the money went to. A banker's value to pictures can not be measured by the number of mergers he brings about. He can become valuable only when he understands how pictures are made and when he uses the power of his financial position in insisting that they be made with more regard for business common sense. And until bankers are ready to learn something about the business, they had better stay out of the operating end of it. The industry can settle its troubles for itself and render the Kennedys of the future impotent by making entertaining pictures more wisely than they are being made now. However much I abuse our present producers it is a privilege I retain as my own, and I am willing at all times to line up with them when these noisy bankers start out to show us how to run the film business. I abuse producers for their grossly extravagant way of making pictures because I feel that by abuse I can get under their skins more quickly than I can by taking them by the hand and pleading with a sob in my voice, but at the same time I regard them as the only ones who can continue to conduct the business. But unless they apply ordinary business rules to the industry and get it on a basis that will make it independent of Wall Street, they will continue to have the Kennedys annoying them. Kennedy, as an individual, soon will pass from pictures because he has nothing to contribute to them, but there will be more of his type poking around as long as the condition of the business makes an opening for them. When it is conducted so wisely that it can not be criticized, the Kennedys will have to expend their destructive activity on something else.

If the Academy Will Permit a Suggestion—

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has issued an elaborate report on incandescent illumination. I presume it will prove of great value to the technical end of the business. I can not estimate its value myself for it deals with a subject of which I am profoundly ignorant. Producers will be the beneficiaries of whatever practical good it does. The technicians as individuals will not profit from it for it makes its knowledge common to all studios. Another important step which the Academy took some time ago was the decision to establish a research laboratory, something that was advocated more than two years ago in The Spectator in one of a series of articles contributed by Alfred Hustwick. The laboratory is something else that will benefit only the producers. Included in the report on incandescent lighting is a list of the members of the Academy. There are fifty-five producers, practically all that are available for membership. There are three hundred and twenty-five directors, actors, technicians, and writers—exact five other members to every one producer-member. Now that the Academy has done well by the one member, is it not time it was giving some attention to the welfare of the other five? It would be only fair if the majority of its members became the object of the Academy's chief solicitude. Thus far, it appears to me, the one has received all the Academy's attention and the five have been neglected. Founded on an altruistic yearning to be a little godfather to the entire industry, I am sure it will be grateful to me if I point out something it might do in an effort to live up to its ideals. Out of every six dollars that the Academy has spent on its work connected with incandescent lighting and a research laboratory, the producers, who will reap all the benefits of the expenditure, have contributed one dollar, and those who work for them, who will not profit financially, have contributed five dollars. To even things up, and to perform a service for the majority of its members, I would suggest that the Academy spend some money in investigating, and printing a report upon, the benefit that would accrue to the industry by the inauguration of an eight hour day. Such an undertaking really would not be, as it might look on the surface, a departure from the Academy's apparent policy of benefitting only its producer-members, for an eight hour day would profit producers quite as much as the perfecting of incandescent lighting or the establishment of a research laboratory. True, the
producers will not agree with me in this, consequently I disregard them and make my suggestions to the Academy solely as something that it might undertake in half of five-sixths of its membership. Ordinarily five-sixths of the membership of an organization can make it perform any antics it desires, but the majority of the membership of the Academy has been signally backward in taking any step, by virtue of its strength, that the minority did not wish it to take. In some instances no doubt the organization has performed services for individuals, but during the entire course of its existence I do not know of one major act it has performed on behalf of the five-sixths of those it represents. The one-sixth has been the object of its constant solicitude. The acting branch of the screen has more members in the Academy than any other branch. On the Tiffany-Stahl lot—to be specific in only one instance—actors and actresses are treated like cattle. They are made to work almost twenty hours out of every twenty-four, a condition that is tolerated in no other industry, however menial, in the country. Is not that something as important to the Academy as incandescent lighting? As a matter of fact it isn't. The only thing of importance to the Academy is what the producers want, and the only constructive things it has done have been done to benefit the producers. I will believe otherwise when it investigates the advisability of an eight hour day.

In Which We Advise You Not to Take Our Advice

While I complain of many conventions that are hampering screen art, no one is more aware than I am that, it being an art, there is a place in it for everything, even conventions. I complain frequently of the inclusion in a picture of something that has nothing to do with the story, and one of my favorite platitudes is that anything that does not help a story, harms it. No inflexible rules can be applied to a creative art. It is art's indifference to conventions, the joyous abandonment with which it disregards even its own rules, that makes it a more fascinating occupation than making shoes. Finding fault with motion pictures because they do not conform to my notions of what they should be, is to me the most important thing I do, yet screen art would come to a sad pass if it did everything I said it should do. Screen entertainment would be a poor thing if it accepted The Spectator's dictates as rules to be followed in the making of all pictures. I still insist that there should be nothing in a picture that is not part of the story, yet every now and then I see that rule disregarded and I mentally give three cheers. In Serenade Lawrence Grant wanders into the story at irregular intervals and wanders out again without having done anything that is of the least consequence to anything else in the picture, yet it would have been a crime if he had been eliminated under the rule that what does not help a story harms it. Grant's performance is so artistic in itself that it is its own excuse. In The Magnificent Flirt there is no place in the story for Ned Sparks, yet his delicious comedy is one of the outstanding features of a meritorious production. Like Grant, he wanders in and out of the story without having anything to do with it, yet so perfect is his acting and so clever Henry D'Arrast's direction, that it would be unthinkable to leave the part out because someone has laid down a rule that a picture must contain only things that advance the narrative. In Submarine, a Columbia picture which I review in this number, Arthur Rankin's acting justifies the inclusion of a character that would have no place in the picture if it were judged merely for its assistance to the story. Not only has it nothing to do with anything else, but it is a straight steal from the "Mother-boy" idea in What Price Glory? It is a small part that I resented at first because it was born in iniquity and promised to become maudlin, but in the second or third shot I began to notice what a superb performance Rankin was giving, and I forgave the picture even for its dishonesty. He gives such a splendid exhibition of the art of acting that it excuses the story for pausing while we contemplate it. But I still insist that the rule against interpolations is a good one, and that all other rules that The Spectator has laid down with such solemn unction should be followed closely except when they are ignored brilliantly. You can do anything you want to on the screen. When you adhere to conventions you may do things conventionally, but when you depart from them you may travel as far as your art has sufficient strength to carry you. List the things that I have objected to, and you will not find one that can not be in any picture provided it be done well enough to atone for its crime of being an interpolation, or for its presence in the list of things that should be eschewed. Downright cleverness is what the screen lacks most. To-day we must get stories that will hold our interest by reason of the strength of their plots, something made necessary by our lack of directors clever enough to add anything to them. For the future we must develop screen writers and directors who can take a bit of nothing and make it delightful on the screen.

Something About the Importance of Stars

One thing that should be remembered by people who make pictures containing World War sequences is that the war was more important than any character who could be used in telling a story about it. In a sequence in Lilac Time, Colleen Moore bids farewell to Gary Cooper as he is about to go to his plane to take-off for a flight so hazardous that it is doubtful if he will return. The farewell is effective. Cooper goes to the flying field, where the seven planes of his squadron are drawn up in line. He has ceased to be the lover and now is the soldier, and the picture has lost its charm as a romance and has taken on the tragedy of war. No time should have been lost in getting the seven young fellows into their waiting machines and starting them off on their perilous flight. The whole spirit of the picture demanded such treatment. But it is not treated that way. Colleen comes running onto the flying field, and the whole farewell is done over again. It is wrong technically because a noncombatant would not be allowed on the flying field when a squadron was taking-off, and it is wrong dramatically because it is anti-climactic and repetitious. When Gary leaves Colleen, she is standing disconsolately in a gateway. The last shot of the sequence should have been a long one of her, still by the gate, gazing sorrowfully up at the sky. Her figure should have been a small one, and
should have been the only one in the long shot, two features that would have emphasised her loneliness now that her sweetheart had flown away. All Colleen’s pictures are notable for their excellent casts and fine productions, but in each of them there is too much Colleen. All star pictures seem to be made on the assumption that the public will patronise them merely to see the stars, consequently the stars are kept in front of the camera for much greater footage than their importance to the story warrants. The only thing that the public is looking for at any time is entertainment. Colleen Moore has millions of admirers who flock to picture theatres to see her on the screen, but it is the excellence of her pictures, not the contour of her nose, that assures their steady patronage. No screen star ever can become popular enough to hold, alone and unassisted, the attention of an audience for the length of a feature picture, nor can one of them become strong enough to hold his or her popularity with the public in face of a string of poor pictures. No one will deny the truth of these two statements, and taken together they establish the fact that in the final analysis it is the picture, not the star, that is the matter of greater importance. Working on this premise, a producer ought to be able to see that a close-up that does not help the picture can not, by any possibility, help the star. Giving Colleen Moore undue importance solely because she is the star of a production can do neither her nor the production any good, and it is a safe rule to go by that what does not help a picture, harms it. In many pictures scenes and shots are distorted to give the star the camera. Only in a business in which ignorance, false pride and egoism are so rampant could such a mistaken policy be followed. We have too many close-ups of our stars as it is, but if we had as many of them as the stars themselves think the public wants, there would be a complete new set of names in electric lights within one year. The reputation for appearing always in entertaining pictures is a thousand times more valuable to a star than credit for possessing long and languishing eye-lashes. Jack Gilbert has the right idea about this star business. His only concern is for the picture. Even he, however, does not go far enough, but probably he can not resist the studio demand for more close-ups of him than are necessary. In the Lilac Time sequence we have huge close-ups of Colleen doing something on one spot that she previously had done on another. We are treated to the double dose because she is the star of the picture. In a given scene the star is of no more importance photographically than an extra in the same scene. The star gets her importance in a picture by virtue of being in more scenes than an extra, and by having the story revolve around her. Using the camera to increase her importance by increasing the width of her smile is not good technic.

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Is Cheap Mentally and Afraid of Its Own Shadow

The fight of the school children in The Godless Girl and the fire sequence near the end of the same picture reveal C. B. De Mille at his best in directing purely theatrical scenes. That, and crediting him with getting good performances out of unseasoned players are as far as we can go in congratulating C. B. on his latest work. It was an unwise venture. In the opening se-

quence he puts constituted authority in the form of the school principal and his staff, on the side of God, and leaves the championing of atheism to a number of children and a monkey. This sequence definitely takes sides in a controversy that C. B. was not brave enough to follow through to the end. He drops it entirely and takes us inside a reformatory and shows us what a dreadful place it is. When he has worked us up to a state of indignation over the evils he exposes and has us recognizing the picture as a great piece of prison-reform propaganda, he switches to a romance, and apple blossoms, and birds that twitter. Once in a while there is a timid touching of the God-or-no-God theme, a subtle reminder of its existence, and then C. B. hurries away from it as fast as he can. One of these pokes at what apparently was to have been the theme of the story comes in a sequence in which Lina Basquette and George Duryea are shown clinging to a fence charged with electricity. On Lina’s palms are burns in the shapes of crosses, and two or three times in inserts C. B. tries to make us believe that there is divine significance to be attached to a pattern that originated in the brain of a manufacturer of wire fences. I suppose that if the picture had dealt with the evil of playing checkers, C. B. would have had Lina burning her hands on a waffle iron. Although the burns retained their photographic vividness to the end of the picture they do not disturb Lina in the least; she uses her hands just as if the divine trade-mark had not been burned into them. Viewing The Godless Girl as a piece of screen entertainment one would give it satisfactory rating, for it is a picture well worth seeing, but estimating it coldly as an example of screen art there is no escaping the conclusion that it does the art little credit. It brings out afresh the fact that De Mille is not a story-teller. The Godless Girl is cheap mentally, and is afraid of its own shadow. No art should touch anything that it can not treat boldly. From a showman’s standpoint it was a foolish exploit to introduce atheism in the first of the picture and to take a stand against it. Any anti-God society has as much right to existence as a pro-God society, and, anyway, I don’t imagine that the world has been waiting to learn what De Mille’s opinion on the matter is. When he passes on to the second phase of his crusade, C. B. shows us how terribly some penal institutions are run. Well, what about it? What does he want us to do? He says all his incidents are true, but doesn’t tell us where he got them. Then he obscures the issue farther by telling us that all such institutions are not run like the one in the picture. Why does he play on our feelings until we are ready to set out forthwith and reform every reformatory on earth, and then fail to show us how we can expend

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all the energy that has been born of our indignation? The fact that the incidents are true is what robs them of value as screen material. As long as I thought that the exhibitions of cruelty were the children of De Mille's brain I was intrigued by them as examples of creative thinking, but when it was explained in a title that everything was true, which meant that the picture merely was copying old stuff, I lost interest in the scenes and resented being preached at. By his method of treating both atheism and prison cruelties they become only something that he is going to try to sell to the public. There is nothing constructive in the picture for the reason I have pointed out, that if we become excited sufficiently to do battle for the cause, we are not told how to go about it.

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But the De Mille Opus Will Make Much Money

The Godless Girl is impressive. It will satisfy those who regard a motion picture merely as something to entertain them for an hour or two. This means that it will be successful, thus achieving the first and most important aim of any article of commerce. However to the reviewer, the only one who need remember a picture after he has seen it, De Mille's last work reveals under analysis that the only thing about it upon which its creator need pride himself is the fact that it will make money. The whole construction of the story is weak. Several score high school youngsters engage in a riot during which one of them is killed. Every member of an audience that views the picture is competent to testify in court regarding the manner in which the girl met death; he knows that the mob itself, not any individual member of it, is to blame for the accident, yet he is supposed to accept without protest the fact that three people, no more guilty than any of the rest, must go to jail as criminals. And when these young people, obviously from refined homes, enter the reformatory they register no more sense of shame or degradation than they would be expected to display on entering college. C. B. may defend this indifference on the ground that he wished to show that the trio was not prepared for the cruelties that feature the picture so heavily. Any nice girl, as Lina Basquette is characterized in the production, who would not register a sense of the disgrace attached to incarceration for a term of years in any penal institution, no matter how conducted, is poor material for the heroine of any picture. It is up to De Mille to mold his picture around natural human emotions, not to take liberties with such emotions merely to suit the exigencies of the story. The real screen artist distorts nothing in telling his story. The Godless Girl is a series of distortions. Take Noah Beery. I positively refuse to believe that such a character as he depicts ever lasted a month in any institution on earth. C. B. may have proof that every act of cruelty that Noah practices took place in some reformatory in this country, but I'm willing to bet him something that all of them were not performed by one man in the brief time that elapses while the story of The Godless Girl is being told. And when this totally unreal character is dying he urges the release of the four young people in whom we are interested. The recommendation of this brutal moron apparently is all that the authorities need, as in the next shot we see Lina, Duryea, Marie Prevost and Eddie Quillan leaving the institution. The grouping of Beery and those surrounding him as he dies makes one of the most impressive screen pictures I have seen in a long time. In this instance De Mille's artistic sense and Peverell Marley's knowledge of the camera combine to give us an exquisite work of art. But C. B. is more brutal than artistic in the majority of his scenes. He is as ruthless as a Dante although his medium is not one that permits of Dantesque treatment. We can gaze without emotion on one of the people of Dante's brain burning in hell, but we cannot view with as much indifference one of our own children being tortured before our eyes. Harrowing the feelings of its patrons is no part of the mission of an art as strongly commercial and with such widespread and popular appeal as that of the screen. It takes no brains to shock or disgust an audience. Any director by slaughtering an ox before the camera can make an audience gasp and shudder. A director who is an artist can put over by suggestion the fact of the slaughter and get all the story value out of it without disturbing his audience to such an extent that it sees only the horror and none of the story in a scene. The accident that causes the death of the little girl was directed admirably by De Mille, but he keeps cutting back to the crumpled heap on the floor until he defeats his own purpose. If he had given us but one quick view of that poor, twisted and inert body, keeping the camera away from it for the rest of the sequence, the sadness would have been enhanced by the delicacy and suggestiveness of the treatment. But De Mille chooses to exhibit the dead body as a side-show man displays his tattooed lady.

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Scenes of Cruelty Have No Real Story Value

As the majority of the footage of The Godless Girl is devoted to shocking us by its revelation of prison cruelty, I presume I am justified in viewing the whole production as a piece of prison reform propaganda. That the scenes of cruelty were inserted either for their value as propaganda or to show that C. B. has hair on his chest, becomes apparent when we reflect that the religious and romantic phases of the story could have been played out in an institution that was conducted in a humane and gentle manner. It is not necessary to torture the inmates of a prison to make them wish to see the institution burn down. I never yet have experienced a joy as great as my dream of the pleasure it would give me to see my schoolhouse burn, and no one ill-used me at school. But let us suppose it were necessary for The Godless Girl to show us the drawbacks of reformatory life. Again we find De Mille's ruthlessness, his fondness for broad and sometimes vulgar strokes, defeating his own purpose. The saddest feature of institutional life is the drab duplication of its victims. On her first night in De Mille's inferno, Lina Basquette is assigned to her bed in the dormitory and we fade out on a close-up of her going to sleep in it. That one brief shot betrays C. B.'s lack of knowledge of the subtleties of drama. He should have faded-out on a long shot of the dormitory, a shot that showed the long lines of beds with their maddening likeness to one another, each containing a person who had become a number. Instead of giving us a close-up of one of the inmates, he should have photographed the spirit of the reformatory, and in no place is its spirit more vivid than in monotonous repetition of beds that are alike. In other sequences we see
long shots of the dormitory, but none as effective as one of
Lina's arrival would have been. I would not belittle De
Mille's ability at drawing performances from his cast,
although, as in the case of Noah Beery, I can not agree
always with what he draws. I would give the acting
honors of The Godless Girl to George Duryea. He gives
an even performance throughout, a sincere interpretation
of a part that does not permit much latitude in depicting
lights and shades. The excellence of the performance
might serve to an extent as a vindication of De Mille's
viciousness and heartless sarcasm in extracting it from
the young man, but it will be interesting to see if he can
do not as well when treated by a humane director as an
ambitious actor and not as a lowly worm. When the part
made its greatest demands upon her, Lina Basquette
proved equal to them with a display of ability that indi-
cates that she has a future as a dramatic actress, but in
her lighter phases in her love scenes she is not as
convincing as she no doubt will be when she has had more
experience. Marie Prevost deserves praise for her contri-
bution to the acting strength of the picture. Her per-
formance is assisted greatly by the witty spoken titles ascribed
to her. Eddie Quillan is a comedian with a future. He
has a compelling personality and a natural sense of comedy
that should bring him to the front as one of the best box-
office bets in the business. I can not recall having seen
Quillan before, but he has impressed me more by his work
in The Godless Girl than anyone else ever did with one
performance. As I could not accept Noah Beery's charac-
terization as one that is believable I could not see in it the
artistic virtues that no doubt it is to be credited with.
However, he has so many great performances to his credit
that his luster can not be dimmed by the unreasonableness
of but one more. As I have intimated, I am in doubt
whether The Godless Girl is to be considered as an argu-
ment against atheism or a plea for prison reform, but of
one thing I am convinced, and that is that the picture
demonstrates that there is dire need of a reform in the
punctuation of screen titles. I can not conceive how C. B.
De Mille can strive so much to make pictorial appeal to
people of intelligence, only to reveal in his completed pic-
ture that he is ignorant of the simplest rules of presenting
the English language. A picture is like a person in that
the degree of its education is measured by its speech, not
by its deeds. In the titles of The Godless Girl capital let-
ters are used in a ridiculous and indefensible manner.
Sublime heights are reached when the garbage detail as-
sumes the dignity of being presented to us as Garbage
Detail, thus adding importance to garbage, but lessening
somewhat the importance of the picture as a serious work
of art.

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Good, Even in Spite
Of Its Terrible Name

T HE First Kiss is such an excellent picture that it will
be successful even though it must carry the load of
such a dreadful name. I was indifferent to the name
until I saw the picture. Since then I have been indignant.
To burden such a superb example of screen art with such
a cheap and idiotic name is a cinematic crime that is aggra-
vated by the fact that there is nothing in the picture to
justify the title. The Last Gasp would have been as appro-
priate as The First Kiss. Rowland V. Lee, who directed
the picture for Paramount, has made a beautiful job of it.
It is a story by Tristam Tupper, adaptation and continu-
ity by John Farrow, jointly starring Fay Wray and Gary
Cooper. Gary has three good-for-nothing brothers whom
he beats into a sensibility of their obligation to the family
name, and to send them through the university he becomes
a river pirate, stealing enough money to see his brothers
through to their degrees. Thus we have a hero who is a
thief, a man who sacrifices both his good name and his
great love for a girl. So feelingly does Lee tell his story
that there is not a moment during the picture when the
audience will lose its respect for the hero and fail to
sympathize with him. Although the story is one that
easily could have been made over-sentimental, Lee tells it with perfect taste, vigor and intelligence. All the
exteriors were shot in Maryland, bringing to the screen
some locations that are refreshingly new. There are some
scenes showing the oyster fleet in action which will warm
the hearts of those who love the water. There is a beau-
tiful romance between Cooper and Fay Wray, a sweet love
story told with so much sympathy and tenderness that at
several places in its screening handkerchiefs will be in
evidence among those who see it. Gary is arrested for his
crimes and is found guilty. In the trial sequence the pic-
ture reaches its greatest heights. Here again Lee's mas-
terly direction is in evidence. He keeps the trial moving by
suggestion, avoiding a fault common to trial scenes, that
of slowing up the story by adhering to court procedure.
It is in these scenes that Fay Wray does her best work,
her performance being fully up to the standard set by her
in that slumbering Von Stroheim opus, The Wedding
Mareh. In the earlier sequences the chief demand on her
is to be sweet and tender, which she accomplishes with
a combination of her ability as an actress and the charm
of her personality. But it is Gary Cooper who carries off
the acting honors of the production. Some months ago
I wrote that I could not see him in robust parts, that to
me he was a dreamy sort of person with a poetic side that
his directors should bring out. Lee has done it. Only an
impractical dreamer could turn robber and make you love
him for it. On the ethics of a man resorting to stealing
to maintain his reputation for keeping a promise, there
may be a difference of opinion, but thanks to the sincerity
of Cooper's performance, in this instance any audience
will condone the crime. The other brothers are played by
Lane Chandler, Leslie Fenton and Paul Fix. All of them
do excellently. I always have contended that we do not
have enough pictures of a manly sentimental nature. This
one, coming as it does in the middle of the underworld
phase in screen entertainment, will be like a perfumed

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First National

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breeze making the atmosphere less odorous. When we view a picture we like to laugh, to shudder and to feel our spines grow cold, but most of all we like to feel lumps rising in our throats and tears coming unbidden to our eyes. This most desired reaction is the most difficult for a director to produce, for it entails an exercise of more subtlety and delicacy than most directors possess. Rowland V. Lee possesses both. The First Kiss is a piece of screen craftsmanship of which he should be proud. But he should choke the guy who named it.

Chiding George Marion For Overlooking a Bet

COLLEEN Moore follows Lilac Time, rich in romantic quality and big because of its war background, with Oh, Kay!, a frothy farce which is as artistic in its way as its more important predecessor. I am sure it is going to delight Colleen's friends. It delighted me, and I saw it—and chuckled all the way through it— in the severe and unrelenting atmosphere of a projection-room. A projection-room always impresses me as a place one must take seriously and in which one must be coldly critical to a degree that makes laughter border on the sacrilegious, consequently when I so far forget my unsympathetic surroundings as to laugh in one of them, you may be sure that I am prompted to do so by something worth laughing at. There is a great deal in this gay little farce to laugh at, and nothing from the standpoint of clean entertainment to grumble about. It is by long odds the best directing job that Mervin Le Roy ever did. The youth is coming on. As is usual in all Colleen Moore’s pictures, Oh, Kay! is given a sumptuous production. There is a short sequence in an English home, and although I cannot conceive of any Englishman living in such a place, I must admit that the art director turned out sets of great beauty and that the cameraman caught all the beauty and transferred it to the screen in an impressive manner. The photography throughout has a rich quality that is a feature of the production. Le Roy makes the most of the production by keeping it on the screen, only occasionally sidetracking it in favor of close-ups that have no meaning. Some day I hope to see a Colleen Moore picture containing only close-ups for which there is a reason, but at the present rate of progress I am afraid it will not be for some time. Colleen's delicious and impish grin is much in evidence in this picture, and altogether her performance is a delightful one, emphasizing her right to be considered one of the most talented girls on the screen. As usual she is surrounded with an excellent cast, another feature of all her productions that goes a long way towards sustaining her popularity. Ford Sterling, always a fine performer, will be responsible for a lot of the laughs with which the picture will be received. Oh, Kay! is frankly a farce, and Sterling carries his part with farcical abandon that is irresistibly funny. Lawrence Gray, Alan Hale, Claude Gillingwater, and Julanne Johnston make large contributions to the joy of the occasion. While many of George Marion's titles are among the cleverest he ever wrote, the picture would have been still better if he had taken advantage of an opportunity so obvious that I am surprised that it was not apparent to him. Colleen takes the part of the daughter of an English earl, but in most of her spoken titles she indulges in typical American wisecracks, and in none of them does she speak as an educated and aristocratic English girl would speak. In other pictures Marion has demonstrated his ability to write titles with an English flavor, and until he began to overdo it, the titles he has written for William Austin played an important part in building up that actor's popularity. In Oh, Kay! he had an opportunity to give Colleen feminine versions of the Austin titles, which would have had the double virtue of keeping her in character and adding refreshing hilarity to the production. Even a farce should be taken seriously by its makers, for it is as high art as any other class of screen entertainment. Casting Colleen as an English girl and giving her typically American titles on the ground that the whole thing is a farce anyway, is not treating the farce fairly as a work of art. One weakness of Oh, Kay! that is common to many pictures with clever titles, and which will disappear automatically when all screen dialogue will be reproduced in sound, is the failure of the characters on the screen to react appropriately to the titles ascribed to them. In this picture Sterling makes many funny remarks to Gray, who does not register his appreciation of their humor. The fact that in Hollywood we know that the humor was added after the scenes were shot does not remedy the defect in the picture. But it is a defect that will not worry us much longer, for hereafter the George Marions will have to insert their funny cracks in the script instead of sticking them on the film.

Exclamation Point and Miss Clara Bow

THE Fleet's In! is Clara Bow's latest. The exclamation point is mine. You won't find it on the screen, but I maintain it should be there, for without it the title conveys merely an unexciting fact, but with it, there is much whoop-la! to the announcement, which is precisely what there should be, as the whole story is about what a whale of a time the girls ashore have when the fleet's in. Under the circumstances the exclamation point becomes perfectly devilish, and it is too bad that Paramount could not see it. However, no picture in which Clara Bow appears is without at least a suggestion of exclamation points, for she is a human one. There is no one on the screen quite like her. Her work is absolutely flawless. She is equally at home in light comedy and high tragedy, although half the time I don't suppose she knows what it is all about. She presents an interesting problem. Unquestionably she is going to develop into one of our most spectacular, dynamic and powerful dramatic actresses, but Paramount can not start her on her upward climb without sacrificing almost all the box-office following she has now and losing money in the interval during which she will be accumulating a new set of admirers. The Fleet's In—we will humor the producers in the matter of punctuation—will have a direct appeal to gum-chewers, but has considerable entertainment value for those who like to see young America at play, and much excellent acting and intelligent direction to intrigue those who like to look for merit in a motion picture. But when the world hails her as "the divine Clara," little Miss Bow will recall it with a shrug of her dimpled shoulders and dismiss it merely as something of the sort she used to do. I hope Paramount soon will begin her march upward, for it is inevitable. Mal St. Clair directed The Fleet's In and made it one of the funniest
things in which Clara has appeared, and he has traced through it an appealing romance that holds it together and gives her a chance to play upon our feelings until we grieve with her when she loses her sweetheart. James Hall is the sweetheart. I can't recall any performance of his that compares with that in this picture. He is convincing in both his light comedy passages and in the serious moments when the romance begins to jell. Another excellent characterization is that of Jack Oakie, a cheerful comedian whose performance should be much oftener. Bodil Rosing has a short part that she makes stand out. The production is an adequate one, the United States Navy being part of it. In several sequences St. Clair was given great mobs to handle, and he displays marked ability in his manner of handling them. He gives us two free-for-all fights that are delicious. The slightness of the excuse for them adds delightful piquancy to the enthusiasm with which they are conducted. The picture is helped immensely by the titles written by George Marion, who is the outstanding wit of the industry. Elsewhere in this issue I criticize him for giving Colleen Moore titles not consistent with her role. He does not commit the same fault in The Fleet's In, for all the characters are alike and are to be expected to indulge in the same variety of humor. The picture fades out on the inevitable close-up of the star, a particularly stupid bit of editing in this instance. Clara is standing on a float, watching her sweetheart going to sea. For a few feet the camera is carried with Hall, but just as I was beginning to enthuse over the intelligent ending, Clara ceases to be a disconcerting figure growing smaller in the distance, and becomes a huge thing, filling the screen and conveying no suggestion whatever of being lonely. The camera should have been carried to sea until the girl he left behind him became a dot that disappeared in the distance. There would have been feeling in such a shot. There is none in the close-up.

Suggesting an Effort Be Made to Cut Out Cuts

ONE improvement that must come in screen technic is the elimination of unnecessary cuts. Traveling and pan shots are being used more generally and they tend to increase the rhythmic, flowing quality of pictures by decreasing the number of sharp cuts which would present in a jumpy way the action they show without a break. Very few directors, however, seem to concern themselves with the problem of getting away from cuts. They ignore it so completely that they give the impression of purposely grouping characters in a manner that makes frequent cuts necessary. An example of this appears in Submarine, a really excellent picture which Columbia soon will release. Jack Holt and Ralph Graves are naval buddies, their love for one another being the theme of the story. They are about to be separated and Graves goes to the cabin he shares with Holt for the double purpose of packing his duds and taking leave of his friend. Frank Capra, the director, places them on opposite sides of the large cabin, which makes it necessary to show the whole sequence in a number of quick cuts. If he had placed his characters close enough together to permit both of them to be picked up in a medium shot, he would have avoided the annoying cuts and maintained the spirit of the sequence by keeping the friends close to one another. Capra's direction on the whole, however, is excellent and he has given Columbia a production that will rank with Blood Ship and which is good enough to be shown in the biggest houses anywhere. The picture was made with the cooperation of the United States navy and is rich in production value. It reaches its highest dramatic point when it shows the rescue of the crew of a submarine which has been sunk in a collision with a destroyer, but its chief claim to distinction is the manner in which the story is constructed. It is a story of the two men and a girl, and it takes itself seriously as a story, bringing in the navy only when it advances the narrative. While the picture derives most of its pictorial value from scenes showing naval activity, such scenes in reality serve only as a background for the human and interesting story. This is as it should be, for it is the story, not the camera, from which a picture derives its entertainment quality. The acting honors of Submarine go to Ralph Graves who, having no heroic role to live up to, gives a sincere and compelling performance of a likeable chap who unwittingly becomes involved in an affair with his friend's wife. The wife is played by Dorothy Revier. I can't recall having seen this young woman before. While I viewed her excellent and intelligent performance and enjoyed her grace and beauty, I thought of the work of some of the girls whom the big producers feature, and wondered anew at the vagaries of the film business. I have only this one glimpse of her to go on, but I have no hesitation in placing her quite near the top of the list of young leading women. Jack Holt is the star of Submarine, having a role that is conventionally heroic and which he plays like a conventional hero, which is about all anyone could do under the circumstances. Clarence Burton appears as the captain of the unfortunate submarine. He plays his first sequences with a brusqueness and harshness foreign to the spirit of the navy, but when his ship is helpless and his crew apparently doomed, he is splendid and helps greatly to make the whole sequence an outstanding one. It is in these under-water scenes that Graves does his best work. Arthur Rankin contributes a little gem of acting which I refer to elsewhere in this Spectator. When I saw Submarine it had not been whipped into its final shape, but unless it was mauled unwisely in its final handling it is going to be a big boxoffice hit. It contains one particularly clever touch. To cover a time lapse during which the damaged submarine is raised and the crew released, a gob stands on the bridge of a naval vessel and wig-wags the five letters, "s a v e d." Somehow I fear for the safety of that shot in the final cutting. I feel that it is just a little too clever for the average motion picture mind and that some one in the studio will think it is a fool of a shot.

Obscuring the Romance By Heavy Expenditure

OBVIOUSLY it is a waste of time and money to put on the screen scenes which the public does not understand when the picture containing them is shown. In Cossacks two opposing forces fight. The screen is filled with fighting—crowded to the frames with squirming masses of men who are trying to annihilate one another. The sympathy of the audience has been created for the side upon which Jack Gilbert and Ernest Torrence fight, consequently the outcome of the fray is a matter of inter-
est and importance. Metro went to a great deal of trouble and expense to stage it, but a blank screen would have contributed quite as much in story value. There was nothing in the battle scenes to give the slightest idea how the fight was going. You see such meaningless mass shots in many pictures. They are supposed to contribute production value. I don't believe they contribute anything to offset their great cost. The only excuse for the inclusion in a picture of a shot that has no story value is the fact that it has entertainment value of its own to the extent that it justifies the viewer in forgetting the story for the moment that he has something else to command his interest. There is an example of this in Cossacks. Gilbert's double and others do some extraordinary riding. The camera catches them in some hair-raising stunts, and the shots are carried in the picture for much greater footage than can be excused on the score of story necessity, but they in themselves are so entertaining and so well within the atmosphere of the production that a whole reel of them would not have tired my patience. The battle sequences, on the other hand, being jumbled messes that meant nothing, succeeded only in boring me. They represent something that is too prevalent in the Metro output—pure picture mechanics that lack imagination and reason. Cossacks shows us so many feet of meaningless turmoil, followed by a close-up of a selected bit of meaningless turmoil, and then it does the whole thing over again half a dozen times during which the story comes to a standstill. The weakness of the picture lies in the fact that the romance is overwhelmed by the atmosphere. Long after it should have settled down to the serious business of telling the story briskly and without interruptions, it keeps on presenting atmospheric shots of pictorial value, but which do nothing to forward the romance. This propensity for overdoing a thing that the studio evidently thought had merit, is in evidence again in the torture scenes which are carried beyond the saturation point. I can not see that anything is gained by harrowing the feelings of an audience beyond what is necessary in telling the story. The fact that Gilbert and Torrence enact the torture scenes with a realism that does credit to them as actors, is no excuse for prolonging them until they harrow the feelings of the audience. A shot upon which the technical department of Metro is to be complimented shows a cliff apparently falling on a troop of horsemen, but much of its effectiveness is lost by reason of the fact that while it looks as if the gigantic rocks crush the riders, they continue their journey as if nothing had happened. Perhaps my attention was wandering, which would account for the fact that I did not know if the imperilled horsemen were friends or foes and whether I should be glad or sorry if they escaped. Cossacks would have been a much better picture if it had cost half as much to make. George Hill, the director, was given too much money to spend. He tried to crowd all of it on the screen with the result that the romance had difficulty in maintaining its presence. The performances of both Gilbert and Torrence are what we could expect from such excellent actors. Renee Adoree, whom I don't see often enough, is splendid, as she always manages to be. She proved herself such a good runner in Big Parade that Metro has her duplicate her athletic feat in Cossacks, this time substituting a horse for a truck as her running mate. Nils Asther and Paul Hurst also contribute excellent performances.

Miss Myriam Sieve, who writes a nice letter on the stationery of Alred A. Knopf, Inc., informed me that Carl Van Vechten's latest and gayest novel, Spider Boy, was on the way to me, and she went on to say that she hoped I would agree with the others who had read it and who declared it to be Van Vechten's best to date. The book is about Hollywood, Miss Sieve informed me further. Well, Spider Boy arrived and I settled down to a gay evening with it. I was willing to give Miss Sieve the best of it in the way of anticipation, even though she addressed her letter to "Weefer" Beaton, which, I maintain, is a truly dreadful name. I read along through some smooth reading until I came to where the conversation began, and there I made the interesting discovery that Mr. Van Vechten is a lunatic. He does not use quotation marks. I don't know where the book is now, consequently I can not quote from it, but this is a sample of the stuff that the fool of an author asks me to grasp in a glance: Yes. She raised her eyes. If you think it wise, and the dinner gong sounding, they rose. Let us go in. (Stop.) No author thus far in the history of literature has made himself great by making his stuff as hard as possible to read. For the convenience of the reader punctuation marks were invented and sane writers use them. Van Vechten no doubt feels that he is such a genius that we will follow him breathlessly no matter how hard he makes the going. I stopped reading where I first discovered his tremendous confidence in himself, and turned to the last couple of pages. The hero, it seems, married someone. She is telling him that she is going to take him to New York, where she wishes to introduce him to a lot of

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famous people. The author names the famous people. Among the names is that of Carl Van Vechten. That confirmed my first opinion that the author of Spider Boy is an egotistical ass. I don't know anything about the story. Read it if you like. I don't care.—Weefer.

THAT the best always is the cheapest is one of the little economic truths that the film industry apparently never will learn. An experienced actor whose salary has been established for a considerable time at five hundred dollars a week, was called to a studio a month or so ago. After a lot of bargaining he consented to take a part for four hundred a week, and would not go below that figure. He was the actor whom the director wanted, but finally a man who would work for one hundred and fifty dollars a week was engaged. Even a comedy constructor can figure out that the supervisor, who did the bargaining, saved two hundred and fifty dollars a week to the production, the difference between the cost of the man the director wanted and the one he got. One of the missions of a supervisor is to save money, and this one performed that mission. The company went on location. Because the director found it almost impossible to get the one-fifty-a-week man to enact his scenes in a manner that would not make the whole picture ridiculous, the company was on location two days longer than the schedule called for. Nearly all of one of these days was spent in trying to get the actor to look as if he were crying. The overhead was around three thousand dollars a day. The supervisor saved his two-fifty a week all right, but his company lost six thousand on the location trip and a few thousand more when the interiors were being shot at the studio. The original actor would have gone through his scenes promptly and saved the company several thousands of dollars, but so weirdly is the business conducted that I have no doubt the supervisor is being congratulated by his boss upon his success in not allowing an actor to hold him up.

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By Donald Beaton — The Spectator's 18-Year-Old Critic

WARNER Brothers is making no attempt to rest on its laurels. The Terror, their latest all sound picture, makes Lights of New York look like an amateur attempt. The picture is more pretentious than the first all sound feature, and the Vitaphone itself is very much improved. The dialogue in Lights was good, but it didn't have the advantage of being so carefully planned as that of The Terror. However, both pictures had in common the ability to tell the whole story very entertainingly. Sound is the natural way for pictures to be made; because after about a while, one forgets that he is seeing anything unusual. Silent pictures are the ones that are out of place. However, that has nothing to do with The Terror. The mystery which is the main theme is clearly worked out and no one is likely to guess the real man. One silly thing is perpetrated, however. The house in which the action takes place is situated in a lonely spot, the night is dark and rainy, yet Eddie Horton appears at the window in a golf suit and says that he has been playing golf. No one appears to suspect him, but none but an idiot would try to solve a mystery in a disguise which was obviously false. The musical score which accompanied The Terror was highly useful whenever there were incidental noises to be covered up. Those who experiment with sound are going to find that music is far better than every little unimportant noise. It increases the drama of the scenes remarkably. Roy Del Ruth gave the whole thing intelligent direction. Edward Everett Horton has the principal part in the picture; and strange to relate, I never realized before how perfect his voice was until I heard it on the Vitaphone. His performance was brilliant, although he was given a characterization which was impossible at first. Monty Woolley, who had the feminine lead, did very good work. She has developed a very good voice—not to mention a most soul-rending scream. Louise Fazenda, although she has never had any stage training, has a voice which seems very well trained. Of course, her acting was splendid. Alec Francis again scores heavily. John Miljan and Holmes Herbert contribute interesting characterizations, and Matthew Betz was good. The man who played the Butler was clever, but I didn't get his name.

CRIME and underworld are beginning to be drugs on the market; so Midnight Life, which was pretty good as that type of story goes, wasn't as interesting as it might have been. However, it was pretty well done, and whoever made it had the sense not to make it the seven reels which motion picture traditions seem to demand. It had five reels of story and five reels of picture were put upon the screen. Practically any fault may be forgiven a picture when those back of it are intelligent enough to know when to stop. It was a long time getting under way and several of the opening scenes were rather vague as to what they were trying to put over. The more I think about it, the more I realize that Scott Dunlap, who directed Midnight Life, deserves a great deal of credit for doing as well as he did with the slender story given him. There was scarcely anything to it. The casu- lardness with which the underworld and the police accept crime and murder was so elaborate in some places that the person viewing the picture can not sense the drama in it. The detective, who was the main character, rounded up a whole gang of murderers and thieves which had completely baffled the whole force before. He caught them in a room at murder's outfall, so far as I could see, to pin any robberies on them. The picture didn't seem complete in some places. The "man higher up" in the outlaw ring threatened to "break" the detective. Coming from a man as powerful as he was supposed to be, the threat would have meant something. Yet nothing was shown to have happened. Those were the places where the picture could have stood padding.

Francis X. Bushman was the detective. Except for an obtrusive and omnipresent toothpick, his characterization was perfect. Just as Bushman's superb acting was beginning to register, the toothpick would waggle coquet-tishly from the corner of his mouth and take all the attention unto itself. Nevertheless he did wonderful work. There isn't a bad scene in that picture. Most of the names I've mentioned, except his, are unknown, yet they are given to inferior actors. Sound will put Bushman back among the top notches where he belongs, as he has a splendidly trained voice. It is unique in that it suits him perfectly, something that not many of our screen actors can claim, as we have learned to our sorrow since the advent of talking pictures. Gertrude Olmstead is the only other member of the cast I can recall. Her work was quite satisfactory.

ALTHOUGH there were times when the story was rather disjointed and the action dragged, Four Walls, directed by William Nigh, was pretty good entertainment. Nigh used a lot of close-ups in the wrong places. They were responsible for the faults of the pictures to a certain degree. There is a scene where Joan Crawford
tries to keep John Gilbert from entering a gang fight. The action is violent since she was forced to keep him away from the doors. The scene is shot in close-ups; so that all the dramatic value of the violence is lost, because nothing but two shaking heads is shown. It merely looks as if Jack and Joan had St Vitus’ dance, a condition which makes them interesting, but not romantic. The impression of Four Walls which is most vivid to me is that it lacked coherence. There were so many unrelated incidents that there were times when I wasn’t quite sure just what the picture was trying to put over.

Gilbert, who was starred in Four Walls, gave his usual good performance. Joan Crawford again demonstrates her ability for dramatic roles. Louis Natheaux, Carmel Myers, and Vera Gordon all contributed excellent work to a strong cast.

UNLESS Western pictures are produced with a little more intelligence, they are going to be hopeless as screen entertainment. They are produced for children, and the children are gradually growing farther and farther away from the Wild West. Their ideas of adventure are turning toward other things. Non-stop flights now interest them more than the non-stop six-guns of the Wild West. The illusion of fact, underworld pictures, no matter how poor, are far more exciting than the Westerns. They are set in the elements children understand. The average child probably never saw a lot of horsemen in the flesh chasing hither and yon, but he can understand an automobile speeding through city streets while the passengers exchange shots with the pursuing policemen. I suppose there are older people who enjoy Westerns, but there is something wrong with them anyway. Whoever was responsible for Tim McCoy’s Riders of the Dark certainly had peculiar ideas. W. S. Van Dyke wrote the story and Nick Grinde directed it. I don’t know what came over Van Dyke, whose work in White Shadows in the South Seas revealed that he had unusually sane screen ideas. I strongly suspect that it was something he wrote only under pressure. No one could deliberately turn out such trash. As a matter of fact, the picture looked as if no one was quite sure just what it was all about. Most of the more dramatic scenes brought forth the heartiest laughter I have heard and indulged in since the Gold Rush.

THERE is no doubt but that David Butler is a good comedy director. The way he made the frail story of The News Parade interesting deserves great praise. The picture had marvelous production, as it was shot almost entirely at various luxurious resorts. Using that atmosphere also helped out the story. Even trivial action was amusing against that background. One gag in The News Parade should win a gold medal or something. The newsreel man props up his victim who can’t skate, on the ice and tries to take his picture. The result is very amusing. Nick Stuart has the lead in this picture, a circumstance which did it a great deal of good. Nick has a fine screen personality and an unusually happy flair for comedy. I hope this picture will help him get the breaks he deserves. Earle Foxe did his best with a rather poor part.

THE Baby Cyclone, now playing at El Capitan, is one of the most amusing little comedies Henry Duffy has put on. The action centers around a Pekingese, which, by the way, has a most definite personality, and later in the play two more dogs are produced. They all have an air of world-weariness which is very effective. Their appearance is a very clever bit of play construction, because the countenance of a Pekingese is sufficient to arouse laughter. However, the whole thing reveals clever work and is most amusing. Harrison Ford, Natalie Norwood, Isabel Withers, and a man named Prudhomme, whose first name I forget, were highly satisfactory. By all means see The Baby Cyclone!

Reviewed in this Number

COSSACKS, THE—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by George Hill; from the story by Lyof N. Tolstoi; adaptation and continuity by Frances Marion; titles by John Colton; settings by Cedric Gibbons and Alexander Tolouhoff; wardrobe by David Cox; technical advisor, General Theodore Lodi; photographed by Percy Hilburn; film editor Blanche Sewell.

The cast: John Gilbert, Rene Adoree, Ernest Torrence, Nils Asther, Paul Hurst, Dale Fuller, Mary Alden.

FIRST KISS, THE—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Rowland V. Lee; from the story Four Brothers by Tristan Tupper; adaptation and continuity by John Farrow; photographed by Alfred Gilks; assistant director, Dan Keefe.

The cast: Fay Wray, Gary Cooper, Lane Chandler, Leslie Fenton, Paul Fix.

FLEET'S IN, THE—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Malcolm St. Clair; supervised by B. F. Zeidman; story and screen play by Monte Brice and J. Walter Ruben; photographed by Harry Fischbeck; assistant director, Paul Jones.

The cast: Clara Bow, James Hall, Jack Oakie, Bodil Rosing.

FOUR WALLS—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by William Nigh; based on the play by Dana Burnet and George Abbott; continuity by Alice G. D. Miller; titles by Paul Fix; produced by Henry E.百花; music supervised by Walter十月; supervised by John C. Newhouse and Dr. Robert O. W. Reeder; photographed by John Loder; film editor William Tudor; assistant director, Syd Howard.


JOHN PETERS
CHARACTERS
GLadstone 5017

TITLES — DIALOGUE — EDITING

ALFRED HUSTWICK
Formerly Supervising Title and Film Editor
Paramount West Coast Studios
With Paramount 1919-1928

Now Freelancing
Management of Lichtig and Englander
by Joe Farnham; settings by Cedric Gibbons; wardrobe by David Cox; photographed by James Howe; film editor Harry Reynolds.


GODLESS GIRL, THE—A Pathé-Daily picture. Directed by Cecil B. De Mille; story and continuity by Jeanie Macpherson; second assistant, Curt Rayfield; chief photographer, Peverell Marley; assisted by J. F. Westerberg and Franklin McBride; art director, James Mitchell Leisen; properties by Roy Burns; film editor, Anna Bau- chens; titles by Beulah Marie Dix and Jeanie Mac- pherson; costumes by Adrian; technical engineer, Paul G. Sprunck; research, Elizabeth McGaffey; assistant director, Frank Uron.

The cast: Lina Basquette, Marie Prevost, George Duryea, Noah Beery, Eddie Quillan, Mary Jane Irv- ing, Clarence Burton, Dick Alexander, Kate Price, Hedwig Reicher, Julia Faye, Viola Louie, Emily Barry.

MIDNIGHT LIFE—A Gotham picture. Directed by Scott Dunlap; produced by Sam Sax; supervisor, Harold Shumate; assistant director, Eli Dunn; cameraman, Ray June A. S. C.; screen play by Scott Dunlap and Harold Shumate; titles by Delos Sutherland; production manager, Don Diggins; editor, Ray Snyder.

The cast: Franch X. Bushman, Gertrude Olmstead, Cosmo Kyrole Belle, Eddie Buzzell, Monte Carter.

NEWS PARADE, THE—A William Fox picture. Directed by David Butler; from the story by William Conselman and David Butler; scenario by Burnett Hershley; cameraman, Sid Wagner; titles by Malcolm Stuart Boylan; assistant director, Ad Schumer.

The cast: Nick Stuart, Sally Phipps, Brandon Hurst, Cyril Ring, Earle Fox, Franklin Underwood, Truman H. Talley.

OH KAY—A First National picture. Directed by Mervyn Le Roy; adaptation by Elsie Janis; from the musical comedy of the same name by Guy Bolton and P. G. Wodehouse; scenario by Carey Wilson; photographed by Syd Hickox; titles by George Marion, Jr.; art director, Horace Jackson; film editor, Paul Weather wax.

The cast: Colleen Moore, Lawrence Gray, Alan Hale, Ford Sterling, Claude Gillingwater, Julanne Johnston.

RIDERS OF THE DARK—A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by Nick Grinde; story and continuity by W. S. Van Dyke; titles by Madelaine Ruthven; wardrobe by Lucia Coul- ter; photographed by George Nogle; film editor, Dan Shands.

The cast: Tim McCoy, Dorothy Dwan, Rex Lease, Roy D'Arcy, Frank Currier, Bert Roach, Dick South- erland.

SUBMARINE—A Columbia picture. Directed by Frank Capra; from the story by Norman Springer; adaptation by Win-

ifred Dunn; scenario by Dorothy Howell; photographed by Joe Walker; art director, Harrison Wiley; assistant director, Buddy Coleman.

The cast: Jack Holt, Ralph Graves, Dorothy Re- vier, Clarence Burton, Arthur Rankin.

TERROR, THE—A Warner Brothers picture. Directed by Roy del Ruth; from the stage play by Edgar Wallace; scenario by Harvey Gates; dialogue by Joseph Jackson and Fran- cis Powers; titles by Joseph Jackson.

The cast: May McAvoy, Louise Fazenda, Edward Everett Horton, Alec B. Francis, Holmes Herbert, Mathew Betz, John Miljan, Otto Hoffman, Joseph Girard, Frank Austin.

MUSIC AND PICTURES

Dear Welford:

Our translation from the wilds of Hollywood to the Middle West, has effected many changes, but it most cer- tainly has not dimmed our appreciation of "The Spectator."

In particular have we been interested in your attitude toward the Vitaphone and its tremendous contribution to the advancement of motion pictures.

I wonder if the phase of the simultaneous advancement in the "incidental music" to feature pictures has impressed you as much as it has impressed me. No longer must one anticipate with horror the usual "musical accompaniment" to an excellent picture that one has come to expect in a small theatre. No more must the incidental music consist of certain selections from "Organ Solos for Every Occasion", or "Favorite Selections for the Piano." The small theatre musical director, be it said in his defense, with his limited musical background, can not be expected to possess the vast fund of musical knowledge that the director of the large urban theatre commands.

But with the advent of the Vitaphone, and the Sym- phonic arrangement, prepared by musicians of the highest attainments, the musical education of the movie going public can not but be vastly and painlessly aug- mented.

The musical score of The Jazz Singer was a joyous revelation to music lovers, who might recognize through- out the picture, woven almost imperceptibly in with the "Kol Nidrei"—that tragic Hebrew lament—the seldom-
heard and indescribably lovely theme from the second movement of Lalo’s “Symphonie Espagnole”. And again and again, in the same picture, we find the wistful beauty of Tchaikowski’s “Romeo and Juliet” Overture recurring. How much more effective to employ great love motifs rather than the sentimental ballad themes to enhance the beauty of great love sequences!

But it is not always the small theatre which may be accused of musical errors in judgment. Only last week I visited the most popular picture theatre in this city, where Greta Garbo’s The Mysterious Lady was being presented. In the sequence where she returns from the opera “Tosca” with the young officer, they are both singularly affected by the poignant beauty of the scene in Act II of the opera. In this episode the desperate Floria Tosca, frenzied by her inability to awaken pity in the heart of the ruthless Scarpia, invokes heaven to witness her anguish in that poignant aria “Vissi d’Arte.”

Allusion is made throughout the development of the story to this celebrated aria, and each time, the moving picture orchestra would swing blithely into the love music of the duet in Act I. Even when la Garbo turns to the young musician and says she will sing Tosca’s aria, once again the orchestra conscientiously (?) picks up the cue with the duet passage, — music that is exquisite, but entirely unlike the heart-broken desperation of that later theme. It was, therefore, entirely unsuited to the conception of the scenarist who anticipates in that fateful music something of the desolation in store for his own heroine.

To anyone who knows the score of “Tosca” — and a vast number of theatre-goers do — it is as absurd to play the love-motif where the famous aria is indicated as it would be to play “At Dawning” for an Execution scene.

Had the picture had a Vitaphone accompaniment, we should have heard not only appropriate music but authentic atmospheric background. It would be interesting to read what you, as an unquenched authority, would have to say about this in “The Spectator”, and of the possibility of opera a la Vitaphone.

Kansas City, Missouri.

Mona Modini-Wood Pearson.

LONG ODDS
(Across the Border, Tia Juana, Mexico)

By James Brant

My dear Beaton:

Here’s to your good health and future prosperity. Let ‘er trickle, it’s been a dry season. Ah-h-h-h! One down. When the sky’s the limit, why be a piker? Once more. Here’s to your eternal fame and ten million circulation. Two down, and isn’t it a lovely world? Well, that’ll be all for right now.


The little ball rolling on the wheel that’s black and red, the light fall of cards, the smooth roll of dice. The intoning of the bookmakers, the click of the mutuels. The pounding of hoofs in the stretch, the screams of the finish. The feverish greed and passion of something for nothing.

Tia Juana!

Legalized robbery and white girls for sale.

Aunt Jane, the Landlady of the Brothel.

Hell and humanity.

Tia Juana!

The silent drama of the screen offers to dive-keeping mentalities an opportunity not afforded by the spoken drama of the stage. They exhibit in theatres of the first class picture plays with scenes and stories that would be barred from the same theatres if enacted by principals in person in a spoken play. In the secrecy of the studio the dance-hall, dive-keeping variety of producer films plays

WESLEY RUGGLES' Next Picture is
"Port of Dreams"

TOM REED

"CLOSE-UP"

is by far the finest, most artistic publication that I have had the pleasure of reading."

—William A. Wellman.

—which opinion is now concurred in by Paul Leni, Lubitsch, Murnau, Henry King, George W. Hill, A. Korda, Paul Fejos, and many others who are subscribers to this

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Symon Gould, Director
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Director
in Production
"THE REDEEMING SIN"
starring
Dolores Costello
A Vitaphone Feature
to gratify and satisfy a low desire of degenerate greed and lust. They are exhibited, some of them, in theatres of class because the eye of the general public is unable to see beyond the end of its nose.

They belong across the border, such producers and such plays. They have no place in a country that is pleased to boast of its civilization. A dive-keeping lump of scum whose highest and only sense of art is the licentious portrayal of body and sex belongs in a dive outside the boundary lines of a country with a citizenship that calls itself educated. Scum has no place in education nor would there be scum with a truly educated and alert public.

The mightiest nation in the world gone mad with money power. A nation so lax in its regard for the future that it permits scum, greed and ignorance to decide the quality of a fine art and to dictate the policy of a great educational force. A travesty on enlightenment.

The women in motion pictures are entitled to some consideration. Just why, in order to hold her job and make a living, should a woman be coerced into an act or a portrayal that will hold her up to scorn and contempt and smear her with an unsavory reputation?

What women wear and what they do not wear is their own business. They can wear short skirts above the knees or long skirts sweeping the ground or they can throw the cumbersome things away and wear breeches. It is their own affair, although men, from the beginning of time, including bishops, and cardinals, particularly so, have been rather dictatorial about what women should wear and what they should not wear, not that it is any of their damn business, but just because. The because can be very easily defined, but will be passed this time.

Women can bathe in wine, vinegar, milk or water and it is still their own business, and they can bathe in private or in public without the least semblance of immoral wrong, except that in the present state of American so-called civilization a lady bathing in public would start a riot, which would be very undesirable.

There is a difference when a woman, a slip of a girl, a maiden, is induced by the bribe of gold in hand or future wages to bathe in public or in private merely to satisfy money greed or gratify the lusty morbidity of degeneracy. When that type of bribe-giver can slip through with only a slight punishment on the technical charge of perjury, because, forsooth, he made the mistake to lie about it, and no action taken for the insult to girlhood, it is an indictment against the manhood of legislators, prosecutors and jurists of an utter indifference to and disregard of the decency of girlhood and the dignity of womanhood, and the conviction of an attitude of "Oh, well, it was only a woman", a sneering snub at the womanhood, wifehood and motherhood of the nation.

"Only a woman." Good God!

A legitimate commission to a legitimate broker is fair enough and generally good business. What can be said of a salaried employment agent who sticks up women for a piece of change and gives them a job when they need every cent they can get for a livelihood, sometimes a bare living?

It would be extreme forbearance and a sweet charity to brand such an animal with the stigma of a street-walker's pimp.

It is one hell of a note when white men and white women in their country can not get an outlet for their product or their profession, or both, except through the medium of scum, native or foreign, foreign either in race or in thought, ideals, principles and practices, either, any or all.

THE TALKING PICTURE
By GROVER JONES

It is the purpose of this article to acquaint you with the mysteries of the talking picture. I will begin by stating that I have been writing talksies for thirteen years which is probably the reason why I make less money than a non-union plumber.

The requisites for writing a silent drama are few—a sharp pencil, plenty of stamps and at least ten sheets of paper. The paper should be of heavy texture so that one may write upon both sides. Yes, indeedly!

The talksie requires only a sharp pencil and a small Edward Everett Horton
In "Arms and the Man"
By George Bernard Shaw

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GEORGE D. SMITH President and Manager
drawing outfit, consisting of T square, art gum and not less than two dozen thumb tacks.

The simplicity of the new art will amaze you. Let us compare the construction of the word play and the dumb drama:

The silent opera. A sequence taken from The Life of Ludwig Halspeffel:

**Scene 19**

**A SHADY GLEN.** Fade in on full shot of Ludwig Halspeffel and his sweethearts seated on a fallen tree. Ludwig is holding the girl's hands tightly. He gazes passionately into her lambent orbs. Exclaims:

Subtitle No. 394: "I love you, Louise—"

The girl frees her hands. A momentary flash of pleasure, then fear. She sobs:

Subtitle No. 395... "You mustn't say that! You mustn't say that!"

Again he grasps her dainty hands. Breathes heavily:

Subtitle No. 396... "I will say that! I love you!"

She shakes her head dulously. A tear courses down her left cheek.

Subtitle No. 397... "Please, don't! — Please!"

He crushes her to him. Pants into her shell-like ear:

Subtitle No. 398... "I love you! I love you! I love you!"

A man appears from the woods and takes his place behind them. He has hsy fever and is wearing a Pillsbury flour cap with the bill turned up. Breaks the love scene with a raucous laugh. Says:

Subtitle No. 399... "That's the chorus of a song, ain't it?"

Ludwig jumps to his feet. Grates angrily:

Subtitle No. 400... "No it isn't, you — — !"

The man's eyes glint evilly. Snarls:

Subtitle No. 401... "Say that again, stranger, an' I'll turn my pet wolf loose!"

Ludwig faces him, unafraid.

Subtitle No. 402... "You — — !"

(Note—This is repeated in Scene 22, Subtitle No. 915.)

A wolf comes bounding out of the woods. It fastens its fangs in Ludwig's right leg. The latter's eyes widen—then he laughs:

Subtitle No. 403... "My, what large teeth you have, grandpa!"

The wolf bares its fangs—and takes another bite. Now for the talky! The construction would be exactly the same except for this one improvement:

The wolf bares its fangs, but before it takes the second bite it looks up at Ludwig and says:

"How about your own teeth? And, further—"

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ADAPTATION AND SCENARIO
by
HANS KRALY
If You’re Going to Be Held-Up
You’ll Have to Hurry!

The forms for the Hold-Up Number of The Spectator—its first issue as a weekly—will close on September 30.

Several score of our friends have told us to see them before we go to press.

Announcing the Hold-Up Number took about all our nerve. We haven’t enough left to strengthen us sufficiently to undertake a personal campaign.

We don’t want to sacrifice our remaining shred of decency by taking to the highways with a mask and a black-jack.

Please spare our feelings by sending along your checks and the copy for your advertisements.

Rates one hundred dollars a page. Decide for yourself what fraction of that amount you wish to spend.

A phone message will do. We’ll mail you a bill.
Problem of Sound Is
Judicious Use of Silence

Hollywood Should Cease
Entertaining Its Knockers

Some Little Things Are
Big Things in Pictures

Stars Should Be More
Sensible About Close-Ups

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SCARLET LADY
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The Hold-Up Number Comes Next!

This is the last issue of The Film Spectator as a bi-weekly. Two weeks from today it will make its bow as a weekly. There won't be any physical change. It will look the same, the only difference being that it will come to you oftener.

The Weekly is to be born in iniquity. Its first issue will be the Hold-Up Number. It will be filled with the advertisements of people who will derive no benefit whatever from the advertising, and no consideration of ethics will interfere in the slightest way with our enjoyment of the proceeds of our looting exploit.

What should prove to be a popular feature of the Weekly will be a department conducted by K. C. B. He will discuss anything he wants to—perhaps even pictures, about which he confesses he knows nothing whatever.

As we wish to make our clean-up as thorough as possible we have advanced the deadline for the Hold-Up Number to the night of Friday, October fifth. And that is the deadline. Anything received up to that time can get in. Anything that dribbles in after that will appear in the succeeding number.

Until October first the subscription price remains at five dollars a year; after that it will be seven and one-half dollars. Before the price advances, you may renew for as many years as you like at the old rate.

Must Not Eliminate Silence Altogether

A sk an expert what is the secret of successful newspaper or periodical advertising and he will tell you that it is the judicious use of white space. An advertisement crowded with type will not attract as much attention as one which has its type matter well set off with a generous quantity of blank space. There is an analogy between effective advertising and the application of sound to pictures. Sound is going to derive its greatest value from the judicious use of silence. Pictures in which sound is spaced properly with silence will be those which will express most effectively the new art. My disposition has not been to criticize any sound picture that I yet have seen. We do not criticize a baby's stride when it first stands erect and walks. We applaud the effort for the progress it signifies and the promise it gives. I am interested in the pictures I have seen already because they prove that sound has come to stay, and that ends my interest in them. Of greater interest is the trend of thought as indicated by the discussions that I hear in studios. From what I can gather, it seems to be the prevailing idea that advantage should be taken of every possible opportunity to introduce sound. Within a year we will get entirely away from that idea. Unnecessary noises never will be popular on or off the screen. It may be all right now to give a wheelbarrow a close-up to allow the audience to hear it creak, but after the fact that creaks can be recorded has been established, we will keep our wheelbarrows in long shots for the sole purpose of not annoying the audience with the discordant noises that are incidental to their locomotion. To-day it is our disposition to move the camera close to a rooster to give volume to his crow; to-morrow the crow will come to us from the deep background, a muffled message that will emphasize the quiet of a rural scene rather than disturb it. The producer who is going to get farthest soonest with his sound pictures, is the one who devotes himself from the outset to the task of eliminating as much sound as possible from his pictures. His success will be hastened by those who are striving so earnestly now to make their pictures as noisy as possible. The first silencer that can be applied is the elimination of unnecessary dialogue. Last week a producer asked me to read his first sound script. In it A, in an incisive and determined speech, threatens to kill B forthwith if B does not agree to leave town at once and never see A's daughter again. B is in the right. He makes a long and well-written speech in which he defies A, whom he accuses of not having nerve enough to shoot. The encounter takes place in B's apartment. The whole script is talky. Apply to this sequence the rule that the first consideration should be to eliminate all unnecessary sound and we find the problem an easy one. Also we are presented with a splendid opportunity for the effective use of silence. Let us do it this way: While A is making his threatening speech, B is filling his pipe; when A concludes, B does not speak, but lights his pipe slowly, looking over the match into A's eyes. B meticulously places the burned match in an ash tray, rises, goes to the door, opens it, indicates it to A with a bow of dismissal and with or without a few spoken words. In this treatment, B's silence says everything that is written into the script scene; it breathes defiance, his contempt of his adversary and his rejection of A's terms. Coming as a silent moment in an exceptionally chattering film it would add immeasurably to the dramatic value of the scene. This is a typical example of what can be done with silence to add effectiveness to sound. We can stand less talking on the screen than we can on the stage because with the camera we can bring the characters closer and let them continue the story with the expressions of their faces or the subtle movements of their bodies. The industry may be sure that its sound pictures are what the public wants, but it should not make the mistake of thinking that the public wants noisy pictures.
We Should Be More Careful In Picking Out Our Guests

BECAUSE Carl van Vechten is an eccentric ass who scorns the use of quotation marks, I did not read his Spider Boy, as I explained in the last Spectator. I refuse to follow any author who makes it as hard as possible for me to read his stuff. Apparently Louella Parsons has no such inhibition. A few weeks ago she complained in her column that the book did not give a true picture of Hollywood, and that the author had been ungracious in his treatment of a community that had been gracious in its treatment of him. Mrs. Parsons intimates that it is time something was done about these writers who come out here, accept our hospitality, and then laugh at us in their pages. I agree with her. We might start by ceasing to fawn on every author who comes within our borders. When a Van Vechten arrives we strive to out-do one another in throwing open our doors to him, and so enthusiastically do we pounce upon him that he gets the impression that we are a lot of brainless hero-worshippers. And that is exactly what we are. The mass mind of Hollywood is sycophantic, and has a strong tendency towards publicity madness. While a Van Vechten is with us we reveal to him only our most unprepossessing side, and he has neither wit enough to dig through the surface until he finds our pay-dirt, nor grace enough to treat indulgently what he finds on top. Of course, until he has proven that he does not regard our hospitality as an obligation upon him to be decent, we can be criticized only on the fervor of our treatment of him and not on the fact. It is when he comes again that we show ourselves at our lowest level. (I do not know of my own knowledge that Spider Boy is a libel on Hollywood, but will accept Mrs. Parsons' intimation that it is. If it is not, substitute for Van Vechten's name the name of any other of scores of writers who have come out here, broken bread with us and returned home to tell the world what hopeless asses we are.) When he comes again we will fawn upon him a little more obsequiously than we did the first time, whereas if we had any community spirit we would tell him that we did not want any scavengers snooping around our social kitchens, and we would let him dine alone and learn further facts about us from waiters. Draw a circle around the picture colony and you will find more brains and culture within it than is brought here during an entire year by those who step across it. It is time we were feeling our oats and developing a disposition to tell the rest of the world to go to the devil if it does not fancy our ways. Al Jolson, not because of a feeling of animosity, but because his mind naturally is muddy, broadcasts to all America a dirty libel on screen people, and when he steps on the stage of Warner Brothers' theatre we applaud him long and enthusiastically. If we were a community that thought clearly, it could be charged against us that our applause signified our approval of Jolson's radio utterances. We are without either shame or pride, and we are as courteous to our traducers as we are to those who praise us, as considerate of thugs as we are of gentlemen. If we as a community had any sense of decency, the doors of Hollywood would have closed automatically against Jim Tully when his cowardly libel of Jack Gilbert reached the public. As we lack such sense, he continues to be a welcome guest wherever he appears, notwithstanding the fact that such a libel of one member of the picture colony is a libel of the entire colony. We will be held up to the ridicule of the world as long as we deserve it, and no longer. Those who come among us, accept our cordial attention and later hold us up to scorn, are people with brains but no breeding, and the presence of the one does not excuse the absence of the other. We should make a practice of entertaining only those who have both.

Time We Were Paying Attention to Little Things

CLARA Bow and Jimmy Hall occupy a garden seat in The Fleet's In. Jack Oakie approaches them. He enters from beside the camera, and to keep from coming between the camera and the star as he walks towards her, he describes a distinct arc, veering off his course several points to port. When he reaches the two, he takes up his position in such a way that the faces of the star and her leading man are not lost by the camera for an instant. Mal St. Clair will be commended by screen people for handling the scene with strict regard for picture conventions. My opinion is that making a character swerve from a straight line in going to his objective, his only reason being to keep the star's face to the camera, is an exhibition of screen insanity. That it always is done is one of the chief reasons that it is insane. Screen art has advanced until it has mastered about all the major obstacles that it can encounter, but it still suffers from little weaknesses that are of its own making. One of them is the notion that the star's face always must face the camera. It can not be defended on any grounds. Any scene always is of more importance than one of its component parts, and there is as much distortion of screen art in sacrificing a scene for the sake of the star's face as there would be in doing the same thing for the sake of an extra's face. Any director with sense enough to handle all the old situations in a new way would be hailed as a genius. If I had been in St. Clair's place I would have directed the scene I mention in a manner that would have placed Oakie directly between the camera and the two people on the bench. When he reached them, I would have shown only his back when he began his expostulations, and an occasional flash of the hands of Clara and Hall as they argue with him. This treatment would have the virtue of being a departure from the established routine, and such novelty is something that the screen sadly lacks. During the past couple of years pictures unquestionably have been growing better, yet from exhibitors all over the country comes word that their attendance is falling off. The public's indifference to screen entertainment can be ascribed only to the fact that it feels that it has seen everything that the screen has to offer. The art has become so standardized that when you see one ordinary program picture you have seen all of them. The dawning era of sound pictures offers producers a fitting opportunity to throw overboard all the old tricks that the public has tired of. Instead of preening ourselves upon turning out a form of entertainment that is patronized by so many millions of people, we should lament the fact that we are failing to reach so many other millions that are available as patrons. These other millions do not refuse to patronize pictures because they are ignorant of them, for there is
scarcely anyone in the country who has not seen one or more of them. Their failure to patronize picture houses is on account of their dissatisfaction with what was served to them when they did patronize them. All those malcontents will give talking pictures a chance to intrigue them. People who have not seen a motion picture for years will be attracted by the novelty of pictures that talk and to the extent that the talking pictures intrigue them they will become regular patrons of the new art. The talkies therefore have an opportunity to double the attendance at picture houses, but they will not accomplish it by adhering to all the screen conventions that made the silent pictures drive customers away. They should shed all their silly habits. The abuse of close-ups is one of the first things that should receive attention. Exaggerating the importance of the star is another. With the new era should come a realization of the fact that the only thing that matters is the story, that it is of more importance even than the amount of lipstick that the star uses, or the extent to which the mascara on the star's eyelashes can be magnified. A realization that the star is composed only partly of face and even more largely of back is another thing that would make screen art more refreshing. No radical revolution is necessary to make our future pictures appeal to the millions we are not reaching now. We are handling the big things all right as it is. Only the little things need attention.

* * *

Thoughts Suggested By a Visit to an Inn

To reach the Inn when you're going north, slow down four or five blocks this side of the business district of Santa Maria and look for a big loquat tree that holds hands with a tremendous palm on one side, and something else tropical on the other. The Inn begins somewhere in the foliage and stretches back so far that when you're inside you wonder why they don't run busses in the corridors. There is a restfulness about the Inn, an unobtrusive beauty that makes you feel comfortable and satisfied with yourself. But it is when you visit the dining-room for the first time that the Inn gets you. You think you've made a mistake and wandered into a flower show. On each of the many window-sills is an immense basket of flowers, and on each table a huge bouquet. The prodigality of the display is the first impression you get; then a sense of the exquisite beauty of the whole room comes to you, and you're glad you're there. Frank J. McCoy owns the Santa Maria Inn, and while he assures me that he has a common-sense, commercial mind, I think he built it and operates it merely to have some place to put his flowers. He grows them on various corner lots, lining up the plants like vegetables, caring for the foliage only to improve the bloom, and carrying off the flowers as soon as they are matured. Flowers are Frank's hobby, an esthetic selfishness that he indulges in and shares with those who turn into the curved road that leads to the front door of the Inn. It is a hobby that has made the Inn prosperous. The commercial value of the esthetic is something that I wrote articles about a score of years ago and always have believed in. I commend it to the consideration of motion picture producers. Of course Frank McCoy could not make the flowers in his dining-room pay him dividends if he were careless about his ham and eggs or if his table linen were not spotless and his waitresses neat and courteous. His dining-room is a gorgeously beautiful place in which to eat one's meals, but one does not eat beauty, nor can it achieve such perfection that it compensates for a flaw in the roasting or the service of a joint of beef. The flowers are a background for the more solid business of appeasing material appetites. They attract customers, but the quality of the food holds them. Unesthetic travelers eat the food with no conscious appreciation of the beauty that surrounds them, yet it has a subconscious appeal that brings them back to the Inn and makes the food taste better and the beds feel softer. If Frank McCoy's mind were wholly material, he would save the money the flowers cost him and lose twice as much by robbing his place of the subtlety of its esthetic appeal. There are plenty of satisfactory places to sleep and eat between here and San Francisco, but only one that is prodigal with flowers, and every year fifty thousand motorists plan their trips to permit a stop at the one with flowers. The minds of our motion picture producers are material. They are business men who claim that the public wants ham and eggs, not beauty. Frank McCoy knows that his public wants ham and eggs, not flowers, but he uses the flowers to make the ham and eggs more palatable. If our producers had a greater appreciation of the commercial value of the esthetic, they could make more money out of their pictures for the same reason that Frank McCoy's flowers help him to make more money out of his meals and beds. Sheer beauty on the screen has a direct appeal to those who can appreciate it, and a subconscious appeal to those who are unaware of its presence. It is a marketable quantity, yet among all our directors George Fitzmaurice is the only one whose work always is remarkable for its purely esthetic appeal. In the great majority of our pictures whatever degree of beauty that is achieved with composition and lighting is sacrificed to the obsession for close-ups and quick cuts. We get glimpses of beauty, brief glimpses that move on to give place to gigantic rouged lips and mascaraed eye-lashes. It would profit us to pause a bit and contemplate Frank McCoy and his Santa Maria Inn.

* * *

This Moral Is Drawn From Popularity of an Orchestra

The fault, I maintained at the time, could not have been mine. I put the note in my pocket after reading it sketchily, and a pocketbook must have extracted it. Anyway, we had to join some friends in a hotel restaurant and I couldn't remember which hotel it was. We went first to the Palace—it was in San Francisco—where we found perhaps a dozen couples on the dance floor and not one quarter of the tables occupied. We were pleased not to find our friends there. We went next to the St. Francis, where the restaurant also had a deserted look. No friends there. Then to the Mark Hopkins, our starting point, for that was where we were stopping. Every table was taken and the dance floor was filled, and in the crowd we found our friends. I wondered why of three rather sumptuous hotels, one was crowded and the others almost neglected. Our host explained that it was largely on account of the music of the Anson Weeks orchestra, although the good food and the general atmosphere of the hotel had something to do with it. But
chiefly the music. There were orchestras in the other restaurants, but the one at the Mark Hopkins was considered to be the best in town. I studied the faces of the dancers and those seated at the tables. I turned to my host. "I'll bet you a new hat," I said, "that if you ask ten of these people, who think this is the best orchestra in town, in what particular it is better than the others, none of them would be unable to give an intelligent answer, and yet the whole ten unquestionably are right in their estimate of the relative merits of the orchestras."

“What are you trying to get at?” inquired my host.

"Merely that the mass mind of the public has a highly developed critical faculty," I replied. "It never is wrong, yet, for the life of it, it could not tell you why it is right. Only someone who knows a lot about music can tell you why this is the best orchestra, yet the room is crowded with diners and dancers who have the unerring instinct for being right and for patronizing the best without knowing why they do it, for they lack the critical sense to consciously know that it is the best." As I watched the crowd that night I thought of a motion picture producer who argued with me that it was silly of me to keep harping on close-ups and punctuation of titles, for they are trivial things that never in his entire career had he seen mentioned in any reviews except mine; that if they were of any importance other reviewers would have dealt with them long before The Spectator was born. It is the rule to read in the important dailies and weeklys of the country that the majority of pictures are inferior, but it is the exception to read in one of them why a given picture is inferior. The reviewers merely are a cross section of the public. Now and then I complain that a picture was ruined by close-ups. Check up those pictures and you will find that the public did not patronize them to any great extent. The public knows a poor picture from a good one, and it expresses its preference in patronage, just as the San Francisco dancers express their preference. Picture producers are making a big mistake in assuming that the public is not critical. The ridiculous use of close-ups is keeping millions of dollars out of box-offices every week, yet I will agree with the producers that the public does not know that close-ups are being abused. Nor does the public know that pictures are lowered in quality when common sense in grouping is sacrificed by lining up characters to face the camera, but the box-office knows. In fact, the box-office knows all about pictures, which no human knows, and reacts promptly to any trifling with screen art. The severest critic of the screen is not the man who writes about it. He is the one who has his likes and dislikes without knowing why.

How Must One Dress to Transport Garbage?

Cecil de Mille goes to great lengths in The Godless Girl to show us what a dreadful place his reformatory is. He devotes a lot of footage to showing us how the girl inmates are deprived of their bobbed locks, that they must wear coarse garments of unimaginative design, and huge boots of blister-producing ungainliness; then in close-ups of Lina Basquette and Marie Prevost he lets us know that lipstick was not taboo. We have a shot of Lina manfully propelling a wheelbarrow full of garbage, and there is a cut to a close-up that reveals that her lips were made-up perfectly, which is a detail not to be sneezed at when one dresses appropriately for the task of transporting garbage. You can imagine the dismay any carefully reared girl would feel if she found herself without make-up as she approached a crowd of hogs with their morning swill. One would think that C. B. had been in pictures long enough to have outgrown the foolish notion that our pretty girls always must look pretty, even though the aids to prettiness make many scenes absurd. Half an hour after Esther Ralston is dragged from the sea in Half a Bride and finds herself on a deserted island with not so much as a nail-file to start housekeeping with, her hair is as beautiful and as meticulously arranged as it ever has been in a ballroom scene. In God Gave Me Twenty Cents, Lya de Putti’s lips were made up with that perfect bow that proclaims the use of lip-stick. She is taken to a hospital and in close-ups of her in bed the lipstick is just as much in evidence, notwithstanding the fact that the first thing her nurse would have done would have been to wash it off. These three instances are among the thousands that could be quoted to show the extent to which directors sacrifice screen art to the obsession that the heroines always must look perfect. My personal belief is that anyone wearing lipstick, either on or off the screen, looks hideous, but it is used on the supposition that it is an aid to beauty, and as such I regard it for the purpose of my argument. Is it more important to have a girl look beautiful or look her part? In these three cases it would have been much more effective dramatically to have stuck to probabilities. The fact that Lina Basquette was going through an ordeal would have been emphasized if it had been reflected in her personal appearance. The same is true in the case of Esther Ralston. If we had seen her tramping over the island, her hair straight and neglected, it would have helped to create an impression of the seriousness of the situation in which the castaways found themselves. In the case of Miss de Putti, it is obvious that we could believe more readily that she really was ill if her lips had been less livid and robust looking. I am not decrying the use of lipstick on the screen. My quarrel with it is on the grounds that it is used so heavily in close-ups that it makes its users look ridiculous, and that its dramatic possibilities are overlooked by our directors. With a regularity that suggests the mental stolidity of an ox, girls are moved into close-ups with the same make-up that they used for the long shots, and come to us on the screen with lips as black as coal. And it is done because we have a notion in Hollywood that our screen girls must look beautiful under any and all circum-

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The Go-Between

(title registered and protected) is my original crook story, based on the life of 'Mother' Mandelbaum, the famous New York 'fence'. More powerful than "Madame X". No rubber-stamp situations. I had Vera Gordon in mind when I wrote it. With her in the stellar role, I believe it will prove a box-office clean-up. Offers from motion picture producers invited.

JAMES MADISON
(Scenarios - Gags - Titles - Talk)
323 North Citrus Ave., Los Angeles . ORegon 5627
stances. Our conception of feminine beauty apparently is the perfection with which artificial aids are resorted to. No prominent screen girl would dream of going on the set without a maid to pounce hawklike on an erring hair. I should think that some director would awaken to the fact that there are times when a girl is caught without her make-up on or with her hair a trifle awry. I am sure that such a girl would be a refreshing sight to a motion picture audience that is fed up so much on the other kind. I would not go so far as to suggest that we tamper with the style of make-up that C. B. has established as correct for a young woman about to transport garbage.

* * *

**Right Moment at Which to Show Close-up of Star**

A PICTURE'S first mission is to grip our interest. After it has done that, it can slow up a little and even make a few side excursions. The opening sequences should be all story. Until we know what it is about we cannot take any great interest in the people in it. Of course, if Mary Pickford walks into the opening scene carrying a mop and a pail, we take interest in her because we know that Mary Pickford, the person, not the slavey, must be the biggest thing in the picture and the one we should watch. A disadvantage under which screen art labors is that the smooth telling of a story is thrown out of joint by the fact that the minute the star appears on the screen the audience knows his part, no matter how humble may be its beginning, is to be the most important in the story. In this respect the printed story has the advantage over the screened one, for as you read a story you become acquainted with the characters only as their importance grows. It would profit screen entertainment if pictures could be viewed in the same way. As they can't be, because of the public's familiarity with the stars, it might help a little if the makers of our pictures proceeded upon the assumption that it can be done. By our present unimaginative and wooden method of producing films, Mary Pickford is picked out in a huge close-up the moment she steps into her first scene. At the time she is nobody—just a drab little slavey with a mop and a pail. The picture itself should encourage that thought. If no one noticed Mary in the opening scene except to the extent of being subconsciously aware of her presence, so much the better; it would give her an opportunity to grow into the picture in a manner that would be dramatic. When her importance began to dawn upon us we would have reached the point of wanting to know her better, and not until that point is reached should there be a close-up of her. But that is not the way it is done. The very first glimpse we get of her is a huge close-up, which, in effect, says to the audience: "Watch this little girl, ladies and gentlemen! She may not look important now, but, believe me, she is the big noise in what is about to happen." That is not the theory upon which a screen story should be built. In exploiting a picture, naturally the fact that Mary Pickford stars in it is the feature that should be brought out most emphatically, but the picture itself should make its own star; should develop the part that Mary plays until it stands out most prominently and dominates the story. Any chance of reaching this theoretical perfection is dissipated at the outset by the close-up of the star which gives her importance before she has earned it in that particular picture. In a film that opens with a ballroom scene, the star is picked up in a large close-up the moment she puts in an appearance among the other guests. As this is the first time we have seen her, she has done nothing to indicate that she is of more importance than any other member of the crowd, yet we are given a huge view of her merely standing among the others. It is necessary to plant her, you will say. Why? Because she is going to do a lot of things important to the story? Then why not let the first important thing plant her? There is no ground upon which initial close-up can be defended. If in the first scene the star walks into the ballroom and cuts the host's throat, she arrests our attention at once and we are anxious to get a closer view of her. Then the close-up becomes imperative. The throat-cutting should be treated in a sufficiently close shot to enable us to identify the parties to it, the deed itself being the first thing photographed. When we have become interested in the deed, we become interested in the parties to it and until such point is reached there is no sane reason why there should be a close-up. The makers of our pictures, however, proceed on exactly the contrary theory, which I contend is wrong.

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**Columbia Does Well by the Russian Revolution**

BANISHING all close-ups from opening sequences—something that will be done when intelligent people make pictures—will assist greatly in overcoming one of the difficulties that the screen has in common with the stage and literature: that of capturing the attention of the audience with the first scene, act or paragraph. As a concrete example, take the opening sequence in The Scarlet Lady, an excellent picture, directed by Alan Crosland for Columbia. It deals with the Russian revolution. To get the story under way, it is necessary to plant a lot of things, making the capture of the audience's interest a problem difficult to solve. Until the trend of the story is planted it can not escape being somewhat draggy, and until the status of the principal characters is established the audience can not be interested in them to any great extent. The mission of the director in such a situation is to devote all his attention to getting the story under way and anything that retards it should be avoided. As we have it in the picture, the sequence presents many close-ups of Lya de Putti and Warner Oland. There is nothing dramatic in any of the scenes, for the story has not reached its dramatic stages, consequently the close-ups have no story value. They are inserted only because it has become a brainless habit to stick them in at regular intervals quite irrespective of story demands, and in this picture they serve to make the opening draggy. Later in the story when the dramatic episodes are reached close-ups are permissible, for by that time we have become interested in the thoughts of the characters. The Scarlet Lady is one of the best pictures that Columbia has turned out. The fault that I point out is common to practically all pictures, consequently it will not lessen the entertainment value of this one. It is rich in production quality and presents several phases of the Russian revolution in a dramatic and colorful manner, and which reveal Crosland at his best as a director. Lya de Putti gives an excellent performance, Crosland bringing her to us to better advant-
Despite His Ego, the Little Chap Makes Good

JOSEF von Sternberg, that odd little chap on the Paramount lot who was so shocked by my effrontery in criticizing his direction of Drag Net that he has forgotten that he knows me, rises to truly magnificent heights in his direction of The Docks of New York. He tells a story of strong human emotions in the steam of a stokehole, the fog of a harbor, and the mean, smoky atmosphere of waterfront dens. All his sets are dark and lovely, and the story is as drab as the setting. Only a director with the sublime conceit of Sternberg—Jo Sternberg was his name before he hung frills on it—would have undertaken to make a picture out of such material, and only one with his genius would have achieved such brilliant results. He is extraordinarily effective in using the thoughts of his principals to advance his story. It is a George Bancroft starring picture and in it also are Betty Compson, Baclanova, Clyde Cook, Mitchell Lewis and Gustav von Seyffertitz—artists all of them. The close-ups of them are character studies that have distinct story value, vigorous portraits of strong, elemental people whose eyes reflect passions that they have not brains enough to control. All through the picture the lighting and photography are glorious examples of the possibilities of screen art. The picture opens in the stokehole of a vessel, and I can not recall having seen more effective shots in any other picture. By the judicious use of background lighting Sternberg makes the stokers stand out like animated things done in bronze, each so sharply defined as to give the scenes a suggestion of stereoscopic quality. The camera brings out all the vigor and brute strength that Sternberg's grouping and action provide. The chief weakness of Drag Net was the ridiculous manner in which he directed his principals, presenting them as movie actors pretending to be something else. In Docks of New York he gets away from this fault. A little bit of the movie actor sticks to Bancroft, but not enough to keep his performance from being really good. However, Paramount should give him a change of directors before the strutting that Sternberg demands becomes a habit with him.

If I wore a hat, I would doff it and make low obeisance to Betty Compson. It's many months since I have seen on the screen anything as notable as her performance. We make her acquaintance when she jumps off a dock to end it all. As Sternberg does not stop his story to introduce any of his characters, we know nothing about her, but we are left to surmise that she has had no great regard for the moral code. Bancroft comes into her life, and in a brilliantly directed sequence, marries her. Her pathetic attempt to hold on to her romance, apparently the only decent thing that has come to her, reveals what a superb actress Betty is. Her performance is purely a mental one, and she tells the story of her tragic hopelessness and loneliness almost entirely through the medium of her eyes. I hope her remarkable acting in this picture will be responsible for her more frequent appearance on the screen in major parts. Baclanova gives us another of her vigorous performances. She is a great actress, with a dominant personality and a perfectly functioning brain. Mitchell Lewis and Von Seyffertitz acquit themselves with that rare artistry of which they are masters. Jules Furthman wrote the story and scenario and to him goes much of the credit for the excellence of the picture. The production is so perfect in its present form that I trust Paramount will use discretion in applying sound to it. It justifies my prediction of more than two years ago that Sternberg is a great director. True, he is a quixotic little fellow who by no possibility ever can become as great as he thinks he is now. When a man considers himself above criticism there is reason to feel dubious about his future.

Bill Howard Adds Another to His String of Good Ones

HERE are many features of The River Pirate that will please those who like good pictures. It is a Fox production, directed by William K. Howard and starring Victor McLaglen. Again the Fox people prove themselves to be masters of the art of building productions. The picture is presented with extraordinary pictorial effectiveness, and even Hollywood is going to find it hard to believe that the whole thing was shot on one stage. I would not have believed it myself if I had not seen some of it being shot. In one sequence we see a police boat with several officers in it giving chase to a motorboat in which McLaglen and Nick Stuart are trying to make their getaway. Through a fog we see both boats speeding along a line of docks. Every foot of it was shot on a Fox stage. You won't believe me when you see the picture, none the less it is true. But that is the mechanical
end of the picture. Something that is not mechanical is Bill Howard's direction. He has succeeded in making beautiful the love between a crook and a lad, and in doing so has avoided the slightest approach to the sickly sentimental touches that most directors have to resort to to advance such a theme. Howard tells the story in a he-man way that makes it both convincing and engrossing. In several places he reveals a rich sense of comedy, and in others a cleverness in avoiding uninteresting time lapses. McLaglen and Stuart enter a clothing store and the former buys the latter a suit of clothes. Nick enters a booth to don his suit. Ordinarily we would have been treated to a fade-out and a fade-in to give him a chance to change his clothes. Howard does it differently and with no apparent effort to cover a lapse. He shows McLaglen trying on hats, the scene reflecting a lively sense of humor both in acting and direction. It is a far cry from this comedy to the tragedy of McLaglen's arrest after he kills Earle Foxe, and likewise there is a great contrast between the thrill of Stuart's escape from a reformatory and the sweetness of the culmination of his romance with Lois Moran, but in all the widely differing phases of the story Howard shows the same sureness and intelligence. Unquestionably he is entitled to a place among our very best directors. For the first time Victor McLaglen has given a performance that satisfies me completely. As the river pirate he is nothing but a big, rough-neck law-breaker, but he succeeds in making the character one that appeals to you on account of its tenderness and sympathy. Nick Stuart is a lad who is destined to have a brilliant screen career. If I remember correctly, I made the same prediction about him after seeing him in a small part in one of his first pictures. His work in The River Pirate justifies my early prediction. He has an immense capacity for enlisting the sympathies of an audience, and an ability that is rare among the youths of the screen—that of playing character roles with all the finish and sincerity of an old trouper. Perhaps the individual feature of the picture that intrigued me most was Donald Crisp's return to us as an actor. His part does not permit him to do much more than remind us what a splendid artist he is, and to make me hope that in the future he will be kept in front of the camera instead of behind it. Earle Foxe plays a cringing gangster with the sincerity that has characterized his work since he escaped from two-reel comedies. I understand that Winfield Sheehan has big plans for him, and I have no doubt of his ability to handle them in a big way. Lois Moran does excellently as the girl. She is another who is coming along fine under the Fox banner. In this picture I was treated to one brief glimpse of Oscar, my favorite motion picture actor. He plays the part of a bookie, for which he has been rehearsing for years on the Lasky lot. The fruits of his conscientious preparation are apparent in every stroke of his brushes and every inch of his grin. All my friend Oscar needs is a real opportunity.

**Patsy Ruth Miller Has a Picture All to Herself**

To-Morrow is all Patsy Ruth Miller. The story picks her up as a coy young flapper and follows her through until she becomes a pathetic old woman who uses cosmetics and hair-dye in a fruitless attempt to make the years stand still. It is rather a remarkable performance that the young woman gives. Between our visions of her having a good time at a young people's dance and a scene showing her pleading with a policeman not to arrest her for the murder of her husband, there is demand upon her for wide range of expression, and the manner in which she meets the demands indicates that we yet will include Patsy Ruth in our limited circle of beautiful girls who are dramatic actresses. To-Morrow is an interesting picture. It is about something, and sticks to its discussion of it. Companionship marriage is the theme, a social question in which my lack of interest is vast. It probably is all right as a box-office theme, but Tiffany-Stahl did not rely solely on that fact to render the picture commercial; they made it entertaining, and even if you are as indifferent to companionship marriage as I am, you will find the picture is well worth seeing for the pleasure it will give you in watching Pat's performance. James Flood made a good job of the direction; in fact, I think it is one of the best things he has done, but there are one or two things I do not agree with, and which might be discussed profitably. Patsy Ruth comes home from a dance and tells her parents that she is going to enter into a contract marriage. The father stands on one side of the room, the mother on the other side, and Pat in the middle. As the matter is discussed the only way the characters can be shown on the screen is in a series of choppy close-ups. There is no suggestion of family entity in the grouping or editing. The proper manner in which to handle the sequence would be to bring the group together to suggest the family idea and to enable all the action to be registered in a medium shot, making unnecessary the flickering procession of close-ups. For a brief moment at the end of the sequence we see the whole room, and discover that all the time we were hopping from one close-up to another, Pat's grandmother was in the room. In another sequence Pat indulges in a tirade against her husband in particular and the heartlessness of fate in general. She does it splendidly, taking herself so seriously that she becomes dramatic, which is the manner in which the scene should be handled. It is the sort of scene that gets its dramatic strength purely from its duration; the longer it is held the stronger it becomes. However, it reaches the screen in chunks, a perfect example of ignorant editing. Obviously no one with authority over the picture understood what the sequence was about. But To-Morrow is a worthy picture nevertheless. It shows what dreadful things probably will happen to a young couple starting life on the companionate mar-

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Winifred Dunn
Current Scenarios
"SUBMARINE"
Columbia
"ADORATION"
First National
riage plan, and is an argument in favor of the old-fashioned church wedding. Pat and Lawrence Gray start living together on a contract basis, and the picture deals with what Pat dreams is happening to her. It is plenty to scare one off from companionate marriage if one doesn't stop to consider that marriage itself has nothing to do with making two people love one another. It is a long and logical dream. I have had dreams as long myself, but they have been complicated at intervals by my arrival at large and brilliant social functions at which I attract considerable attention by reason of the fact that I have no clothes on.

Joe Kennedy's Help Seems to Know That It Is an Art

Fortunately for the shareholders of F.B.O. there are people on its production staff who are not as dumb about pictures as Joe Kennedy, its president, confesses himself to be. Recently I viewed Sinners in Love, a new F.B.O. film, and found it to be a picture that obviously was made by people with picture intelligence. As screen entertainment it has the fault common to practically all of the company's output, that of being about nothing in particular. It is just another crook story with Huntly Gordon repenting in the last reel and taking unto himself as wife Miss Olive Borden, whose good influence prompts him to close a dignified and prosperous gambling joint and go straight. The story has been told so often that its power to entertain me is not great, but I was interested in the picture as a nice little example of screen work. George Melford directs with the sureness and effectiveness that characterizes all his work. He first shows us Olive Borden in her childhood home, a place made most uninviting by the squalor, drudgery and poverty that characterize it. Melford stresses the drab note so strongly that I was quite sure that he was building up an excuse for Olive going wrong when she left home, as Fred Niblo did in the case of Norma Talmadge and Camille. But Olive does not go wrong; on the contrary, she is uninterestingly right all the way through the picture. It is good story material to effect the regeneration of a crook through having him fall in love with the innocent small-town girl, but most of the plausibility is taken out of the situation when the girl is shown to be a dumbbell. A crook in love might excuse a girl for being vicious, but he could not go as far as loving her if she were dumb. Too many of our screen heroines are presented as negative characters who would not appeal to the kind of men who fall in love with them when the director tells them to. Miss Borden plays the part satisfactorily, but the circumstance would have been more convincing if she had been a little less innocent. When we see her in the luxuriously furnished rooms of Huntly Gordon's gambling house, we realize the importance of the early scenes showing the meanness of her home. The fact that she started in squalor lends additional glamour to any surrounding in which she later finds herself, thus giving the first sequence story value which lasts throughout the picture. When Olive comes to Huntly's place she is wearing a drab little dress, and carries the rest of her possessions in a cardboard box. When there occurs the split-up demanded by the mechanics of this kind of story, and the girl leaves the young man forever, she wears the same drab little dress and carries the same old cardboard box. When I see something of this sort in a picture I wonder when screen art is going to develop something beyond a single-track mind. The same situation has been in scores of pictures and it has been handled in the same way in all of them. Always the ragged dress is hanging in the millionaire's closet and the cardboard box is at hand. It is silly because in real life the old things would have been carried off by the servants, and it has no story value because it has been repeated until it has become laughable. Inherently the situation is sound in that the girl must leave the man; but in presenting it always in the same old way we are overlooking a definite opportunity to advance screen art. If we take this one old situation and do something new with it we have made definite progress. Then if we take another old one and put it in new attire, we have progressed a little farther. In Sinners in Love the girl had worked for the man long enough to have earned at least one of her neat street dresses, and to keep the sequence from becoming absurd she should have worn it when she left him. However, the picture is a worthy one that will please F.B.O.'s regular patrons.

Uncle Tom Has Music Now and Is Much Better

When I saw Uncle Tom's Cabin the first time it was almost incoherent. The fact that sixteen hundred and thirty-eight scenes were shot—a secret that Carl Laemmlle shared only with the readers of the Saturday Evening Post—and not more than five hundred could be used in the final cutting, precluded any possibility of a satisfactory picture resulting. Every precaution to make the picture as bad as possible was taken by Universal. If it had a script, it must have been one of the weirdest ever written. It cost around two million dollars to make the picture, and it is being exploited as an attraction that cost that sum. By Carl Laemmle's own admission, not one out of every three scenes shot reached the public; or, to put it in terms of dollars, what the public sees costs about six hundred thousand dollars, leaving one million, four hundred thousand dollars totally wasted because Universal does not believe that such a thing as a perfect script is possible. For that much money all the writers in Hollywood would be taught to write perfect scripts. Of course, it may be that Uncle Carl was impressed with the old wheeze that a perfect script curbs the inspiration of the director, and that he blew the one million, four hundred thousand on the theory that at any moment Harry Pollard might become inspired. If Mr. Laemmle had provided in his budget for the expenditure of one million dollars in making the script perfect, he could have saved about two-thirds of the second million in shooting, cutting and editing the picture. And he would have had a better picture, particularly if he had used two hundred thousand dollars of the amount saved to pay someone to punctuate the titles properly. Even while it is tempting the public to see Uncle Tom's Cabin because it cost two million dollars to make, Universal offers as a reason for the wild expenditure the fact that it had a lot of hard luck during the shooting. At the time, every misfortune that the production experienced was blamed on the fact that Harry Pollard had the toothache, thus raising this particular molar malady to the dignity of being the most expensive in the
history of the world. But all the misfortunes that reached
their culmination in the director's tooth could not be re-
sponsible for the fact that eleven hundred and thirty-eight
useless scenes were shot. Even with a perfect script a
production can have a streak of bad luck to add to its
expense, but I can imagine no sort of calamity that will
add script scenes which never can be used. I was pre-
pared to find Uncle Tom's Cabin as bad as it was when
I saw it first, but I did not review it at the time as some-
one on the sidewalk told me that they were going to
monkey with it a lot more. I have seen it again, the
second time with a synchronized score and a restrained
attempt at sound effects. It still is a poor picture when
considered purely from the standpoint of screen technic,
but it none the less is splendid entertainment. If houses
are wired fast enough the chances are that the public soon
will pay the entire cost of the toothache. The symphonic
accompaniment to the picture alone is worth the price of
admission. Effective use is made of those fine, old Southern
melodies and negro spirituals. They are played beautifully,
and they carry you from sequence to sequence, dulling your
sensibilities to such an extent that you likely will not
notice that the second sequence has no place in the story
at all. In the version to which sound has been applied,
the story of Eliza and George Harris is given prominence.
It stops for a while to give Topsy and Eva a chance to
do their stuff, and so excellently do they do it, with so much
feeling and tenderness, that the most captious critic could
not object to it as being irrelevant. There is much in
Uncle Tom's Cabin for which the producers and the direc-
tor are to be commended. The musical accompaniment
heightens the thrill of the scenes showing Eliza crossing
the ice. The whole sequence is one of the most stirring I
ever saw on any screen. And those haunting Southern
melodies get you.

Pleasantly Surprised
to Find It Has Merit

FORBIDDEN Hours was released a long time before
I ran across it. I was prepared to find it just another
of those things. It seems to have been received
indifferently by the public, and I could find no critic who
saw anything in it to enthuse over. I was quite sure that
if I viewed it I would be compelled to find fault with it,
and, as I have recorded several times, I much prefer to
praise pictures, particularly one produced by Metro, as it
is a pleasure that I have but rarely. I avoided Forbidden
Hours, but having loaned on the job for a week I had to
run hither and yon looking for pictures, and as I could
not see them fast enough in projection-rooms, I fell back
on this Metro production when it was showing within
walking distance of my home. I don't suppose you are
curious on the point, but if you would like to know what
I consider a perfectly produced motion picture, one that
was directed in a manner beyond criticism and acted
superbly, view Forbidden Hours and your curiosity will be
satisfied. To Harry Beaumont goes the credit for the
direction, and to Renee Adoree and Ramon Novarro
the praise for the superb acting. Every foot of the picture
delighted me. I can understand why it did not create
more than a ripple in the cinematic world, for it is too
perfect a gem to be acclaimed by a public not trained to
appreciate perfection. It is a slim story, but is told by
Beaumont with a subtlety, a delicacy, a sense of humor,
and a knowledge of human emotion that make it entranc-
ing. Good taste is the dominating note of the production,
a quality that we see too infrequently. Metro mounted
the picture sumptuously. It has many scenes of great
beauty that reveal that Beaumont appreciated the pic-
torial possibilities of his sets. A. P. Younger was respon-
sible for the story and the scenario, and if his script
was followed by the director we must give Younger credit
for doing a mighty fine piece of screen writing. Great
moments in the story were put over with the lightest
touch. A brilliant example of this is the manner in which
the audience is informed that his people refuse to accept
the abdication of Novarro as king on account of his love
for Renee Adoree, a commoner. The two reach the border
in a closed car. We do not see them as a sentry tells the
chauffeur that the people want the king and his sweet-
heart; the car swings around and disappears in the dis-
tance—and still we have no shot of the two inside. It is
the finest bit I have seen on the screen for a long time.
And it is but one of the many fine bits in the picture. For
years I have been waiting to see Novarro in a part that
allowed him to show us what an excellent actor he is. He
was given the opportunity in Forbidden Hours. His per-
formance is flawless. He has a sense of comedy that is
delicious. He at all times is every inch a king, playing
the part with dignity and impressiveness without detract-
ing from the impetuosity of his love-making or the light-
ness and gaiety of his comedy scenes. Novarro is one of
the greatest artists in pictures, much greater than he yet
has been able to demonstrate on the screen. I am afraid
that pictures will lose him before he goes as far with them
as his ability can carry him, for he is blessed with
a divine voice and it seems inevitable that he will not
long resist the call of grand opera. Renee Adoree never
appeared to better advantage than she does in Forbidden
Hours. She is the only girl on the screen who can tell a
whole story by the flutter of her eyelids. I can imagine
nothing more delightful in the way of screen acting than
the early sequences bring to us when she and Novarro
are becoming acquainted. In the big moments of the
story, scenes that mark the high spots of Beaumont's

Ray Doyle
Scenarist

Just Completed
"Madonna of Avenue A"
Management
For Warner Bros.
Lichtig & Englander

John Peters
Characters
Hollywood 1068
splendid direction, Miss Adoree is magnificent. As I watched her work I wondered why Metro does not get suitable stories for her and enter into the serious business of making her a star. She would do more than her share.

** **

ANY times I have pointed out that a dying person does not close his eyes when the end comes. If he had enough energy left to perform the physical feat, he would consume it in keeping alive a few seconds longer. Nearly all motion picture directors either do not know how a man dies, or consider the method an old-fashioned one. If we may judge from the death scenes we see on the screen, "Now close your eyes and die" are the usual instructions that wind up such scenes. In Uncle Tom's Cabin, Uncle Tom closes his eyes so emphatically that if the lids were metallic the action could be reproduced with sound effects. The very thing that a man never does when he is dying is the almost universal screen symbol that he has died. There are some directors who avoid this anachronism, but not many.

** **

THE Los Angeles Times is fearful that unionism is getting an increased grip on motion picture studios. For all there is in the situation to be alarmed about the producers can thank themselves. Employers always are responsible for the spread of unionism. Take the eight-hour day. Nothing on earth is surer than that some day it will be introduced into all studios and will include all departments. It can be prophesied with assurance for it is inevitable that the motion picture industry in time will learn what all other industries have learned, that there is economy in promoting human efficiency and that the maximum time that men can work at their maximum efficiency is eight hours a day. Our present producers, lacking the mental equipment to think the thing out for themselves, resist the eight-hour day on the ground that there is something mysterious about the picture business that makes it unlike all others. It is mysterious to the producers because they are incapable of appreciating its fundamentals, but to those with ability to think clearly everything about it is as clear as day. From some direction the eight-hour day is going to come, and as the producers are too backward to introduce it themselves, it follows that the employees will organize and force it on their employers. And the employers will complain of the unions that they themselves have brought into being. If the motion picture industry were run intelligently there would be no necessity for unions, and there would be none connected with it.

** **

YOU have heard Ol' Man River on the radio. You put it down as just another popular air, a thing suitable for a musical comedy, but neither inspiring nor great. One night recently I heard Lawrence Tibbetts sing it. He stood by a piano in a friend's house, and sang it to please his friend's guests. Don't try to argue with me now that Ol' Man River is not great art, for I heard what a great artist did with it. It is great music, great poetry, great drama. Tibbetts does marvels with it, and although he sang half a dozen or more songs that night, I am confident that when the guests left the Milton Sills residence the one that stood out most, the thrill of which continued with them as they drove away, was the musical comedy composition that is murdered on the radio as regularly as it is sung. Tibbetts tells me that he will include it in his programs during the coming season. He will make it a great American classic. Hear him sing it, and reflect again that in art it is not the thing itself that is important, but the manner in which it is done. Before a motion picture director pays scant attention to a scene because it merely is a piece of old stuff that is done in one way, anyway, he should hear Ol' Man River on the radio, and then hear Lawrence Tibbetts sing it. He would learn that art has possibilities hidden in unexpected places, and that even old stuff can be given new life and great dignity by an artist who understands what he is doing.

** **

THE principal thing that a screen actor or actress has to sell is personality. It is something over which the possessor has little control. It just is. And it can not be hidden. Sue Carol can remain stationary on the screen in a scene showing half a dozen other people, and all eyes in the audience will be directed towards her because she has a personality that shines out even when she is doing nothing. I do not know if her voice has been put through

---

**PEPPY STORIES, FRENCH FLAVORED**

by

**F. DE MIOLLIS**

author of the screen play that broke all box-office records for Pathe (Paris).

1743 ORCHID AVE.  GRANITE 1674
the sound device mill, but I do know that when it is, its reproduction will be successful. In no way is personality registered more definitely than by the voice. Consider radio announcers. Practically all of them are just voices, cold, emotionless and characterless. Occasionally there is a note in one of the voices that makes you wonder what kind of a fellow its owner is. This one has personality. Motion picture artists who have it need not worry about their voices. Sue Carol could squeak, lisp and stutter and the charm of her personality would shine through it all.

* * *

A TITLE in Docks of New York introduces a water-front dive with the statement that it was wiped out long ago. Another title fixes the time of the story as being prior to the introduction of oil as a fuel for steamships. Throughout the picture the dresses of the women conform to the latest 1928 model. This anachronism is permissible. If the story had been one of one hundred years ago, the costumes of that time would have to have been adhered to closely, but when a story reaches back only a score of years it in every sense is modern, and to adorn it with the long skirts and other trappings of two decades ago would mean the introduction of an element that would distract the attention of the audience without adding anything in story value by way of compensation. There is no reason why an anti-prohibition story should not wear post-prohibition clothes.

* * *

O NE of the many things that I like about Jo Sternberg's Docks of New York is the fact that he does not introduce his characters nor pick them out in close-ups when they make their first appearances. They come into the story naturally and on the theory that they are not entitled to any prominence until the story develops their importance to it. I liked this treatment because I know the principals, anyway, and it was not necessary to tell me who they were. But how about Buffalo? How are the people there going to know which player is Mitchell Lewis and which Gustav von Seyffertitz? It is good screen technic to bring the characters in as Sternberg does, but I doubt if it is good showmanship. It is a method that I condemned myself until I became so familiar with screen players that I forgot about it. I believe the majority of picture patrons would prefer to have the names of the principals appear on the screen at the bottom of titles telling who they are in the story. I don't like it myself, but I think Buffalo would.

* * *

H ARRY Carr said recently in the Times that when Vitaphone first made its appearance all Hollywood received it with derisive hoots. Harry should have been more particular with his facts; he should have said that after the first Vitaphone showing two years ago he wrote in the Times that we never would have talking pictures, and that at the same time I wrote in The Spectator that talking pictures were imminent and that the industry should prepare for them.

* * *

H OWARD Hill, The Spectator's business manager, desires me to state with emphasis that he is not the Howard Hill who was sent to jail for ignoring five traffic warrants. If you could see our Howard's car you would realize that by no possibility could more than one such charge ever be brought against him—that of delaying traffic.

---

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By Donald Beaton — The Spectator's 18-Year-Old Critic

For the first time since he embarked on his career as chief religion dispenser for motion pictures, C. B. De Mille has let it damage his picture. The Godless Girl is powerfully done and contains some great entertainment, but the religious element is silly and brought in clumsily. To begin with, De Mille is far too prejudiced to attempt a picture of that kind, because he never gave the atheists an even break all the way through. Besides, there is no particular harm in being an atheist. It is an evidence of independent thinking which should be encouraged, but violence, on one side or the other, is a lot of foolishness. De Mille started his own particular vogue for religious pictures, no doubt because they are sure-fire at the box-office. They were good enough to cover up the religious hokum; but The Godless Girl isn't, so, for the first time, it becomes objectionable. However, I enjoyed the picture when it got away from the propaganda. There is no one like De Mille when it comes to spectacles, his fire scene in The Godless Girl being one of the greatest he ever has done. It was a tremendous relief when they all got out alive, although De Mille never makes his characters real enough to get much sympathy. Anyone viewing the picture has to work all the way through it. It certainly is not entertainment for the tired business man. It never lets down for a minute, which is one of the reasons I think it a good picture. Even the religion isn't allowed to interfere with the swift action. The only time the picture relaxes to any great extent is the sequence during the escape when the two principals stop for a little while. There are some pretty good love scenes, but always in the background are the pursuing guards and bloodhounds. My only reaction to them was a wish that the two lovers would get up and run, instead of sitting and gazing into each other's eyes. De Mille got good performances out of every member of his cast. Lina Basquette, who had the title role, did splendid work. Not the least part of Lina's success was due to her powerful screen personality. She was at her best as the dynamic leader of the atheists, although there was never a moment when her work was not impressive. George Duryea is a real find. He, too, has a fine personality; and he has the ease of a veteran before the camera. The Godless Girl should establish him firmly in motion pictures. However, the laurels for the best performance of the picture go to Eddie Quillan, a brilliant actor and a natural-born comedian. Even in the gloomy setting of the reform school he contrived to be amusing, and he has a very likeable quality in addition to his acting ability. He has a great future. Noah Beery made a fine heavy although he was almost too cruel to be real. Marie Prevost gave a good performance, and Kate Price and Hedwig Reicher were highly satisfactory.

EXCEPT for spots where it dragged, The Docks of New York, Josef von Sternberg's latest with George Bancroft for Famous, is pretty good stuff. There is some beautiful camera work, chiefly in the handling of lights and shadows, as there were no decent looking sets. Von Sternberg uses very few cuts and usually dissolves from one scene to another, giving an impression of continuity.
which is very valuable in the telling of the story. Jules Furthmann's story was powerful and adroitly written, although his characterizations were a bit uneven at times. There were scenes where the emotions of the actors seemed distorted and abnormal, but I imagine Von Sternberg was partly responsible for that, because he never struck me as being very good at the building up of characterizations. Realism, except for his lapse in Dragnet, is his long suit; and there were moments in The Docks of New York when it was rather too evident. Heavy drama under the kitchen sink of some tenement has few charms for me, and it is to the credit of the picture that only occasionally did the action become so uninteresting that my attention wandered to the setting, which was reminiscent of The Salvation Hunters and The Street of Sin. Two shots in The Docks deserve particular mention because of their cleverness. One is a shot of a woman attempting suicide by drowning. She isn't in the range of the camera at all, but all her actions are mirrored in the water. There was no particular reason for shooting the scene that way, except that it showed a little independent thought. The other shot was a murder, which was put over by the actions of a flock of sea-gulls who were alarmed at the report of the gun. Von's intelligence of direction extended even to his method of ignoring a lot of elaborate introductions for his characters. A powerful cast was a big feature of the picture. George Bancroft and Betty Compson, in the two principal roles, gave splendid performances. Clyde Cook, Balcnova, and Mitchell Lewis also were in the cast, and there was a glimpse of Gustav von Seyffertitz.

UP until just lately, Dolores Costello was the only actress in Hollywood with a "tomorrow". She acquired hers in Glorious Betsy, and was rather vague as to details, though she spoke upon it at some length just prior to the end of the picture. However, her exclusive position has been usurped by Patsy Ruth Miller, who has a very definite Tomorrow in the shape of the Tiffany-Stahl production. The picture is intended for a good role, and she uses her opportunity to give the best performance to her credit yet. Other members of the cast rush in and out, but Pat goes on forever. There is nothing particularly outstanding about Tomorrow, as it is based on a dream which is a strain on one's credulity, and poor dramatic construction, to boot. The best point of the picture is the casting of the parts, and specially must be mentioned the various forms of companionate marriage. James Flood's direction, while scarcely inspired, is adequate. There are times when the action acquires a weight which is very boresome, and the whole thing is not exactly light entertainment. There really is very little to say, one way or another, about Tomorrow. There was nothing very good or very bad about it, although that extraordinary dream still haunts me. If I could have one wish, this is that the picture be released a bit earlier, as I think it has been kept too long. I would be happy to cancel my subscription to the Book-of-the-Month Club.

HARRY Beaumont, with the able assistance of Ramon Novarro and Renee Adoree, has managed to make a rather interesting little picture out of Forbidden Hours. It is the story of the king and his commoner sweetheart. The only original thing about it was the happy ending; and, as I get thinking about it, there seems to be no particular reason why that type of story should ever end so happily. Judging from the newspapers, most of these royal affairs end happily, if immorally. The main fault of Forbidden Hours was that it lacked the most important component of any drama, a clearly defined crisis. There was no time when the story reached the height of its development. Perhaps A. P. Younger, who wrote the story and continuity, did not put it in its scenario. Perhaps Beaumont and his actors didn't make it clear enough.

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THE film Spectator

September 29, 1928

Page Fifteen

THE main fault with The Mysterious Lady is that its leading man is made out to be an idiot, and you'd be surprised how much an idiotic leading man can hurt a picture. It is not customary for Conrad Nagel to play an idiot, and he's not convincing at it. Of course, Fred Niblo, the director, didn't intend Nagel to be an idiot, but he made him do so many silly things that he became one anyway. He meets a girl at the opera, takes her home, and falls madly in love with her after behaving like a character from Jim Tully's works of art. He is a trusted member of the War Office, but he hasn't wit enough to see anything queer about the woman's instant acquiescence to his whirlwind courtship. I guess he thought that spies were just imaginary bowey men. On top of that, he goes placidly to sleep with an avowed spy in the adjoining compartment panting to steal his plans. His surprise when he finds them gone is really quite touching. Aside from the impossible part of the leading man, The Mysterious Lady is pretty good entertainment, as it has been given lots of production. Niblo's direction was very good on the whole, the scene where the hero has his commission taken from him being very impressive. Greta Garbo, Conrad Nagel, and Gustav von Seyffertitz, a trio of fine trouperos, leave nothing to be desired in the acting line.

THERE are young people. Older people may maintain that they like silent pictures, but the younger element, which always welcomes something new, will make the talkers permanent. Incidentally, producers have got to stop playing down to the younger members of their audiences. Judging from some of the pictures being put out these days, I would imagine that anyone over the age of twelve would be terribly bored. There are so many different ways of acquiring education these days that there is no excuse for a picture to be graded down to the intellectual level of the average audience. The way the audience greeted the subtleties of Lubitsch's direction in The Patriot demonstrated that they were capable of understanding anything, because it will be a long time before we have another motion picture as brilliantly done as Lubitsch's masterpiece. Harry D'Arrast is rated as a successful director, and his work is good solely because he respects the intelligence of his audience. He told me once that he thought that the audience had more intelligence in some instances than the people behind the camera, and he has made enough successes to know what he is talking about.

THESE one and two reel freaks which are occupying the spare time of half the motion picture industry are interesting and no doubt provide amusement for their makers during the long winter evenings; but the fact remains that they are freaks, and never will go over with the general public as steady diet. The majority of them don't deal with normal people, and the average audience doesn't feel particularly interested in characters it can not understand. The ones which do deal with normal persons are usually so harrowing that they are no entertainment at all. Most of them are reflections of their producers' personalities and opinions; and since everyone holds different ideas from everyone else, they irritate rather than please. Their only claim to merit, aside from their value as hobbies, is that they sometimes give us new ideas on lighting or something like that. If they were always good ideas, these freak pictures would be very valuable; but occasionally they are responsible for weird stuff which is hard on the eyes. I won't be responsible for what will happen the next time I see one of these things where the fact of one of the actors suddenly becomes terribly distorted and elongated due to his catching a glimpse of a loaf of bread in a bakery window. That is one little trick which could be dispensed with quite easily.

Motion Picture Aeronautics
LIEUT. E. H. ROBINSON
Oxford 3753

Howard Bretherton
Director
In Production
"THE REDEEMING SIN"
Starring
Dolores Costello
A Vitaphone Feature

John J. Goodrich

George Scarborough
Consulting Dramatist
Stage and Screen
Granite 1870

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Gladstone 6111
for stories with more entertainment value. There wasn’t a
tight moment in it which didn’t look as if it had been
made to order after the producers of the picture had seen
that it was going to be terribly dull without some relief.
There were too many unrelated sequences wandering
around loose, chiefly because the story jumped around from
one principal character to another so much that it was
hard to keep track of just what it was all about. Cruz
didn’t make it any clearer by adding a few trivialities
of his own. When a character left his plow to go into the	house, Cruze followed him all the way in, instead of cut-
ting to the interior of the house with the man already
there. Another fault of the story’s was its peculiar method
of developing love themes. One minute, two people loved
each other; the next, they didn’t. The whole thing was
rather a mess. Thomas Meighan was starred in The
Mating Call, and gave his usual impassive performance.
Evelyn Brent’s heavy characterization was one of the
highlights of the picture. I don’t know why Famous Players
is frantically trying to create a second Negri out of Bac-
lanova when Miss Brent is on the lot. She is obviously
the correct one for the place. Renee Adoree is also in
the cast of The Mating Call, and she gives her usual splen-
did performance.

DOCKS OF NEW YORK—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Josef von Stern-
berg; suggested by John Monk Saunders’ “The Dock
Walloper”; story and screen play by Jules Furthman;
photographed by Harold Rosson; assistant director,
Bob Lee.
The cast: George Bancroft, Betty Compson, Bac-
lanova, Clyde Cook, Gustav von Seyffertitz, Budd Fine,
May Foster, Lilian Worth.

GODLESS GIRL, THE—
A Pathe-De Mille picture. Directed by Cecil B. De
Mille; story and continuity by Jeanie Macpherson;
second assistant, Curt Rayfeldt; chief photographer,
Peverell Marley; assisted by J. F. Westerberg and
Franklin McBride; art director, James Mitchell Le-
son; properties by Roy Hurst; film editor, Anne Bau-
chens; titles by Beulah Marie Dix and Jeanie Mac-
pherson; costumes by Adrian; technical engineer,
Paul G. Sprunck; research, Elizabeth McGaffey; as-
sistant director, Frank Urson.
The cast: Lina Basquette, Marie Prevost, George
Duryea, Noah Beery, Eddie Quillin, Mary Jane Ir-
ing, Clarence Burton, Dick Alexander, Kate Price,
Hedwig Reicher, Julia Faye, Viola Louie, Emily
Barrye.

FORBIDDEN HOURS—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by Harry
Beaumont; story and scenario by A. P. Younger;
titles by John Colton; settings by Cedric Gibbons and
Richard Day; wardrobe by Gilbert Clark; photo-
graphed by Merritt B. Gerstad; film editor, William
Hamilton.
The cast: Ramon Novarro, Renee Adoree, Dorothy
Cummings, Edward Connelly, Roy D’Arcy, Mitzi Cum-
mings.

MATING CALL—
A Caddo production, released by Paramount. Directed
by James Cruze; from the story by Rex Beach;
adapted by Walter Woods; continuity by Ford I.
Beebe; photographed by Ira Morgan.
The cast: Thomas Meighan, Evelyn Brent, Renee
Adoree, Gardner James, Helen Foster, Alan Roscoe,
Luke Congrave, Cyril Chadwick.

MYSTERIOUS LADY—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by Fred
Niblo; based on the novel War in the Dark by Ludwig
Wolf; treatment and continuity by Bess Meredith;
titles by Marian Ainslee and Ruth Cummings; set-
tings by Cedric Gibbons; wardrobe by Gilbert Clark;
assistant director, Harold S. Bucquet; photographed by
William Daniels; film editor, Margaret Booth.
The cast: Greta Garbo, Conrad Nagel, Gustav von
Seyffertitz, Albert Pollet, Edward Connelly, Richard
Alexander.

RIVER PIRATE—
A William Fox picture. Directed by William K. How-
ard; story by Charles Francis Coe; scenario by John

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Reinhardt and Benjamin Markson; assistant director, Gordon Cooper; photographed by Lucien Andriot.

The cast: Victor McLaglen; Lois Moran, Nick Stuart, Earle Foxe, Donald Crisp, Robert Perry.

SCARLET LADY—
A Columbia picture. Directed by Alan Crosland; story by Elmer Harris; adaptation by Bess Meredith; continuity by John F. Goodrich; photographed by James Van Trees.

SINNERS IN LOVE—
An F. O. picture. Directed by George Melford; from the story written especially for True Story Magazine by an anonymous author; continuity by J. Clarkson Miller; assistant director, James Dugan; photographed by Paul Perry; titles by Randolph Bartlett, film editor, Archie Marshek.

TOMORROW—
A Tiffany-Stahl picture. Directed by James Flood; from the story by Edward Clark; continuity by Frances Hyland; photographed by Ernie Miller; titles by Frederie and Fanny Hatton; cut by L. R. Brown.
The cast: Patsy Ruth Miller, Lawrence Gray, Ralph Emerson, Duke Martin, Raymond Keene, Claire McDowell, John St. Polis, Robert Edeson, Ruby Lafayette.

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN—
A Universal picture. Directed by Harry Pollard; story by Harriet B. Stowe; scenario by Harry Pollard and Harvey Thew; supervised by E. J. Montaigne; edited by Gilmore Walker; photographed by C. Stumar and J. Hull.

GOES INTO DETAIL

Dear Mr. Beaton:
On page 15 of your August 18th issue, concerning one John Considine, there are so many misstatements I feel I should call your attention to some of them, believing that you will be courteous enough to publish these corrections, giving credit where credit is due.

I need not state that the writer deserves no credit on any of these statements, but where there are such glaring discrepancies, I am sure you would like to correct them.

No. 1—Mr. Considine did not give Mr. Clarence Brown his first big picture. On the contrary, I believe the credit belongs to Universal—a picture starring Pauline Frederick, the name I can not recall at the present time.

No. 2—I believe also that credit should be given to Warner Brothers for Lewis Milestone's beginning.

No. 3—Mr. Wolfson, I believe, was a comedian on the stage long before he came into pictures. Although you call him a heavy, he has played both parts.

No. 4—As for Gilbert Rowland—Mr. B. P. Schulberg gave him his first chance when he took him out of the extra ranks and put him in a "heavy" role in "The Plastic Age."

No. 5—Don Alvarado, I believe, was brought out by Warner Brothers, who were the first ones to promote his interest.

No. 6—George Marion, as I recall, wrote his first titles for F. O.

No. 7—Also, Hans Kraly, I believe, got his start with Warner Brothers during the regime of Lubitsch. Outside of this your article is correct, as far as I am concerned—because I know nothing of the facts regarding Sam Taylor, and William Cameron Menzies. However, I would suggest that you inquire as to their beginnings.

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The new subscription price of The Film Spectator, when it becomes a weekly, effective October 1st, will be $7.50 per year, $8.50 foreign.

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Enclosed is my check for $.........................., for which my subscription for.............years.

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and you will probably find that Mr. Considine had nothing to do with them.

As I said before, I deserve no credit for any of this, but just thought that you might want the correct data on these people, and give credit where credit is due.

I should advise you, Mr. Beaton, not to follow in the footsteps of Al Smith, but to follow William Allen White—and quote from the records.

N. CYCLOPEDIA.

THINKS HIGHLY OF KENNEDY

Dear Mr. Beaton:

It was with great interest that I read your article in The Film Spectator of September 1st, in which a head-

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GEORGE D. SMITH President and Manager

ing appeared, "What Good is Joe Kennedy Doing, Anyway?"

In your article you say that a better picture is the cure for the overseating problem. A better picture will, I grant you, help some, but will not improve this condition enough to overcome it. If there are too many seats in a town, that's all there is to it. There are just so many people in that arena to go to the movies, and a better picture can not manufacture unborn film fans. There have to be people enough there; if there are not enough people there, seats must come out. This is nothing but a plain lesson in arithmetic and statistics.

This is an age of specialists. Kennedy, you will admit, is a specialist in finance, and organizing big business ventures.

His success alone, if nothing else, merits him that much credit. He is a specialist in that line. As for a better picture, in the sense of art, a good director, another specialist, is the man for that.

As to what good Joe Kennedy is doing, ask any F.B.O. stockholder that question, and he will answer that F.B.O. has enjoyed perhaps the best year it ever had. He is the man directly responsible for F.B.O. mounting the place of esteem it has.

Kennedy, you point out, is merging companies. This is highly essential toward the furthering of big business problems. It's value is too obvious to discuss.

I have been reading your publication for some time, and I want you to know that I think it represents a very high ideal. Mr. Beaton, in my opinion, is not only a writer, but a critic of no small ability. Perhaps it is that your desire for better pictures has influenced your regard for Mr. Kennedy's ability. He is not, and should not be, directly concerned with the making of the picture, because, as you say, he knows nothing about it. But Mr. Kennedy does know about business, and not only does he command respect, but he also is recognized as one of the greatest organizers in the land. This is in answer to your heading, "What Good Is Joe Kennedy Doing, Anyway?" He is righting many economic wrongs that are so prevalent in this industry. That is his job, and he is the man for it.

In closing, may I say that I am practically "nobody" to criticize your columns, but I am merely stating an opinion, and it is in such light that I wish you to read this letter. Once again, congratulations on your courageous attitude, both in the past and also in the present.

J. J. GOLDSTEIN.

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William Fox's First Movietone Talking Picture

Directed by

J. G. Blystone
This is the Hold-Up Number

It consists principally of Loot

But there are things in it written by the Editor, by K. C. B. and by Donald Beaton

HEY, RUBE!
MATING CALL
DO YOUR DUTY
GRAIN OF DUST

SAL OF SINGAPORE
SINGAPORE MUTINY
STATE STREET SADIE
MOTHER KNOWS BEST

MORAN OF THE MARINES
The New Radiolas are

Holding-Up

the good reputation of the Radio Corporation of America

Ask to hear them.

E.A. BOWEN
MUSIC COMPANY

5326 Wilshire Boulevard   ORegon 5206
Well, if one must, one may as well be held up by a really constructive bandit.

Mary Pickford
THE IDEA AND PERFORMANCE OF THIS "HOLD-UP" IS FULLY COPYRIGHTED AND PROTECTED FROM FURTHER USE BY THE FILM SPECTATOR, A PUBLICATION. ONE ISSUE WILL BE PRINTED AND THEN TYPE DESTROYED, AND THE IDEA CAN NOT BE REPEATED HERE OR ANYWHERE. ANY INFRINGEMENT WILL BE PROSECUTED TO THE FULL EXTENT OF THE LAW.

(Signed) CLARENCE BROWN.
"Greetings"

Louise Dresser
Dear Welford:

Understand you are going to use the loot to get out a weekly instead of a bi-weekly. I trust that doubling your output doesn’t affect the quality of your goods.

Douglas Fairbanks
Mr. Beaton is a crabby old thing.

At first he said that a whole page was too much space for me to take because it might look as if he were letting me pay him for the nice things he has said about me.

Then he said that he thought one hundred dollars was too much for me to pay, taking into account my salary and my expenses.

Fancy his saying that!

I borrowed the one hundred dollars from Mother and paid him.

And now that I have all this space I have no idea whatever what I should put in it.

SUE CAROL.

P. S.—When The Spectator is a weekly, I'll like it twice as well.—S. C.
I am glad of this opportunity to express publicly my deep sense of the debt that screen art owes to Welford Beaton.

The Film Spectator is fearless, friendly, constructive; of great literary charm, and honest, penetrating criticism.

I congratulate the motion picture industry upon the fact that Mr. Beaton's wise counsel hereafter will be available every week.

ERNST LUBITSCH.
THANKS!

This Hold-Up Number leaves me rather speechless. It was conceived in iniquity, with a touch of timidity. I was aware that I was offering the personnel of the screen industry an opportunity to express the extent of its regard for The Spectator, but I never dreamed that the expression would achieve such huge proportions.

I dared hope that you would give me twenty pages of advertising—and you have given me over seventy! I knew that the idea of a Hold-Up Number appealed to my own sense of humor, but I could not guess that you would accept it with such an encouraging feeling of good nature.

If I did not admire screen people I could not live among them with such content and devote a publication to their interests with so much pleasure. This number increases my admiration for them, admiration that is not bought with the money they have spent so generously, but which springs from the warmth of their approval of The Spectator’s adherence to the ideals upon which it was founded.

The Spectator is now two and one-half years old, and during its thirty months of existence it has not said one thing it did not believe, nor one thing that was inspired by fear, favor, or flattery; nor was it once deterred for any of these reasons from saying anything that it felt like saying.

The generous proportions of this number bear witness to the industry’s appreciation of a frankness that it could not influence. The response to my serious appeal, which was voiced so thinly with a facetious note, increases my respect for people whom I already had respected most highly.

Making The Spectator a success has been astonishingly simple. It came automatically. Never once did I weigh the effect that anything I wrote would have; I smiled at efforts to influence me, and continued to tell exactly what I thought of the things of which I wrote—and success came in the form of a constantly increas-

ing subscription list until to-day this unpretentious looking little paper is among the two or three most widely read technical screen journals published anywhere in the world.

As a weekly The Spectator will make no greater effort to achieve success. Its fate, as heretofore, will be in the hands of its readers. It will continue to disregard everything except absolute honesty and common decency.

It cannot live without advertising, and it was made a weekly in the hope that it would attract more. It is read by everyone whom a writer, player or director wishes to reach with his advertisement, and I often have wondered why screen people do not make it their sole advertising medium and save the scores of thousands of dollars they now spend with publications that do them no good whatever. The fact that this suggestion may sound selfish in no way alters the fact that I offer it sincerely. A small advertisement appearing regularly in The Spectator is all that anyone needs to keep his name constantly before those he wishes to see it. Scattered big advertisements in papers that make a business of cleaning up at regular intervals do the advertisers no good.

And this goes for The Hold-Up Number.

Who Ever Viewed a Silent Motion Picture?

The proper pose nowadays is to bemoan the passing of silent pictures. The photodramatic art has achieved such perfection as a silent medium that it is a crime to murder it with sound, says the highbrow poseur. He claims that the motion picture theatre has been the one place where he could resort to to escape the noises that infest all other places, and he weeps because sound has invaded this last stronghold of silence. I’ll grant him that one can appreciate a work of art to better advantage when his contemplation of it is wrapped in quietude. The admirable drawing and brilliant coloring of Velasquez’s “Las Meninas” are more alluring in the Prado, Madrid, than they would be if the painting were hung in a market place of the Spanish capital. It would be a crime if the noises of Florence penetrated to the Uffizi Gallery when one was admiring the simplicity and beauty of Fra Angelica’s “Group of Angels”. And the stillness of a moonlight night must add to the amazing spell of the Taj Mahal. The exquisite beauty that the camera recorded for scenes in White Shadows in the

TO ADVERTISERS IN THIS NUMBER

The first four or five page advertisements in the Hold-Up Number were placed. When I got that far I realized that if I continued to the end of the book, I would, with each page, be put in the position of having to favor someone in the location of an advertisement. I decided to leave to chance the positions of all the rest of the advertisements. I was making-up with a “dummy”—a book of blank paper the same size as this one—and instead of writing in a space the name of an advertiser, I wrote only “⅛”, “⅜”, “page” as a guide for the make-up man. He had all the advertisements in type piled up near him and he merely reached for one of the right size and put it in without reference to whose ad it was. That is how the Hold-Up Number was made up.
South Seas, a beauty as great as other arts have to their credit, could be appreciated best in the uninterrupted quiet of a motion picture house. But who was ever in a motion picture house when it was quiet? From the time when tinny pianos first played “Hearts and Flowers” for screen love scenes, motion pictures have relied upon sound to add to their entertainment value. The silent drama never has been silent. The same man who would have taken up arms against an orchestra in the Prado, an organ in the Uffizi, or a brass band playing outside the Taj Mahal, would have protested if no music were presented with his motion pictures. When talking pictures begin to achieve their possibilities as works of art they will have an air of more repose and quiet than our present silent ones possess. For the first time since they came into being pictures find themselves in a position to control the sound that accompanies their presentation. When producers learn to apportion sound intelligently millions of people who refuse to patronize pictures now will be numbered among those who deposit their money in box-offices. Even those who now wait most loudly about sound coming to the screen will not be able to resist it when sound is applied properly. Condemning sound pictures, as such, is as absurd as condemning cooking or sewing as institutions. We do not protest that we are through with all cooking because we encounter an underdone chop, nor do we decide to wear no clothes because our tailors sometimes make our vests a little too tight under the arms. We go no farther than changing our cooks and tailors. We will have an endless parade of dreadful sound pictures, but no person of intelligence will allow them to disturb his faith in the possibilities of the new art that has come to Hollywood. I have listened patiently to scores of people who have told me how wrong I am about sound and who have endeavored to show me just why the silent picture never will give way to the talking one, and among all the arguments advanced to support such contention I have not heard one that would do credit to the intelligence of a ten-year-old child. The problem that faces the industry is not whether to make all-sound pictures; it is to study how to make them. As I pointed out in a previous issue, the constant aim must be to eliminate as much sound as possible. I do not imagine that anyone will take this advice. “We’re paying for sound, ain’t we?” will be the argument of most of the studios, and every effort will be made to make the pictures as noisy as possible. Such pictures will drive away from picture houses again the same people who were driven away first by the monotonous mediocrity of silent films, but ultimately Hollywood will learn that blatant and vulgarly loud pictures will not gross as much as those which possess the quality of artistic repression, and when that understanding comes sound pictures will begin to come into their own.

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**Teaches Us That There Is a Market for Good Acting**

The Patriot is achieving extraordinary success. I knew nothing about it prior to seeing it by myself in a projection-room, but when I issued forth from viewing it I declared in The Spectator that it was the most perfect picture ever made and that Jannings’ performance was the most amazing ever seen on the screen. Since its release every critic who has seen it has been as enthusiastic in his reference to it as I was. And the public is patronizing it in a manner that shows that as a cold, commercial proposition it was good business for Paramount to put so much perfection into one picture. While we must not discount the contributions made to it by Lewis Stone, Florence Vidor, Neil Hamilton, Harry Cording and others, there is no disputing the fact that the greatest single factor in the success of The Patriot is the exhibition of inspired acting given by Emil Jannings. Of course always in the background is the evidence of the greatness of Ernst Lubitsch, but what the public sees chiefly, approves and pays for is the acting of the star. He is not a star with sleek hair and a facility for kissing a pretty girl long and earnestly. In fact, in The Patriot, Jannings is not good screen material. Any supervisor will tell you that. Make a picture with the star part a middle-aged man who is crazy? Kill your star before the final fade-out and give the fade-out to a supporting player? Have no romance between a famous beautiful girl and an equally famous handsome man? Suggest all this on any lot and you’d be thrown over the fence. Yet The Patriot does all of it, and is succeeding because there always is a market for good acting, as I have contended repeatedly. I hope the motion picture industry profits from the lesson this picture can teach it and cashes in on the market value of acting. We have only one Jannings, but we have a Lionel Barrymore, Albert Gran, Otto Matiesen, Frank Reich, Rudolph Schildkraut, David Torrence, Gustav von Seyffertitz, Henry B. Walthall, H. B. Warner, Tenen Holtz, William Powell and scores of others, some of them without fame, who are capable of presenting extraordinary performances even though they have not been elevated to the rank of stars. And I could present as great an array of talented women who are not credited with having box-office value. These artists today are the ones screen art leans upon most heavily, for they provide the performances that dignify it as an art, although others with not half their ability earn greater fame and fortune. The real artists are not allowed to demonstrate their capabilities, for it is a capital offence to give a greater performance than a star. The screen to-day presents a quality of dramatic art that is held down to the low level of star mediocrity, even though The Patriot teaches us that the public wants it in its highest form. In presenting great performances we do not have to sacrifice the drawing power of our pretty girls and handsome boys. We still can star Sophie Glutz and John Dolt, but we are wise not to deprive the public of the opportunity to steal their pictures from them. It makes no difference to the producer what brings the money to a box-office. If the comparatively unknown Tenen Holtz can steal a picture from Sophie Glutz, the producer still has Sophie and perhaps has gained a star in Holtz. And when Sophie is offered to the public again it will remember what a splendid picture she was in the last time, and make the new one a success, which has the same cash value for her as memory of her own good work would have. With the advent of sound the industry is in a position to demand a new deal all around. I hope as it shuffles its roles it will pass out some of the big ones to its real artists. If Emil Jannings, by the sheer brilliance

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Ha, ha! Tom Miranda
of his art and despite the fact that he neither is young nor classily handsome, can attract the plaudits of the world, there are several scores of others in Hollywood who could do the same thing, perhaps not in such great measure, but near enough to it to make them satisfactory commercial propositions.

Realizing Importance of Contented Employees

The screen industry since its inception has refused consistently to profit from the lessons other industries could teach it. All other industries learned a long time ago that there is money in the contentment of employees. Henry Ford has become perhaps the richest man in the world by paying the highest wages in the world and adopting the shortest hours. He does everything in his power to add to the happiness of his employees—and he's credited with owning a billion dollars. There can't be anything the matter with a system that produces such a result. It's a system that can't fail when applied to any business. Making its employees contented should be the first principle of the film industry, for it is the only industry in existence that makes a business of selling the personalities of some of its employees directly to the public. And the personalities of all of its employees are sold indirectly. The artist who gets a smile from the gate-keeper, and from everyone else on the lot as he goes to the set in the morning, is going to put all the smiles into his day's work in front of the camera. Tell this to most of the producers and they will laugh at you. I have not told it to Winfield Sheehan, but I think that if I did, he would agree with me. After some golf on the Rancho course a few mornings ago, I crossed Pico Boulevard and confided to a Fox Hills gate man that I was a person of great importance, getting away with it to the extent of being permitted to invade the forty acres upon which William Fox is spending between eight and ten million dollars for a plant to be devoted exclusively to the making of sound and talking pictures. I found that Keith Weeks, a young fellow with broad shoulders and prodigious energy, was in charge of construction, and I reverted to my almost forgotten reporter facility for extracting information. The feature that interested me most was the evidence that the Fox organization is alive to the importance of the mental attitude of those who work for it. Elaborate preparations are being made to assure that attitude being one of satisfaction with the organization. No less than three hundred thousand dollars is being spent to provide clean air for those who work on the windowless, air-tight sound stages. Summer and winter the temperature of the stages will vary only between sixty-seven and seventy degrees. It will be healthier working on the stages than in the open air, for even the mildest breeze is laden with some dust, an occasional odor, and even golf stories, while the only air that can reach the stages is that which has been purified on the way in. A large dressing-room building is being erected, and in it will be provided every convenience that will make life more comfortable for both star and extra. When all the work is completed, the whole place will be landscaped and flowers will grow everywhere. I have no pets among the producing organizations—you will notice that none of them is in this Hold-Up Number—but the fact is being impressed upon me that whatever the Fox people do, they do well. They are going to make the Fox Hills sound studio a delightful place to work. They have spent a large sum of money to assure this. I believe that when they decided to spend the money they were thinking only of those who will work under the conditions procured by the expenditure, but if they had been thinking only in terms of money, they could not have found an investment that will pay higher dividends. I would not be surprised if the Fox studios before very long would adopt an eight-hour day, half a day on Saturday and no Sunday work under any circumstances. An organization that is so wise in many other ways can not long escape seeing the wisdom of such a step.

Demonstrates That It Should Be One Thing or the Other

The program at the Carthay Circle shows Herbert Hoover talking, and Sir Thomas Lipton and George Bernard Shaw. It gives us Chic Sale in a superb offering in which all the characters talk. And then comes the big event of the evening, the main number on the program, Mother Knows Best, the latest word in screen art. It opens with Louise Dresser and Lucien Littlefield trying to talk to one another with paralyzed vocal cords. Previously in the news reel we have heard a camel giving vocal expression to its meditations, but it takes a title writer to inform us what Louise Dresser is talking about. The fact that most of Mother Knows Best is silent emphasizes the inevitability of all-talking pictures. In the setting in which it is presented at the Carthay Circle, the silent sequences give the whole picture an air of unreality. In viewing other pictures that have followed the showing of short talking films, I found that the letdown caused by silence coming so hard on the heels of sound did not persist throughout the feature, but this was not the case with the Fox picture. About the time that I began to get over the sense of something being missing, along came a talking sequence to remind me what every sequence could have been. I don't see how anyone can sit through this entire program and still doubt that all-talking pictures will supplant completely the silent or partly-silent variety. To show Hoover and Lipton and Shaw talking and follow these exhibitions with views of lips moving without any sound issuing from them, is to do something more absurd than the public will tolerate for any length of time. But even with this handicap Mother Knows Best impresses the viewer with its sincerity, and it is a picture that deserves the attention of the most serious student of screen art. It has a great theme and sticks to it—that of a mother making a daughter sacrifice everything to a career. And it is handled in a great way. J. G. Blystone directed the picture with a most intelligent regard for what it is about. He gives us no "types" or eccentricities in the way of characterizations. Louise Dresser might be any mother, and Madge Bellamy may be any daughter, a condition that must exist to give point to the theme. Blystone had pliable artists to work with, and he used them to tell his story in a manner that lost none of its directness or its smooth-flowing quality by its frequent introduction of subtleties that were inserted upon the assumption that picture audiences are intelligent. I cannot see that the talking sequences help the film in any
way, for I refuse to admit that a hybrid picture is anything but an absurdity. I do not criticize a producer for making them, for sound must be applied gradually, but that consideration does not assist me to enjoy them. As the first appearance of talking in a Fox production the sound sequences are interesting. I have abundant faith in the Fox organization's ability to give us something notable with its Movietone, but it has not done it in this picture. The background noises are too much in evidence and there is a suggestion of a metallic note in all the voices. That the Movietone microphone is sensitive is made apparent when it catches Louise Dresser's faintest whisper. The musical accompaniment comes through splendidly, and for a first attempt at the use of sound in one of its pictures it is quite good enough for the Fox studio to present without any apologies. But it makes me keen to see what Movietone will present next.

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Louise Dresser Gives Us a Magnificent Performance

OTHER Knows Best is held together and is made great by that great artist, Louise Dresser. Her understanding of the part, her rare intelligence applied to her mastery of the art of acting; and Blystone's intellectual direction, his adherence to the theory that the chief thing to photograph is the story, are the two elements that have most to do with making the picture as fine as it is. Miss Dresser is magnificent in every one of her scenes. While her ruthless pursuit of a career for her daughter, to realize for the girl an ambition that had been denied the mother, ruins her daughter's life, there is no harshness in it, no obvious selfishness, nothing but mother-love. It is a splendid, a wonderful characterization, and that its merits were appreciated by the critical first-night audience at the Carthay Circle was made abundantly plain by the ovation that greeted Miss Dresser when she appeared on the stage—a great tribute to a great artist. Madge Bellamy will date things from Mother Knows Best. She performs the miracle of giving a positive performance of a negative role. She does her greatest work when called upon to show us what she is thinking of, to acquaint us with her yearning for romance, for love, for babies. These close-ups reveal to us a young woman with brains, who no doubt will develop into one of our most capable dramatic actresses. I am sorry that she was given imitations to do. I have heard Anna Held sing "I Can't Make My Eyes Behave" a dozen times, and there was not the faintest suggestion of the Held mannerisms in the Bellamy interpretation, yet there was enough cleverness in Madge's work to make it stand alone. The same is true of her Lauder and Jolson turns. She is talented enough to do something original, and why she was handicapped with the burden of trying to express three other people, instead of being permitted to express herself, is a problem too deep for me. In the past I have taken advantage of opportunities to express my opinion that Barry Norton is an excellent actor, and his performance in this picture lessens in no way my appreciation of his artistic ability, but I think he was miscast. If it be the intention of the Fox people to groom him for prominence as a leading man, I am afraid they are going to be disappointed. He should play character roles, particularly polite heavies. He is talented enough to get away with any part, but there is a quality in his work that will shine more brilliantly in definite characterizations than it will in roles that carry the love interest. Throughout the picture Blystone uses close-ups effectively except when he resorts to them to show the fervor of the kisses exchanged by Miss Bellamy and Norton. Such close-ups are disgusting and constitute the only blot on an otherwise fine production. All that the audience is interested in is the fact of the kisses and not the manner of them. Blystone portrays the growth of the romance with delicacy and sympathy, only to make it ugly and sensual when he blows out his settings to give us an intimate view of the muscular contractions that constitute the mechanics of a passionate kiss. It may be offered in extenuation that there are persons in audiences with sensual tastes that it is good business to cater to. I think it would be better business to cater to the overwhelming majority of those with different tastes, those who regard romance as something tender and sweet. But Mother Knows Best is a very fine picture, even with the kissing close-ups. And it would have been better without them.

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Sound Should Be Applied to the Strongest Sequences

THE theory upon which the Warners apply sound to State Street Sadie does not appeal to me as a wise method of using it to assist an otherwise silent picture. They apply it to sequences that have little action, on the theory, apparently, that without it the sequences would drag. In a picture there must be some sequences that are inserted solely to advance the story, not because of their own inherent strength. Their contribution to the story is sufficient excuse for their inclusion, and if the audience has become interested in what the picture is about, such sequences will not drag. Selecting them as the only ones to which sound is applied is a waste of good material. State Street Sadie would have been a much better picture if the dramatic sequence in which William Russell tries to kill Conrad Nagel had been done in sound. Both men are good actors and know how to use their voices, and they could have made the sequence the most dramatic that yet has been presented in sound. It is not a bad picture as it stands. It is the best that Warners have turned out since they have taken the sound bit in their teeth and run away from the rest of the industry. The story is one of the most interesting that have been told in the long succession of crook pictures that we have been getting. The performances of Nagel, Russell and George Stone are outstanding. Myrna Loy not only acts her part convincingly, but she reveals the fact that she has a voice that is charming when reproduced. The talking in State Street Sadie is a great improvement on that in The Terror. In the latter picture the characters talk with aggravating deliberation, while in Sadie they use a conversational tempo that makes their speeches natural. An interesting feature of the picture is the manner in which it demonstrates one of the several advantages it has over the stage, that of carrying a whisper to the back row with the same distinctness that attaches to a normally spoken line, but without dissipating the impression that it is a whisper. Several times Bill Russell speaks in a tone that would not carry his voice past the footlights in a theatre, but which the Vita-
phone will carry to the topmost gallery in the biggest picture house. There are several places in the picture where sound is applied in a way that Warners should not repeat in their future pictures. When a man taps another on the arm to attract his attention the action makes no noise. In State Street Sadie it does. One can hear two off-stage sticks coming together. Myrna Loy presses a button, the modern method of ringing a doorbell. We hear the bell ringing with a volume that would indicate that it was attached to the outside of the house. It is not necessary to reproduce any sound when a doorbell button is pressed, for it is seldom that the person on the doorstep can hear any sound, anyway, and the opening of the door is sufficient to register that someone inside heard something. When there is an excuse for eliminating sound from sound pictures, it should be eliminated, as I pointed out in the last Spectator. We won't have many more pictures like Sadie, which makes it a bootless occupation to analyze it carefully. Every picture soon will have all talking or no talking, and I am inclined strongly to the belief that the all-talking ones will be the only ones that will attract to theatres enough people to pay for their making.

Tom Meighan Will Be Helped Some by This One

A COUPLE of years ago, when Tom Meighan had slipped about as far as a star can slip without disappearing altogether, I wrote in The Spectator that it still was not too late to bring him back with good pictures. Howard Hughes, the young fellow who is learning how to make pictures wisely by making Hell's Angels crazily, apparently had the same confidence in Meighan's latent pulling power as I did. He signed Tom for two pictures. The first was The Racket, which that brilliant young director, Lewis Milestone, made such an outstanding success. The second will reach the public shortly. It is The Mating Call, directed by a veteran, James Cruze, and while it will act as a further leg-up for Meighan, it by no means will repeat the success of The Racket. It lacks the melodramatic setting of the first picture, but has much more in the way of heart interest to offer. Cruze did not realize all the emotional depths that were available to him, although there is much in his direction to commend. He gets the story under way briskly, bridging time lapses smoothly with a succession of dissolves that lose no time in arousing the interest of the audience. The early sequences are shorn of all non-essentials, but later in the picture the pace is not maintained and there are sequences which have little story value, a weakness that perhaps may be blamed on the script and not on the direction. As a matter of fact, the scenes which make the story drag are directed as well as those which give animation to it. There is an interesting example of the habit of planting something being responsible for the slowing-up of the story. Meighan, through the clever building up of circumstantial evidence, is made to appear to be trifling with another man's wife. "The Order", a thin disguise for the Ku Klux Klan, takes the law in its hands, and brings the offender before it. Previous to Meighan's appearance, two other offenders are disposed of to show how the order functions. We know nothing about these offenders and are not interested in them. Their trials, therefore, retard the story and there was no reason for introducing them, for Meighan's trial in itself would have been enough to acquaint us with the manner in which the order dispenses justice. I can see no virtue in showing on the screen how two extraneous things are done solely for the purpose of showing how a third pertaining to the story comes in logically. In this instance nothing is gained by showing that Meighan's trial was not the only one ever conducted by the order. He is found guilty and subjected to whipping. The whipping scene is unnecessary and is weak dramatically. The audience knows he is innocent and that his innocence will be established. The old hokum of his rescue being effected at the moment when the punishment was to begin should have been resorted to. There always is drama in such a situation. But there is a great deal of merit in The Mating Call and exhibitors whose clientele still retains a liking for Meighan need have no hesitancy in booking it. Tom gives a creditable performance, one that is restrained intelligently and convincing. In one sequence that is rich in the humor that sometimes is characteristic of Jimmy Cruze, Meighan throws Evelyn Brent out of his house which she has entered for the sole purpose of vamping him. In conception, acting and direction it is the high spot of the picture. Evelyn's performance is superb. It is smooth, effortless and with an underlying sense of comedy that raises it to the realms of high art. That always delightful Renee Adoree plays opposite Meighan. I never can find much to say about this young woman's screen appearances. No matter how varied the characterization, all her performances are alike in the degree of excellence that marks them. Apparently she is incapable of giving a poor performance. Gardner James is another who maintains the high acting average of the production. Helen Foster, a young girl whom I never saw before, handles her part splendidly, and Alan Roscoe is an altogether acceptable heavy.

Interesting Cinematic Study, But Lacking in Entertainment

B ILL Le Baron, over at F.B.O., undertook an interesting job when he decided to make a picture out of The Singapore Mutiny. Seven-eighths of the story is told on an unprepossessing freighter, and the remaining eighth in a life-boat in which three people are dying of thirst. There is not a land shot in it. Not only did Le Baron select a story that offered so little in the way of pictorial latitude, but he made it doubly difficult by selecting a story with a theme, not, as we might expect, a blood-and-thunder sea melodrama. And when he had made it as hard as possible, he handed it to Ralph Ince to direct. Ralph, to show that he is a glutton for work, cast himself in the leading part, which is all right with me as I think he is an excellent actor. I believe The Singapore Mutiny will be more interesting as a cinematic study than as screen entertainment. Bill Howard confined himself to unlovely surroundings when he made White Gold, and he told a gripping, dramatic story, but the public did not care a great deal for it. In that picture we had a few eye-rests in the way of views of distant landscapes. In Singapore Mutiny we never see more than a few feet at a time and never look over the side of the vessel for an unbroken view of a stretch of water. In such a set-
Dear Mr. Beaton:

I am glad that I can read your paper twice as often in the future as I have in the past.

Wishing you good luck, I am

Very sincerely,

ALEXANDER KORDA.

My dear Mr. Beaton:

Naturally you are to be congratulated over the growth of The Spectator. May that success continue.

Sincerely,

GEORGE FAWCETT.

It Shows How Bankers Do Not Run Their Banks

When David Graham Phillips wrote A Grain of Dust he had the elastic limits of a book in which to develop his theme. When Tiffany-Stahl undertook to make a picture out of it, it was confronted with definite limits within which things must move briskly with no stops for the elaboration of abstract ideas. It is a long time since I read the book and I have forgotten all about it, but I would judge from the picture that the producers followed the book too closely for good results to be possible. An author unhampered by space limitations perhaps can show how the marriage of a man to a brainless and vulgar girl can lead to the ruin of his busi-

Ding Inc unfolds a stark and raw story of the regeneration of a girl who has lived swiftly, and a brute with a little less strength and a little more brains than a gorilla. Estelle Taylor is the girl and Inc is the brute. The regenerating influence is a character played by Gardner James, a stowaway who turns the other cheek to the hardships he encounters. The girl and the brute apparently see in the stowaway Christlike qualities that I am afraid audiences will not recognize. I could not see how the unresisting surrender of the frail stowaway to the harsh routine of the ship could awaken the love of the girl and the respect and admiration of a man whose only god was muscle and only pride his own strength. The fact of the double regeneration is planted without the cause of it being presented convincingly. No one with picture intelligence can view the film without commending the bravery of F.B.O. in making it, and without approving the direction, acting and production, but I believe the general opinion of it will be that it is slow and uninteresting. If this be the general verdict, I am satisfied that the chief reason for it will be the production’s lack of pictorial variety. I have said lots of times that you can do anything on the screen provided you do it well enough, but I feel that making an entire picture practically in one setting, and that setting an unattractive one, is something that can not be done well enough to be entertaining. Picture audiences have been taught to expect variety in scenes and it is reasonable to expect them to spurn a different fare. Too much of this story is told in a stokehole. With his masterly lighting, Jo Sterneburg makes his stokehole in Docks of New York a fascinating place, but in Singapore Mutiny the stokehole is just a stokehole, and we see perhaps ten times as much of it as we see of the one in the Paramount production. If I had been making the F.B.O. picture, I would have had at least one sequence ashore. I would have had my ship stop at a tropical island to take on water, and I would have introduced the beauty of a tropical sunset seen through palms and the exotic appeal of tropical verdure to relieve the harsh monotony of the stokehole and the commonplace deck. In such surroundings I would have endeavored to show something that would have strengthened the plausibility of the regeneration. Miss Taylor, Inc, and James give excellent performances, and excepting some totally useless close-ups of Inc I can find nothing to criticize in the direction. Perhaps the actor demanded the close-ups and the director was too soft-hearted to resist.
BY TELEGRAPH

New York, October 8.

Another day-light hold-up on Broadway. Bought a Spectator just now and hastened to a Western Union office to tell you that my hands are up for twenty-five dollars. Please squeeze in the fact that The Spectator is a complete answer to the question, "Can anything good come out of Hollywood?" Others of your New York friends join me in enthusiastic welcome to the Weekly which we hope will have a perpetual, prosperous, and pungent life.

MOON CARROLL.

(Miss Carroll is a talented English actress who captivated New York last season by her performance in And So to Bed.)

ELIZABETH MEEHAN

wrote the adaptation of Beau Geste, and the adaptation and continuity for Sorrell and Son and The Rescue, all three Herbert Brenon productions, and then actually told me that she was not clever enough to write something to put in this space! She asked me to write it for her. Fancy that! Of course I refused to do any such thing.—W. B.

ROBERT FURST.
It's all right this time, Welford, but if you try it again—

CHARLES FARRELL.

Quick, Watson, the needle!

CRAUFURD KENT.

ness and the suicide of one of his partners; but when a picture has used all the footage necessary to present the bare facts, it has none left in which to make all the bare facts plausible. Ricardo Cortez is introduced as a tremendously successful engineer. Partners in his firm are Jed Prouty and Richard Tucker. A contract to erect a great bridge is secured. Banks finance the contract. While work is progressing Cortez, although engaged to Claire Windsor, is fascinated with the lure of Alma Bennett, a girl who works in his office, and disappears with her. The strong firm is ruined because the banks refuse to advance any more money. The men on the job quit and Dick Tucker shoots himself. As I have said, in a book all these things might happen logically, but they make poor screen material. Anyone with average common sense knows that when bankers undertake to finance anything, they see it through. In this case we are asked to believe that the bankers were willing to lose all the money they had advanced prior to the disappearance of Cortez, and as far as one can gather from the picture, the reason the bankers stand the big loss is because they are annoyed at Cortez for marrying the wrong girl. I found Grain of Dust uninteresting because I could not believe it. It is full of effects that are established without sufficient cause. George Archainbaud apparently appreciated the story weaknesses and sought to compensate us with a large display of acting. His men overact. Possibly if I had been impressed with the sincerity of the scenes, I might have accepted the acting more readily. The best performance, because it is the most natural, is that given by Alma Bennett as the vamping stenographer. I don't think I ever saw her before. She is a clever girl and should be heard from. Cortez responded capably to the direction he received, but I could not feel that the character was real. In the end he is little better than a tramp, and I could see nothing in the picture that made such an outcome logical. When producers buy books out of which they intend to make screen stories they should realize that they can not put on the screen all there is in the books. In the instance of Grain of Dust a better picture would have resulted if Tiffany-Stahl had taken one idea out of the book and developed it without any frills. The moral disintegration of Cortez would have been theme enough, the bridge-building and banking incidents serving no purpose other than to make it impossible to devote sufficient footage to the things that counted. However, I don't wish to convey the impression that the picture is without merit. Those who are not familiar with the ways of bankers, of course, can find no fault with the sequences that deal with them, consequently there will be nothing in such sequences to offend such people. And the same thing probably will be true in the cases of some of the other things that I complain of.

Strayer Adheres to All the Movie Conventions

THE highly developed critical faculty of the public will rate Moran of the Marines as poor screen entertainment. In the last Spectator I argued that the public has an ability to choose the best even though it can not give an intelligent reason for its preference. Those who view Moran will like Richard Dix, its star, as much as ever; they will find Ruth Elder to be possessed
Kenneth Alexander
“Special Art Stills”

ONE! TWO! THREE!
consecutive productions for Samuel Goldwyn, Inc., and now under contract for the next picture for the same organization.

Address: 6685 Hollywood Blvd.
Telephone H0lywood 8443

Dear Mr. Beaton:
I play such bad parts—“Shanghai Mabel” in What Price Glory, “Roxie Hart” in Chicago, my current release Sal of Singapore, and The Shady Lady which I am now making—that being in the “Hold-Up” business myself on the screen and making my living that way, I’m in no position to say anything against such a novel publication as your “Hold-Up” number. It is original. I hope it is a success.

PHYLLIS HAVER.

P. O. Box 1241,
Santa Monica, Calif.
September 8, 1928.

MR. WELFORD BEATON,
c/o Film Spectator,
411 Palmer Building,
Hollywood, Calif.

Dear Mr. Beaton:
I have been tardy in responding to your Hold-Up because after three years in harness with Famous Players I felt that even as you, I was entitled to a vacation. I have been out on the golf links trying to break ninety, and I am not going to leave until I have succeeded.

In the meantime, Arthur Landau is handling my affairs. If you hear of anything important, get in touch with him at once.

Very truly yours,

GL:GP
GREGORY LA CAVA.

P. S.—I have never played Ojai, so let’s get together sometime.

EDDIE QUILLAN

Just one of the Quillan family. Thanks to my greatest pal, “MY DAD”, whose guiding hand helped to develop me.

Thanks to Mr. Cecil B. De Mille for his faith in me.

Thanks to the critics and friends who have said such nice things about my work in “The Godless Girl”.

L.
of comedy features and quite as much acting ability as the majority of our pretty leading women can boast; they will find that the story is an interesting one and the production adequate—and likewise will they find that the whole thing bores them. They will not be able to tell you why they are bored, for, as I argued previously, the critical sense of the public generally is inarticulate. As we look into this picture, we find that the specifications, as enumerated above, are satisfactory, consequently the success or failure of the whole thing depends upon the manner in which the specifications were handled. The picture lacks that sense of reality that a picture must have to make it popular with the public. It opens with a shot at Dix, at the head of a table, making a speech to a number of guests. He is standing, as is usual with after-dinner speakers. A little later there is a long shot that reveals that the Dix table is merely one in a large cafe and that when Dix was speaking he was within six feet of a stage upon which the cabaret program was being presented. Perhaps the majority of people in audiences would not stop to reflect that speeches are not made at small tables in large restaurants, and that even if they were, they would not be made so close to an orchestra that it would be impossible for the diners to hear a word. In the same sequence, Roscoe Karns rushes to a policeman to protest against the arrest of Dix. Before he begins his protest, Karns turns completely around in order to face the camera, which makes him face in the same direction as the man to whom he is protesting. Dix, Ruth Elder and Brooks Benedict engage in conversation. They stand shoulder to shoulder, all facing the camera. Dix and Miss Elder dance together. They stand in the middle of the dance floor for a long time, their arms around one another, and the other dancers glide past and around them as if there were nothing unusual in their conduct. In giving orders to rookies, a sergeant of marines waves his arms and indulges in other gestures so violent that if the scene were done in sound he would have to scream hysterically to make his voice match his actions. No story written for the screen can be strong enough to stand up under the manner in which this story is told. Frank Strayer, the director, makes it shriek movie. As soon as we see the absurdity of a man making a speech at one table in a restaurant, we feel that there is something the matter, even though we may not be certain what it is; and when we see that all the characters all the time face the camera, we feel that something is out of joint, although we may not recognize it as the height of incompetency in direction. Some of the things you see on the screen are unbelievable even when you are looking at them. It seems impossible that a director should ask us to believe that when a man rushes up to a policeman he turns and faces in the same direction as the officer before conveying his urgent message to him. What possible objection can there be to showing the back of the man? Would some misfortune befall a director who posed three people in a triangle as they converse,

GEORGE CHANDLER
Universal Star
Hayden Stevenson
Now Free Lancing
20 Years on Stage

Management
WM. W. COHILL
Gladstone 7290

Appreciating the value The Film Spectator has been to screen art in general, it is with pleasure that I greet its appearance as a weekly.

Charles F. Klein.

Good luck to The "Spectator"—no matter how, when, or where it is published!!!

Your friend,
WILLIAM BAKEWELL.

Hail to The Spectator as a weekly—
May it never be a weakly!

LE NORE J. COFFEE
writing for M.-G.-M.

WILLIAM J. COWEN
directing for Pathe.
instead of in a straight line, all facing in the same direction? Moran of the Marines is a sacrifice to movie conventions. If the camera had been kept on the story instead of on faces, it might have been a convincing and plausible comedy. There are many laughs in it as it is, but no one will believe the story.

This One Has Good Acting to Its Credit

WHETHER Singapore Sal was made under Joe Kennedy's dictum that his pictures were to cost forty per cent. less without sacrificing their quality, I have no way of knowing, but I do know that it bears upon its surface no marks of having sacrificed anything that would add to its entertainment value. It is a splendid picture, the production, acting and direction being of uniform excellence. It contains three outstanding performances, Phyllis Haver, Alan Hale and Fred Kohler distinguishing themselves by the manner in which they enact their roles. Sometimes we see on the screen stories so interesting that they almost can act themselves, making the contributions of the members of the cast matters of no great importance. Singapore Sal does not have that kind of story. It demanded real characterizations, and the picture has them. Phyllis Haver never did better work on the screen. As the dancehall girl whom Hale carries away on his ship to take care of a baby that was wished on him, she enters into the spirit of her part with intelligence, and handles all its widely differing phases like a real artist. In the dancehall she is the tough wisecracker to the life, and over the cradle of the sick baby she is tender, wistful and pathetic. My conviction that Alan Hale is one of the best actors we have is strengthened by his work in this picture. I never have seen him in a scene in which he was making any conscious effort to act. Even when he is indulging in villainy he radiates an air of cheerfulness that earns for him the sympathy of the audience. In this picture he is a tough, direct-action sea captain with a tender spot for the baby he is forced to adopt. When he finds the baby on his ship he goes ashore in Singapore and shanghai Phyllis to take care of it, a funny idea which is directed and acted splendidly. Fred Kohler is robbed of Phyllis by Hale's impetuousity and resourcefulness, and the several encounters of the two men are enriched by a generous mixture of comedy and drama. Kohler's performance leaves nothing to be desired. There is a comedian in the picture who some day will be heard from. He appears in only three or four scenes and has nothing much to do with the story, but his personality stands out. I have discovered that his name is Jimmie Aldine. He is like that other Pathé prize package, Eddie Quillan, in that he just can't help being funny. My advice to producers is that they should do something about Jimmie. Not in the way of horn-blowing, but to give point to the advice, I might mention that thus far I have been right when I spotted someone in a mob and led him forward for closer inspection. Howard Higgins directed Singapore Sal just a little better than he ever before has directed a picture. He handles close-ups intelligently, which can not be said of many directors. He gives us sea sequences that are outstanding. In Walking Back, another Pathe picture, Rupert Julian gives us a duel between two automobiles.
If I hadn't put away my guns!

BILL HART.

Flat burglary as ever was committed!

—Shakespeare.

JOHN BOLES.

Fancy ME being held up!

OTIS HARLAN

We can get The Spectator twice as often, but it's a cinch it can't be twice as good.

DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS JR.
While watching Singapore Sal I thought for a moment that Higgin was going to outdo Julian by giving us a duel between two large freighters, but he contented himself with thrilling us with anticipation and then bringing the vessels alongside one another and allowing the respective crews to indulge in a most joyous fight, the pleasure of the combatants being lessened in no way by the fact that they had no idea what the fuss was about. In his direction of the fray Higgin injects some comedy touches that are delightful. When I saw the picture it was not in its final shape and I am presuming that it since has been tightened up in a couple of places where it dragged. Something else that may have been improved, although I doubt it, is the punctuation of the titles. It was awful in the version that I saw.

**PROBABLY** there is some sensible reason for a trip to New York by Cari Laemmle Jr. and Paul Fejos, director, but the publicity department of Universal makes it ridiculous by stating that the pair will haunt the night clubs of Gotham in search of new faces for the screen. When Junior Laemmle feels the urge to hunt for new faces he need go no farther than one of his own stages when a number of extras are used. There are enough new faces in Hollywood to supply the demand for the next dozen years. Lately while I have been visiting sets I have chatted with extras, and I have found that the majority of those with whom I have talked are not bubbling over with enthusiasm. They do not seem to feel that the future holds a great deal for them, yet under conditions that should prevail in the studios, they should be buoyed up with the knowledge that from among them must come the stars of the future. If they could be given such assurance they would have something to strive for. We have thousands of intelligent girls in the ranks of the extras, girls who are being taught how to act in front of the camera, yet they read in the papers every little while that this or that executive has gone some place else to hunt for new faces. If the producers would get together and announce that hereafter they would look for talent only among the picture people now in Hollywood, they would put heart into a large number of disheartened people and assure themselves all the new faces they need. And while on the subject of faces, I would like to express the hope that some day there will arise in our midst a producer with wisdom enough to look for interesting faces, instead of beautiful ones, when girls are being considered. Screen patrons have been so fed up with beauty that there is a great opening for a few girls whose faces run more to personality than to classic features. Hundreds of beautiful girls have enjoyed public acclaim because of their beauty, but only those among them who can act have held their popularity for any length of time, which proves that the first thing that the public buys is acting.

**Y** adventure as a hold-up man would have been still more successful if it had been possible for representatives of the advertising department of The Spectator to gain entrance to studios, the only places where screen people can be found in bunches. The studios have rules that exclude solicitors of any sort. The Spectator, the only paper published anywhere that is devoted exclusively to the betterment of screen art, which is another
As long as you uphold the motion picture art, it seems consistent that you should hold up the motion picture artists.

MONTAGU LOVE.

Just a plodding writer's compliments to the only paper that uses his stuff.
Long life and more space to the Weekly!

JAMES BRANT.

Hail to The Spectator as a weekly!
Long life to the man who writes it!

EDMUND BREESE.

If my small contribution in any way helps The Spectator to appear twice as often, I feel that it is an investment that will yield great dividends.

HARMON WEIGHT.
The way of saying that it is the only one devoted exclusively to increasing the profits of producers, comes under the rule of exclusion. Variety, which frequently makes menacing onslights on the pocketbooks of screen people, and which never contained one constructive thought on the improvement of the art, does not. Its representatives have free access to all the studios and are undisturbed when they roam around and ply their trade. Personally I have no complaint to make. I am granted the courtesies of all the studios and am appreciative of the considerate treatment I receive in each of them. When I am on a lot I am conscious of the fact that I am the guest of its owner, and I am careful not to transgress its law against soliciting business. But if someone encounters me on a lot and offers me a subscription or an advertisement I do not grow indignant and knock him down. As a matter of fact, it is astonishing how genial I become when such a thing happens.

* * *

To those responsible for the Bill Haines wisecracking characterizations is commended the performance of Hugh Trevor in Hey, Rubel, an F.B.O. film directed by George B. Seitz. Trevor has all the assurance that the Metro star displays, but he carries it off with an air of breeding that robs it of offense. In his impetuous pursuit of the girl he displays no bashfulness, but he at all times is amusing and in the best of taste. The young fellow is an excellent actor and even though the top of his head is six feet or more from the ground, he is as graceful as a dancing master. He has a winning smile and a pleasing screen personality that will carry him a long way in pictures. The speed with which he advances will depend on the parts he gets, but it is inevitable that he is to become one of the most popular leading men in the business. Remember my prediction. Hey, Rubel! is an interesting little picture. It has a well-knit story which Seitz handled intelligently, and presents several performances that are worthy of a more ambitious production. There is a young woman in it, Ethlyne Clair, whom I never saw before, and while I am in a predicting mood I would like to go on record as hazarding a guess that she will have a brilliant career on the screen if she be given half a chance. She has good looks and expressive eyes that appear to have a brain behind them. Only the fact that Walter McGrail is such an accomplished villain reconciled me to the fact that they call him Welford. Even so, it nettled me somewhat when a particularly atrocious bit of villainy was followed by the title, "If I find that Welford did this——" Perhaps the title writer is someone whom I tried to hold up for this number and who availed himself of the only medium for reprisal at his command. But I trust that if any other character be dubbed with my name, he will be a benevolent old gentleman who will do credit to it. A perusal of the advertisements in this number will show that I don't stand any too well in the community just now, and to associate my name with diabolical deeds on the screen, is piling it on a bit too thick. However, Hey, Rubel! is a picture that exhibitors need have no hesitancy in booking.

* * *

When I reviewed Raymond Cannon's Life's Like That I stated that it struck a new note in screen technic, and I cited several examples of Cannon's departure from
Dear Welford:

When you and I used to trot around Seattle together about a quarter of a century ago, I did not dream that you would develop into a hold-up man. If I had, I would have suggested a partnership.

I wouldn’t mind being the sidekick of a yegg who uses such a fine, clean weapon in his hold-up operations.

Hail, Weekly!

CHARLES CLARY.

(Cablegram)
Somewhere in France.

Greetings exclamation point if I gotta pay you too can’t say any more period costs too much per word period

NICK STUART.

Dear Mr. Welford Beaton:

I have just received your invitation to stand in line for the Hold-Up Number.

My hands are up, and I am cheering for the first issue of The Spectator as a weekly.

Sincerely,

MARY BRIAN.

Dear Welford:

There’s a couplet in Kipling:

And Tomlinson, he grabbed the bars,
And yammered, “Let me in!”

And in regard to your stick-up number—here’s another of us yammering.

DANIEL TOMLINSON.
Tell me, Welford—did you get that way by looking at so many underworld pictures?

HARVEY CLARK.

They send people to jail for offenses much more trivial than this!

JAMES HALL.

screen conventions. After The Spectator appeared, Sol Wurtzel sent for the picture, and after viewing it, sent for Cannon. Cannon recently finished a picture on the Fox lot, as a result of his interview with Wurtzel. No one interfered with him. Wurtzel approved the story and then the director was allowed to go it alone. The Fox organization gambled a considerable sum of money on its opinion that a man who made a Life's Like That with a small budget should be able to make a good picture with all the resources of a great organization at his back. But it was not only a good picture that Wurtzel was looking for. He was looking also for a director who had something new to offer. The only way to find out what there was in Cannon was to leave him absolutely alone, to give him an opportunity for unhampered expression. His picture may be a poor one, in which case Fox will charge its cost to justifiable experimenting. It may be a good picture, in which case Fox will have, in addition to its good picture, a new director with ideas, something worth a dozen good pictures. Sol Wurtzel adopted the only method by which screen art will be advanced. It is not the usual method. Ordinarily a new director is not allowed to express himself; he must express a supervisor who does not know what it is he wants expressed. There are many reasons why I hope that Cannon's picture will be a masterpiece. The chief one is that I would like to see Sol Wurtzel's judgment vindicated in order that he will be encouraged to give other men with ideas a chance to demonstrate if their ideas are practical. There are enough geniuses in Hollywood to give screen art a new dignity. But there are not enough Sol Wurtzels.

STATISTICS have no part in my life. They are my pet aversion. But I imagine that they would show that more people live in detached homes than in apartments. We would gather from the screen that the reverse is the rule. Right here in Hollywood there are hundreds of bachelors who live in beautiful little homes, but did you ever see on the screen a bachelor who did not live in an apartment? And why has it not occurred to some producer that it would add to a heavy's characterization to show him living in a flower-covered cottage instead of in the invariable over-stuffed flat? Although we have many pictures with California locales I never have seen one of our attractive sun porches on the screen. Pictures have established standard homes of their own and it would be a relief if they reverted for a time to a duplication of real homes. Flower gardens have universal appeal, but they are presented on the screen only in connection with a limited type of characters. Some day a screen genius is going to show us a gangster leaving his bed of roses to sally forth for the purpose of assassinating a friend. There are gangsters of that sort. But I said a long time ago that screen art is one of standard parts.

An art director showed me some sets he had designed, and I admired the artistic perfection he had achieved. He had lent personality to a drawing-room and a living-room, and had made them so individual that I could imagine the kind of people that lived in them. I happened to visit the sets again when they were being shot. The right kind of people were not living in the house.
My best wishes for the success of The Spectator as a weekly.

GEORGE DURYEA.

Zees leetle space costs me $25.
Zat ees 625 francs.
Oooh, la, la!!

F. DE MIOLLIS.

Greetings from

HARRY BEAUMONT.

My best wishes for The Spectator as a weekly.

VICTOR VARCONI,

M.-G.-M.

Now with John Barrymore in production directed by Ernst Lubitsch.
The entrance to the drawing-room was one in which an old butler with an intellectual face and of dignified bearing should have stood to announce arriving guests. I was shocked to see a young butler with a comedy face and an athletic frame. The guests were equally out of tune with their surroundings. They were not the sort of people one would expect to encounter in that sort of house. The art director had given the place a definite personality and the casting director had filled it with different personalities. If the characters were the kind the story called for, the art director was wrong in designing such sets; if the sets suited the story, the casting was done unwise. It seems to me that it should be a simple matter to bring about closer cooperation among the various departments that are responsible for a motion picture.

* * *

ONE of the most extraordinary things about this Hold-Up Number is that those who have permitted themselves to be held-up by it are those who are constantly held-up by other film papers and who know what a waste of money it is. Many of them have told me that they contributed to this number cheerfully, but that they wish they could withstand the demands of the publications which excuse their hold-ups by claiming that their special numbers are published for the sole purpose of serving the industry. I would suggest to those who are looking for a way out that they tell advertising salesmen that they hereafter will buy space only in hold-up numbers, and that any publication that so classifies its special number will receive their support. The Spectator's Hold-Up Number is not published with any idea of being of the slightest value to the industry, but if it could be instrumental in making the personnel of the industry brave enough to resist grafting publications in the future it will not have been born in vain. It would be rather a joke on me if my Hold-Up Number did not have me as its sole beneficiary.

* * *

WHEN I reviewed Submarine a couple of Spectators ago, I overlooked the mention of one feature of the story which impressed me. In this creditable Columbia production Dorothy Revier gives a fine performance in the leading feminine role. It is a characterization of a no-good, brainless trifle who marries Jack Holt and then is untrue to him. She is responsible for a misunderstanding between Holt and Harrison Ford, his buddy. When the misunderstanding is cleared up, the friends clasp hands and depart together for the other side of the world. The picture disposes of its leading woman by the simple expedient of ignoring her. It is a fine bit of screen work chiefly because it is a departure from screen conventions. The universal custom is to "wash up" the unclean hero or heroine. In this picture the woman becomes of no importance as soon as the other leading characters become aware of her unworthiness, consequently she is dropped without any ceremony. It is done so naturally that five minutes after I had viewed the picture I could not recall the scene in which I had seen Dorothy Revier last.

* * *

ON a set which I visited recently a dance sequence was being shot. The floor was covered with young people who acted as an animated background for the two leads who danced on one spot about as big as a washtub. They twisted and turned directly in front of the camera
October 13, 1928

Sincerely hoping that this will be Mr. Beaton's only offense as a Hold-Up man, and that from now on he again will revert to being different.

ESTHER RALSTON.

My dear Mr. Beaton:

You may not know it, but I am after some of your gold medals, and unfortunately I missed the article announcing about your medals at the beginning of the year, otherwise I would have paid particular attention to the two scenes in "Hearts of Romany". But I have still hope, as the year is not over yet.

You are in line for a medal for yourself, Mr. Beaton, and I am convinced that if anyone ever offers a medal to the party that has the most nerve, you will win it by a long margin. First you take a month vacation (with pay) and let all your friends do your work, and now you dare to come and ask us again to help you to hold us up, or in other words, hold up ourselves. Nowhere have I heard of anything like this before. But another medal is due you for the cleverness and frankness of it all, and therefore my heartiest wishes for the weekly Spectator, which cannot help but being a big success.

Bien Amicalement.

ALPHONSE MARTELL.

Doris Anderson
Under Contract to
Paramount
Famous
Lasky

John Stone
Since Jan. 1, 1928

THE PLAY GIRL
Madge Bellamy
ROADHOUSE
Lionel Barrymore
WESTERN ROMANCE
Rex Bell
PREP AND PEP
David Butler Prod.
HOMESICK
Sammy Cohen
CAPTAIN LASH
Victor McLaglen
SUBWAY
Wm. Beaudine Prod.
NOBODY'S CHILDREN
All-Star
Fox Scenario Staff
Dear Welford:

Greetings!

EDWARD T. LOWE, JR.

Police!

KENNETH THOMSON.

and never once merged with the slowly revolving crowd made up of extras. The director who was handling the scene in this way could visit all the dance halls on earth without finding one in which his grouping was duplicated. He is what is the matter with the movies. The boy and girl playing the leading parts are well known and high priced, and no doubt the director shares the conviction of a lot of people who shouldn't be in pictures, but who are, that the only way in which to get back the money paid for featured players is to keep them in front of the camera all the time. The only sure method of getting back the cost of a picture is to make a good picture, and distorted scenes do not make good pictures.

BACKGROUND action, we are told, distracts from the action in the foreground. This belief is one of the blights that make screen art languish. There should be as much action in the background as is customary in a background of the sort. The only distracting thing in a picture is something that is not natural. In some picture that I have seen recently there is evidence of its director's belief in a static background. A medium shot takes in a man seated by an office door, in front of him the two characters who carry the scene. The man does not move as much as an eyelid. He is frozen to his chair. He is so stationary that all the time he was on the screen I watched him to see if he would move. He fascinated me and I paid no attention to the foreground action. If the man had turned his head to watch the principal characters; if he had dropped his hat and picked it up, or if he had done anything else to demonstrate that he was alive, I would have paid no attention to him. In other words, if the background had been natural, it would have occupied none of my attention, and my interest would have been centered on the action that was the excuse for the scene.

Your Duty is, I believe, Charlie Murray's first starring vehicle. His is the only big name in the cast and First National apparently is relying upon it to pull them in at the box-office. If it has any serious intention of continuing to star Murray it should wake up to the fact that he has not enough acting ability to carry seven reels in which practically nothing happens. Neither has Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, nor any other comedian alive. While the picture is the worst that I have seen come from any of the big organizations in some months, Murray contributes to it the best performance I ever saw him give. In fact, it is the first time I ever really have liked him on the screen. William Beaudine directed and it is evident that his lack of enthusiasm was due to the fact that the scenarist gave him nothing to enthuse over. The picture is too absurd to provoke serious criticism, but I can't help wondering why Bill didn't give us a robbery sequence plausible enough to be entertaining. I presume it was considered to be the high spot of the picture, but it was directed with all the delightful disregard for reason that characterized films a quarter of a century ago.

SCREEN people who need mental stimulation, and others who enjoy it, should spend an evening playing Kam-ra, a card game invented by Mrs. Tom Miranda, wife of the man who was so reckless with his money in buying advertising space in this number of The Spectator. The U. S.
Dear Welford:

It isn't a total loss. I quite agree with Shakespeare when he says:

*The robb'd that smiles,*
*steals something from*
*the thief.*

ALAN CROSLAND.

---

**The Rented Body**

It's a Rupert Hughes story to appear in Cosmopolitan immediately.

It's about an artist who rents a girl's body for thirty days and thirty nights—for artistic purposes only—

And remains artistic?

Or doesn't?

John J. Goodrich
6683 SUNSET BLVD.
GGranite 9525
Fleecing? Huh!

Dear Welford:

Mary had a little lamb;
Its fleece was white as snow.
Your fleece isn't white at all,
But you should worry! Here's our dough.

JOBY and DICK.

(These traducers, I'll have you know, are Jobyna Ralston and Richard Arlen, whom I have beaten at golf, individually and collectively, and who now resort to the low practice of writing poetry at me.—W. B.)

Playing Card Company thinks so well of the game that it has made handsome cards for it and they are now on the market. Kam-ra has one advantage over bridge in that the poor playing of one person does not penalize a partner. In the new game everyone goes it alone. I am fond of cards and I prefer Kam-ra to bridge. I recommend it heartily to screen people because Jo Miranda was inspired in her invention of it by the personnel of pictures. The top cards are producer, author, director, star, and hero, and the rest of the suits are extras. Try it and I'm sure you'll like it.

An opportunity to do mankind a service by demonstrating how to make tea, was overlooked in The Mating Call. Caddo's second picture starring Tom Meighan. Evelyn Brent brews Tom a dish of tea, and she does not do it properly. I know, because making tea is my sole kitchen accomplishment. When Evelyn undertakes the task she puts the tea in the cold pot and pours boiling water on it, the usual method of making tea, but not the method of making good tea. The first thing to do, if you want to do it properly, is to pour boiling water into the pot, and leave it there long enough to heat the pot. The next step is to pour out the water, after which the tea is put in, and boiling water poured on it. If I were a Boy Scout, I would put this down as my good turn for the day.

You may remember, if you remember things of the sort, that when I reviewed The Fleet's In! I made some caustic remarks about the failure of Paramount to put the exclamation point on the screen. In quite a bright way—rather clever, in fact—I pointed out that the exclamation point was what the title needed to give it the proper whoop-la! Paramount agrees with me; agrees with me so heartily that it carried out my suggestion long before I made it. The exclamation point was there all the time. I don't know how I happened to miss it, but I did.

Some Spectators ago, in my review of The Loves of an Actress, I referred to the worthy performance given by the man who played Pola Negri's father. At the time I did not know the actor's name, but since I have learned it. It is Gustav Schart. I do not know his record, but I am convinced that he is an artist of great ability. Considering how badly the screen needs real acting, it is surprising how little it uses the actors who are available.

The Spectator apparently lacks sex appeal. You will notice that among the advertisers in this Hold-Up Number the men greatly outnumber the women of the screen, although both were given an equal opportunity to come in.

The more I see of H. M. Walker's titles in Hal Roach comedies, the more am I convinced that he is one of the greatest wits in pictures.

WESLEY RUGGLES' Next Picture is "Port of Dreams"
This Chicago Edition makes Welford Beaton

"The Man Who Laughs"

J. Grubb Alexander

Greetings to the New Weekly and all Good Wishes for its Success.

Clara Beranger
HOKUM may be frowned upon by highbrows, but it's great motion picture stuff and good entertainment at the same time. The hokum in Sal of Singapore is thick enough to be cut with a knife, but Sal is one of the best pictures turned out lately. The story concerns two roughnecks and a baby. Phyllis Haver and Alan Hale play the two parts, and do splendid work. Howard Higgin directed. He seems capable of drawing the characters of ten-minute eggs better than any other director, and with two trouper like Alan and Phyllis, he can hardly help but make a good picture. The most important member of the cast is a baby, name unknown, who is left to the tender ministrations of the two roughnecks. Everything, including a love story, centers around it. Higgin can make an appealing love story out of practically anything, and lack of attractive surroundings appears to make no difference to him. In Skyscraper he made a beautiful romance between a steel worker and a little chorus girl. In Sal of Singapore he works with a tough sea captain and a dance hall girl, and made it just as good. As a matter of fact, there was nothing but a suggestion of a love story in the picture. Roughnecks don't make ardent love to any great extent, and Higgin kept his true to type.

Higgin's comedy, when he doesn't descend to the silliness which kept Skyscraper from being noteworthy, is very clever and amusing. Though it never arouses any roars of laughter, it is always entertaining, a quality which is better than comedy which is very funny one minute and very dull the next. Fred Kohler contributed one of his serio-comic heavy characterizations, so there was a fight, of course. Whenever Kohler gets in a picture with a hero anywhere near his own size, there always is a tremendous fight. When the car-biting and eye-gouging are over, Kohler usually is disclosed sitting in the corner in a gory heap with a fistful of his opponent's hair clutched in his hand. He's a good heavy, and I am glad to say that his physique looks as if it could stand the mauling it gets.

I saw Sal of Singapore at a preview, so I suppose some of the spots which seemed to drag will be tightened up. They weren't very numerous, and it is to Higgin's credit that there weren't more of them, as the story tends toward slowness. Anyway, it's good entertainment, and could be booked anywhere.

WHE student pictures become general all over the country, the Babbitt which made Sinclair Lewis famous is going to disappear gradually. Smart sophistication can be put over so much more easily with the voice than by a written title that there are going to be a great deal more of those pictures produced than hitherto. Apparently pictures are the rulers of fashion out where inhibitions and complexes or what have you are unknown, so the talkers will bring in numerous changes in the life to the denizens of the great American wilderness. Perhaps they will even do something for the chap in Bakersfield who said: "I just ain't got no time". He was fixing our car and exchanging remarks with the town wise man, who also got off a few weird constructions. They got so tangled up some times that it was almost impossible to understand them. Anything the talkers can do for them will be deeply appreciated, by me at least, as the next time I stop in Bakersfield, it would be nice to know the language.

SINGAPORE Mutiny is the type of picture which I thought had gone out of date a year or so ago, but apparently it hasn't. It is a sea-story which Ralph Ince directed for F.B.O., and it has everything in it, including a shipwreck and a big fight scene. Of course, no picture of Ralph Ince's is complete without a lot of human chest heaving and eye snatching, and this one was no exception. They even had the old sequence where the heroine struggles fiercely with the big, bad, bold man who hid in her room for no good purpose. When she is tackling him alone, she puts up a great fight, but when another man enters it to protect her, she seems paralyzed and unable to do anything but stand aside and gasp. In the meantime her protector is being used for floor wax, and is in danger of getting what few brains he has knocked out. He should have known better than to try to beat up the star of the picture, particularly when it is Ralph Ince.

THE main fault of Singapore Mutiny was its failure to remain merely a blood-and-thunder sea story with just the amount of absurdities common to such pictures. They attempted a theme which was meant to have something to do with brotherly love or words to that effect, and did it very poorly. It was silly. Every once in a while, someone would come along and crack Gardner James over the head, and he always came up smiling and anxious to forgive whoever did it. That's a lot of hooey, because they don't make nuts like that any more. Every time he gave some big bruiser a sweet smile, I felt like walking out on the whole thing. He should have died, anyway. When he first entered the story, he was coughing terribly, presumably from tuberculosis. He was put in the stokehold to push wheelbarrows full of coal. Instead of dying on the spot, as he naturally would have, he lived on and even got better.

THERE were many silly things in Singapore Mutiny, every one of which is a relic of the Dark Ages in motion picture making. They all hurt the picture, too. The ship on which the action took place was supposed to be an oiler, but it burned coal for fuel. That scarcely seems right. In one scene, Ince is dressing to go call on the girl. He puts on a perfectly white shirtfront effect, I don't know what they are called, and his hair is ungreased. In the next shot, the shirt is stained with oil, and his hair is plastered down. In the same shot, somebody hands him a bottle of hair-oil, which he tries to drink, not knowing what it is. How he got his hair all plastered in such a short time is apparently meant
Success and best wishes to Welford Beaton and The Film Spectator from two of your most ardent fans and readers—

JUNE COLLYER
and
LINA BASQUETTE.

Help!!  Help!!

Lois Moran
As I consider The SPECTATOR the greatest constructive force that has entered the motion picture industry—

And its editor the most useful critic pictures have produced—

It gives me pleasure to greet the publication as a weekly and to congratulate the industry upon the fact that its most valuable journalistic ally will serve it twice as often as formerly.

Francis X. Bushman.

to be a mystery, as is the manner in which the shirt got stained. What must have happened is that the scene which was shown was one of the later ones taken, when the hair and shirt had been treated several times. The fault lies in their making no effort to change the shirt or take the grease out of his hair. The whole thing was careless. There is a scene where Estelle Taylor is trapped in her room by some wreckage which has fallen across the door. She stands by a window she could easily get out of and screams for help.

WHILE I don’t think much of Ralph Ince as a director, I rather enjoy his acting. When he plays a heavy, as he usually does, he manages to make it human; although he is bad enough to satisfy the most fastidious connoisseur of blood-thirsty villains. Incidentally, he looks very impressive while beating some unfortunate individual into a state of suspended animation. If he could get himself something beside sea-stories aboard miniature ships to do, he might do something really worth while. Estelle Taylor is the girl in Singapore Mutiny, and her work is quite satisfactory. Her clothes were what fascinated me. She was introduced as a failure on Broadway and bound for Rio de Janeiro to attempt a comeback or something. All through the picture she wore very smart and expensive looking gowns, and I don’t see how a girl, who is so poor she has to travel on a third class boat, can have so many different dresses. Gardner James did his characterization again.

TIFFANY-Stahl seems to specialize in the heaviest sort of stuff, judging from the last two pictures of theirs that I have seen. To-morrow and The Grain of Dust were both drama with no light moments at all. The Grain of Dust was adapted from the novel by that name, but I think the adaptation was poorly done and was responsible for most of the faults of the picture. The adapter shouldn’t be blamed so much, however, because the story must have been too long and complicated to get it all in the short space of a seven reel picture. The main fault of the whole thing was the failure of a big engineering firm because one member of it left his job. He was the strong partner and all that, but it seems scarcely probable that his dereliction from duty would bring the whole thing to a finish. That was one of the things that the book probably worked out logically and completely, but it couldn’t be made clear in the picture without a lot of action which would hurt the entertainment value.

THE hero of The Grain of Dust is a poor fish who gives up money, social position, and a potentially happy married life to marry a stenographer in his office. Cleverly acted by Alma Bennett, she was a hopeless little low-brow. Naturally, when the hero marries her, he forfeits the respect and sympathy of the audience. George Archainbaud, the director, was faced with the hard task of making his hero a sympathetic character again; and though he made a mighty effort, he didn’t quite succeed. His direction was very good otherwise, however. While the picture was not the best entertainment I have seen, it was well done; but I think Tiffany-Stahl will do well to choose more popular themes for their pictures. They certainly gather together good casts for
CAREY WILSON

Good Luck to Hold-Up Number!

DAVID TORRENCE
Dear Mr. Beaton:

They tell me that you are achieving great success in holding up producers.

Will you kindly tell me how you do it?

Bewilderedly,

MARY McALISTER.

their films, this one being headed by Ricardo Cortez, Claire Windsor, and Alma Bennett. They all gave good performances, and John St. Polis, Jed Prouty, and Richard Tucker, who supported them, were highly satisfactory.

** After Dad threw Spider Boy aside, I picked it up and made a valiant effort to read it. To my great surprise I managed to finish it in spite of the fact that there were no quotation marks, a circumstance which made it terribly hard to read. Cari Van Vechten, who is responsible for the creation of the book, is just another back-biter on the order of Jim Tully; but he is a pretty fair writer, and I'll always maintain that Tully isn't even that. The book deals with a famous author who goes to Hollywood and is madly pursued by the picture people, because they all want a story from him. There is no doubt that Hollywood pursues authors longer and harder than any place else on earth, and if the book keeps one person from going dippy at the sight of the next author who comes here, it will be a success. My chief reason for disliking the book was Van Vechten's clumsy attempt at satire, because he didn't seem capable of being clever or subtle. If an author must be satirical, he ought to do it well.

** PRODUCERS at times seem to have a peculiar angle on the box-office. They will take a star, one who can really act, and put him in a certain type of picture. The picture is a success, therefore they never give the star anything but that sort of story; and the pictures continue to make money for some time. When told that they are ruining the box-office value of the star, they mention the fact that his fan mail has increased, therefore he must be popular and getting more so every day, due to that type of picture. The reason that the star's fan mail increases is because he has established a new mode, and for a time his popularity will increase. However, when the public swings to something else, the star is left high and dry; because he has nothing to base his reputation on but that one kind of picture, building on sand, as it were.

The star is said to be slipping, and is blamed for something which is not his fault at all. If the producer had given him a variety of roles and built up a following which knew that it always was sure of an interesting characterization from him, the star still would be flourishing like the proverbial green bay tree. The producer probably is stuck with a contract which runs for some time, and weeps and wails about his losses. It never occurs to him that it was his own fault, but he will protest that it is good business to cash in on the star's popularity in a certain brand of story. The stars I mean are the ones who can really act, not the ones who made a lucky hit in one picture and are not capable of doing anything else. They can fade gently but firmly into oblivion, and no one will mind much.

** F.B.O. has turned out some very good little pictures, and Hey, Rube! ranks right up with the best of them. It is an unpretentious little story, but it is well told and produced. It is a tale of circus life, and it has everything, including drama, comedy, and a mild love story. There is nothing new about it, but it managed to be very entertaining. George B. Seitz directed and did a
$ 

I'll get even with you!

Dorothy Mackaill

$ 

$ 

GREETINGS

Louise Fazenda

$ 

$
During my career I've been held up several times, and this is the first time that I have enjoyed it.

NED SPARKS.

very good job, although there was nothing particularly new or original about his work. Gertrude Olmstead, Hugh Trevor, and Ethlyn Clair were featured. Miss Olmstead had a part which offered no opportunity, so the acting honors of the piece go to Miss Clair, whose heavy characterization was unusually brilliant. I never have seen her on the screen before, but it seems to me that if she is in the habit of turning in performances like this one, someone is overlooking a great bet. Hugh Trevor did a good piece of work in a part which was little more than the conventional hero role. Walter McGrail was right there as the menace.

THE production of Hey, Rube! was exceptional for such a little picture. The whole thing took place on the fair grounds, and within a day or two. There were two big thrills in the picture, the big gang fight and the sequence where the heroine is trapped on the burning ladder. There was real suspense and drama in the rescue, and it didn't seem silly and impossible, as most of these motion picture rescues do. The assembling of the circus gang at the cry of "Hey, Rube!" was good, as was the ensuing fight. The old story of the operation, and the sudden need for a lot of money, was used. It wasn't bad, either. In fact I took more interest in the acquisition and preservation of the money than anything else. After the battle, when the hero discovered that it was missing from his pocket, I was terribly worried until they got it back again. Hey, Rube! is the sort of story which made motion pictures what they are, and there should be more like it.

$  

Norman's Art Shop  
The Home of Harmonic Framing  
Paintings Restored and Refinished  
6653 Hollywood Boulevard  
VISITORS WELCOME  

Complete Managerial Service and Business Representation  
for  
ARTISTS  
DIRECTORS  
PRODUCERS  
and WRITERS  

S. GEORGE ULLMAN  
AND ASSOCIATES, INC.  
6606 SUNSET BOULEVARD  
Hollywood 2627
At least he might have spared the Irish.

John Francis Dillon

Dear Welford:

Enclosed is my check. I look upon it as an answer to a highwayman's prayer.

FRED NIBLO.

P. S.—Of course you know how cheerfully I welcome The Weekly Spectator.—F. N.
ABOUT OTHER THINGS, By K. C. B.

O man ever knows thoroughly another man until he
has come to know the viewpoint of that other man.
And to know the viewpoint of the other man he
must know the things that have entered into the making
of it. He must know of the man's environment from the
days in which his mind first began to gather in its store
of worldly knowledge. He must know of the man's assciates
in youth and manhood. If politics has entered into
his life he must know what have been the political affiliations
of the man—whether he has trained with men of
altruistic or egoistic bent. And so, he must know all about
the man, and of his reaction to the various situations in
which he has found himself, whether they be in business
or in politics, or what. And knowing all these things he
then has knowledge of the viewpoint of the man, and, having this, he then can tell you pretty nearly what the
man will do, no matter what the circumstance.

Viewpoint to me, has been, therefore, always the
important thing in my determination of the worthiness
of unworthiness of men. And so it is that when I
am asked to choose between two men, each of whom asks me
for my vote in reaching the high office of president of the
United States, I ask myself what of the viewpoint of
each of them. And having at my disposal various life
stories of each, and knowing something of each through per-
sonal contact and personal knowledge, or through sources
that leave no question as to the truth of what they bring,
I find, in this year of Our Lord, 1928, little difficulty in
determining what I believe to be the viewpoint of the
two men who ask me for my suffrage.

A New York Youth Grows Up

O ne of these men was born on a New York East Side
street fifty-five years ago. He was a likeable boy
and popular in the parochial school in which he earned
his learning. As he grew up into manhood, working for a
time in the Fulton Street fish market, he had for one of
his good friends a Tammany Hall personage who conducted
a saloon in the neighborhood of his home. The saloon
man saw in this young man a little more promise than was
to be found in most of the boys in the neighborhood and
he took him under his political wing to the end that when
he had reached his twenty-second year he was a full-
fledged member of Tammany and a clerk in the office of
the commissioner of jurors of New York City. From his
clerkship he was elevated in 1903 to membership in the
New York Assembly, in which body he remained until
1915, having served as Democratic leader from 1911 to
1913, in which latter year he gained the speakership of
the assembly.

In 1915 Tammany determined that he was entitled to
the office of sheriff of New York county, wherein the fee
system gave legitimate opportunity of enriching the
holder of that office to quite a considerable extent. What-
ever he got out of the office, two years sufficed him, and in
1917 we find him president of the Board of Aldermen of
Greater New York. In another two years he was given
the Democratic nomination for governor of New York,
to which office he was elected and in which he served
three terms and is now serving the fourth. There was an
interim in his gubernatorial service when he was de-
feated in 1920 by a Republican, who served for two years,
during which time he was the nominal head of a truck-
ing firm in New York City, the only period during his
life in which he was engaged in business outside of
politics.

We Find the Viewpoint Here

T HIS, then, is the categorical record of one of the
men who asks us to vote for him. And I know, as all
who run and read may know, that the political organiza-
tion that has sponsored him from his youth, and that still
holds him in its fold, has ever been corrupt and has en-
riched its leaders from hidden sources of wealth. Prolific of
scandals, that have sent men into exile and prison cells,
has continued on its way until to-day it offers to me
one of its members for the presidency of these United
States. And they tell me that this man they offer to me
is an honest man and that his hands are clean. And I
know that Tammany's idea of an honest man is one who
will take orders and do what he is bidden, even though
he may know that he is being sold by Tammany. And
while no one ever has come to me with proof that the
hands of the candidate they offer me have been soiled
with graft, and though there never has been indication
that he has corruptly enriched himself, and I must, there-
fore believe that he has not, I am compelled to put him
down as one who holds the Tammany viewpoint on the
ethics of office holding.

This One Comes From Quaker Stock

A NOther man we have, one born in Iowa, of Quaker
parentage, a graduate of Stanford University, a
holder of honorary degrees conferred by twenty-four
universities, nine of them in foreign lands. By profession a
mining engineer, who has handled large projects in the
United States, Mexico, Canada, Australia, Italy, Great
Britain, South Africa, India, China and Russia. A man
who served during the great war in a dozen different
capacities, who handled millions of dollars of money and
food supplies that the starving people of war ridden
countries might be fed. Who never was in politics in his
life and never was sure whether he was a Republican or
a Democrat until a president called him to be his sec-
retary of commerce.

And so many other things has this man done, and so
many honors have been thrust upon him at home and
abroad, and always as a reward for services rendered
to humanity, that were I to enumerate them I would fa-
tigue both my reader and myself. And so, I sit down
and search the records of this man for the viewpoint which

Motion Picture Aeronautics
LIEUT. E. H. ROBINSON
Oxford 3753
JEAN HERSHOLT

AL COHN

GEORGE SIDNEY
says:
Just finished the "Cohens and Kellys in Atlantic City". Looks like its going to be a good eye, ear and throat picture.

B. M. BOWER
Exclusive representative LES W. FEADER
GLadstone 0983
In Production RODEO
Under the screen title
King of the Rodeo
Starring Hoot Gibson

Scott R. Dunlap
Now Directing
for
WARNER BROTHERS

JOHN FARROW
WRITER
WITH PARAMOUNT

TAY GARNETT
Director
DE MILLE STUDIO

CHARLES KENYON
Free Lancing
Recently Completed
Show Boat
For Universal
In Preparation
The Wrecking Boss
For First National
Demmy Lamson Management

THE PATRIOT
A LUBITSCH PRODUCTION
ADAPTATION AND SCENARIO
by
HANS KRALY
I seek. And that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to try and find the viewpoint of both the men I've told you of and what you do on election day is your own business.

I Used to Like Aimee

Once upon a time I had quite some admiration for Aimee McPherson. I liked the way she stuck to her story of the famous kidnaping, a silly story, to be sure, but having told it she was very wise in refusing to change it in any way, even though a few changes would have made it somewhat more plausible. But I don't like Aimee any more. She bores me, and, if I were a citizen of influence, I would form a committee and at the head of it I would march over to the Angelus Temple or up to Monterey, or wherever Aimee happened to be, and advise her to sell her real estate holdings and cash in on everything she had and go away somewhere.

It isn't Aimee's preaching that disturbs me. That's quite all right. As preachers go I guess she's good. Anyway, she seems to have done a lot better than the most of them. Not only has she made a good living during her comparatively few years in Los Angeles, but in addition to that she has had a trip or two to Europe, and four or five weeks on her kidnaping trip, and also she owns her own church, which is a whole lot better than even Dr. Dyer has been able to do. And you've got to give the girl a hand for that.

But somehow, she just doesn't seem to be satisfied. When she isn't quarreling with her mother she's getting herself tangled up in some real estate venture in which members of her congregation say they were gyped out of their hard-earned savings or their insurance money or wherever they got it. And if it isn't that, we find she has slipped a check into the hands of a venerable judge, just at the time she is trying to explain why she hadn't come right home the night she was drowned.

And all the time she keeps on preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and telling sinners how they may be saved. It's all very disconcerting to one who was brought up in the Episcopal church and, as a youth, was taught to doff his hat to the village rector. Therefore I'm in favor of getting Aimee out of town. Let her take her congregation and go to Iowa. I understand that's where most of them came from. And she might take Judge Hardy along with her to keep her in trouble.

But Why Ask the Mayor?

HAVEN'T a thing in the world against Texas Guinan and not for anything would I lay myself open to the charge that I am ungalant. If Texas wanted to come back to Hollywood it was her right to do so, just as it was the right of her friends to joyously acclaim her arrival in our midst. But whoever it was whose brain conceived the idea of welcoming her in an official way made an ass of himself.

Like Will Rogers, all I know is what I read in the papers, and if the papers inform me correctly, it is my understanding that Texas is under one or more federal indictments for disregarding the provisions of the Eighteenth Amendment and its enforcement act. And while I know that many of us have dealings with bootleggers, and that we don't look upon them as criminals
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<td>Bradley King</td>
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<th>To the Film Spectator</th>
<th>KARL STRUSS</th>
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<td>Q. B. F. F. Q.</td>
<td>CHIEF CINEMATOGRAPHER</td>
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<td>ALBERT CONTI</td>
<td>D. W. GRIFFITH PRODUCTIONS</td>
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<th>SCHNAUZER PUPPIES</th>
<th>“Drums of Love” “Battle of the Sexes” “The Love Song” “BEN HUR” “In the Night Watch” “SUNRISE”</th>
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<td>By Illo von Wilram (imported) ex Vitis von Dischingen.</td>
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<td>SEalyHAM TERRIER PUPPIES</td>
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<td>By Rincon Yannoo All ex Miss Demeanor of Northall. (Sire, best Sealyham Ambassador and Hollywood Shows)</td>
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<td>All Eligible to Registration</td>
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<td>$50, $75 and $100</td>
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<td>RUTH and ARTHUR RANKIN</td>
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<td>10846 Landale St., North Hollywood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephone 420-W (P. S.—Between puppies, I also act in pictures, and the girlfriend writes pieces for the paper.)</td>
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Dear Wellord: Since this is to be a “hold-up” number, I do not...
EVELYN HALL

Fifteen Years Experience in the English and American Theatres.

Queen Elizabeth in "Richard III", with John Barrymore.
Margaret in "A Bill of Divorcement".
Hecuba in "The Trojan Women".
Hermione in "A Winter's Tale".
Electra in "Electra".
Munian, the woman spy, in "The Man Who Stayed at Home", etc., etc.

Present engagement with Henry King in "She Goes to War".

GR. 4415      HO. 4102

Peppy Stories, French Flavored,

by

F. de Miollis

author of the screen play that broke all box-office records for Pathe (Paris).

1743 Orchid Ave.      GRanite 1694

CLAUDE KING

During the five seasons Claude King appeared on the New York stage, he was mentioned in the critic’s summaries as having given one of the ten best performances of the year on three occasions; with Ethel Barrymore in "Declasse", with the Theatre Guild in "Back to Methuselah"; and with Winthrop Ames in "In the Next Room". Also, he is one of the very few actors mentioned by George Bernard Shaw in the prefaces to his plays, see "Fanny's First Play".

Management JACK GARDNER, HO. 7950

Howard Bretherton

Now Directing

"The Greyhound Limited"

with Monte Blue

A Warner Bros. Vitaphone Feature

in the same sense as a shop-lifter or a burglar is a criminal, it remains a fact, nevertheless, that Texas has been arrested for breaking a federal law and is awaiting trial therefor. And with this thing hanging over her it was proposed that she be given a dinner at the Breakfast Club, and the sponsors of the dinner even went as far as to ask the mayor of Los Angeles and the mayor of San Francisco to join in the welcome to the night club hostess from New York.

In the first place it wasn't fair to Texas, and I feel sure that if her nitwit friends had given her time to think it over she would have told them to lay off the mayors and other public officials. Anyway, be it said to the credit of Mayor Cryer, he declined the invitation, and, though it was announced that Jim Rolph had agreed to be present, I have a feeling, knowing him as I do, that a blow-out or some such thing would have delayed him past the closing hours of the dinner.

It's some weeks now since all of this happened, but it may be that there will be other visitors who have gained their fame in some such way as Texas has gained hers, and I want to suggest that for the general good of Hollywood if dinners are arranged for them that there be no fanfare and that invitations be confined to those not under oath to look with disfavor upon all law-breakers.

Those Very Silly Cigarette Ads

WHEN I was a young reporter in Minneapolis I was one day handed by the city editor a letter from a patent medicine concern containing an offer of prodigious sums of money for testimonials as to the remedial effects of whatever it was they sold. If I remember correctly, the lowest priced testimonial was that of a fireman or policeman in uniform. These were rated, I think, at $10. For one from a priest or an Episcopalian minister, with his collar on backwards, they would pay $25. A mayor or a governor brought $100. There were other classifications, but I have forgotten them. In any event I secured testimonials from some firemen and policemen, friends and let it go at that. I gave each of them a bottle of the medicine, but whatever they did with it I don't know. That was long before prohibition, and policemen and firemen never wanted for liquor and so I imagine they threw the stuff away.

When my mind goes back to this incident in my early career I am consumed with envy of whoever it is who is doing the soliciting for the cigarette testimonials. Imagine, if you can, what my patent medicine concern would have paid me for a testimonial from Charlie Chaplin blindfolded! Blindfolded and holding in his hand—with the label outward—a bottle of my medicine, and beneath it his quoted statement that the moment his lips touched the spoon, or the neck of the bottle, he knew he had found his favorite invigorator!

What a piker I was with my little checks for ten dollars each for firemen and policemen! And, too, how silly the whole thing is. Hundreds of thousands of dollars being spent by tobacco concerns for advertising that should properly be a part of the comic page. It surely can't be that anybody takes it seriously. I'm quite sure the Chaplins and the others who have permitted their names and photographs to be used must know how ridiculous it is, and knowing this I can't understand why in the world
Remember your promise—
no more Hold-Up Numbers.

BETTY COMPSON.

P. S.—But count me in
if you break it. —B. C.

BOBBY NORTH
First National Studios
BURBANK, CALIFORNIA
they allow themselves to be so used. They don’t need the advertising and they don’t need the money.

But perhaps the fellow who solicited them is a good fellow, and, if he is, I won’t say anything more about it. Personally, I smoke Chesterfields which have never improved my singing voice and, which, if I smoked blindfolded, would be just as blah as any other cigarette. I’ve got to see the smoke.

* * *

A Word or Two About Gene Tunney

It makes me smile when I find sporting writers panning Gene Tunney and accusing him of ingratitude in that he seems not to realize that it was the sporting writers who made him. One might as well claim it was the sporting writers who made Tilden and Paddock and Helen Wills and all the rest of the champions. Everyone of them earned with his or her prowess, in whatever the game, all the publicity that has ever been given any of them. Was it the sporting writers who convinced Gene Tunney that he could beat Jack Dempsey and become the world’s champion pugilist? Not if you can read, it wasn’t. It was Gene Tunney himself who arrived at that conclusion and straightway he went out and proved it.

And I, who wanted Jack Dempsey to knock his block off, and whose best wish for Tunney was that he should meet stunning and swift defeat whenever he should enter the ring, come now to say that it is my belief that the prize ring never has known a finer figure than Tunney has proved himself to be. Just as a fighter, it is my opinion, that he has shown a degree of judgment and skill within the ring that few of his predecessors ever have known. But it isn’t his work in the ring that has won me

The El Camino Motto:

“Quality and Service with Promptness and Courtesy”

THE EL CAMINO MOTOR SERVICE

7300 Sunset Boulevard (at Fuller Ave.)
Hollywood Phone GGranite 0202

An established reputation for handling the greatest variety of the finest silks and ready to wear.

BOLGER’S

THREE STORES:
446-448 Beverly Drive
6510-6514 Hollywood Boulevard
7615 Sunset Boulevard

WILLIAM LE BARON.
LUDWIG BERGER
who directed

Emil Jannings in "Sins of the Fathers"
and

Pola Negri in "The Woman From Moscow"

—will make one picture in Europe before he returns to Hollywood to direct two more productions for—

FAMOUS-PLAYERS-LASKY
Good luck to the weekly, Mr. Beaton!

And as I want to get as much as possible for my fifty bucks, will you please accept now my best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year?

ARTHUR LAKE.
$ My Heartiest Good Wishes to the Spectator
From
MAY McAVOY

$ ATLAS

JESSE JAMES

Yours for Bigger and Better Hold-Ups

TED WILDE

SUSPENDERS

WELFORD BEATON
Good luck, Welford!
Hope the weekly is as great a success as you deserve.

JAMES W. HORNE.

(Why crowd success into such narrow limits, Jim? — W. B.)

Malcolm Stuart Boylan; movietone dialogue by Eugene Walter; staged by Charles Judels and David Stamper.


SAL OF SINGAPORE—
A Pathe picture. Directed by Howard Higgins; from The Sentimentalists by Dale Collins; scenario by Elliott Clawson; photographed by John Meskill; assistant director, Leigh Smith; art director, Edward J. Jewell; titles by Edwin Mayer; film editor, Claude Berkeley; production manager, R. A. Blaydon.

The cast: Phyllis Haver, Alan Hale, Fred Kohler, Noble Johnson, Dan Wolheim, Jules Cowles, Pat Harmon, Harold William Hill.

SINGAPORE MUTINY—

The cast: Ralph Ince, Estelle Taylor, James Mason, Gardner James, Will Irving, Martha Mattox, Harry Allen, Carl Azuzzell, Robert Gaillard, Frank Newberg.

STATE STREET SADIE—
A Warner Brothers picture. Directed by Archie Mayo; story by Melville Crossman; scenario by E. T. Lowe, Jr., assistant director, Frank Shaw; photographed by Barney McGill.

The cast: Conrad Nagel, Myrna Loy, William Russell, Georgie Stone, Pat Hartigan.

ORDER
THE SPECTATOR
Mailed to You
EVERY WEEK
Telephone
GLadstone 5506

Michael Curtis
Directing Now
“Madonna of Avenue A”
An All Vitaphone Special

Starring
Dolores Costello

Warner Brothers
$ 

With my sincere good wishes to both Mr. Beaton and the Weekly

Lois Wilson

$ 

Attention, Paramount Directors and Supervisors:

If you want a Screen Play

DEPENDABLE

WORKMANLIKE

SHOOTABLE

ON TIME

— Ask —

Louise Long or Ethel Doherty

Paramount Staff Writers

To Do It!
LONG LIFE TO THE WEEKLY SPECTATOR!

(I don't see why I couldn't have telephoned this to Welford.)

FRANK CAPRA.

Here I am working in Douglas Fairbanks' "Iron Mask", and am held up by a man who wears no mask at all!

However, good luck to The Weekly Spectator!

We need it.

Marguerite de la Motte.
My dear Mr. Beaton:

If I must be held up I might as well get something out of it. I will stand for $50.00 worth. Please print the following.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

SAM FREEDMAN.

Watch for my series of one-reel Auction Bridge Pictures in Technicolor, featuring Milton C. Work, world-famous expert. The first of the series will be released shortly. Learn how to trump your partner's ace and get away with it.

My dear Welford:

Here's hoping that your "Hold-Up" will be as successful as all the recent daylight hold-ups pulled off in Los Angeles and Chicago have been.

Yours very truly,

WILLIAM SISTROM.

(You disturb me, Bill. Do you mean successful from the standpoint of the law or the hold-upper—W. B.)
I'm nea a Scot
but when it comes
tae greetin',
I will nae greet
tae find I'm beat
by Beaton.

Nigel de Brulier

A friendly welcome to
the weekly Spectator from

Dwinelle Benthall
and
Rufus McCosh

who write titles for the
‘movies’ or the ‘talkies’.
My dear Welford:

"To Beaton or not to Beaton, that is the — — — ! ! ! !"

Oh, hell—I give in.

Yours,

Bill Davidson.

Dear Welford

How could You do it?

Otto Mattiesen
My dear, oh very dear, Welford Beaton:

This is in the nature of a protest against your Hold-Up number. Heretofore you've been so reasonable about those things. I don't like to see you falling into those bad Hollywood habits. Anyway, at $6 per fill (statistics furnished by your wife) if I only come over every time your pool is filled, I figure you owe me eight and one-third good swims.

But to return to my grievance—I resent it, by gosh. Not that this is the first time I've ever been held up—dear me, no! But it's the first time it has been done so boldly under its own name. Generally it's feebly disguised as a Christmas number, a souvenir program, or an anniversary edition.

Now I want to know when you are going to give me my revenge by coming over and letting me teach you to play tennis. Not that I expect my money back, but I'm going to get Fifty Dollars worth of pleasure out of getting you so exhausted you'll have to listen to how I knocked 'em cold in Podunk in the last picture, and how I'm going to panic 'em in the next one. (Names furnished on request.)

Anyway, I hope your Hold-Up Number is a success. It will comfort me to know that I'm not the only poor goof who had to come across.

Sincerely,

PATSY RUTH MILLER.

P. S.—I used my trusty Corona to evade your all-seeing eye and caustic comment. If there are any mistakes in punctuation blame the typewriter, not me. I know better.

PAT.

Good name in man and woman (My dear Beaton)
Is the immediate jewel of their souls:
Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.

Which, as I read it, is Shakespeare's way of saying that movie critics had better be careful.

WILLIAM POWELL.

Dear Bill:
Shakespeare also said:
"Come not within the measure of my wrath."
Which, as I read it, is his way of saying that movie actors had better be careful. —W. B.
My dear Mr. Beaton:

You are quite a clever critic, but a stupid hold-up man. Ever since you announced your hold-up number I have been standing with my hands over my head. If I buy a half page, may I take them down?

BODIL ROSING.

I follow with interest your arguments in The Spectator that you can do anything on the screen provided you do it well. But why do you carry the idea into hold-upping?

VERA GORDON.
I've always understood that Robin Hood, also, was a pleasant fellow.

EDDIE CLINE.

Famous Holdups I Have Met

JESSE JAMES
PARIS GARTERS
BROOKLYN BRIDGE
and
WELFORD BEATON

JAMES A. STARR.
A Cablegram

Berlin, Germany.

My Ufa associates, who admire and respect The Spectator as I do, greet with pleasure your decision to make it a weekly.

While the menace of your hold-up did reach this far, please enroll me among your willing victims. Draft going forward by mail.

ERICH POMMER.
Dear Beaton:

I believe so far you have lived up to the advice of Goldsmith:

*Blame where you must, be candid where you can,*
*And be each critic the good-natured man.*

That is why I submit cheerfully to being held up, and it is also my reason for wishing the Weekly Spectator a useful, prosperous and endless career.

D. W. GRIFFITH.
It might be expected of a paper as cheerful as The Spectator that when it became a pirate upon the sea of its own popularity it would be cheerful about it and make “walking the plank” a pleasant stroll. If we must be held up, let’s get a laugh out of it, say I!

The appearance of The Spectator as a weekly is a matter of importance to the entire motion picture industry, and I join those who appreciate the value of constructive criticism in extending felicitations to Welford Beaton and best wishes for the success of the paper which I know will continue to be helpful, courageous and good-natured.

HERBERT BRENON.
Sam Taylor’s Page

Respected Sir:

I am the house-boy of Mr. Sam Taylor. I have a verse which he says I wrote. I do not remember. But he says I must send it to you and say I wrote it.

There was a film critic named Beaton,
Whose figure had not so much meat on.
He held up his friends
To serve his base ends,
And now he has plenty to eat on.

To me it is strange verse which I do not understand, which makes it most extraordinary that I wrote it.

With deep bows,

MARCELINO BUSTAMANTE.
Et tu, Beaton!

Wm. K. Howard
Fox Film Corporation
Best of luck, Jesse!
(Pardon, Welford)

The Harold Lloyd Corp.
Jack Warner

told me that he would write his copy for this space while on his way to New York and mail it back to me.

I said he wouldn't.

He said again that he would.

I was right.

He told me what he was going to say. He was going to take a crack at Jesse Lasky, Louis B. Mayer, Joe Schenck, and some of the rest of the fellows who a couple of years ago told him he was crazy to spend money on Vitaphone.

If he could figure out some way of putting it so he could get by with it, Jack was going to tell those guys where they get off.

W. B.
Roy Del Ruth
Director

Vitaphone All Talking Specials

"The Terror"

"Conquest"

Now in production

"The Desert Song"
The First All Talking and Singing Vitaphone Operetta

WARNER BROS. PICTURES
Beaton is a lot of boloney — telling how much he's in favor of "talkies".
I talked my head off for hours against taking this ad, but Beaton is the "deafest" man in pictures.

Wallace McDonald.

Can you imagine soaking a poor actor one hundred berries for this ad?
I wouldn't mind so much if I believed that any of the big shots would see it, but nobody buys the darn paper; I'm never able to find a copy on any newsstand.*
Just throwing money away, that's all!

Wallace McDonald.

Since when has using a man's swimming pool constituted a right to stick up a guest for the hundred smackers this page cost?
I'm telling you.

Wallace McDonald.

*Why doesn't the silly ass get to the newsstands before they are sold out?—W. B.

I tried to select my ad for this page. Wrote the above copy and suddenly received a message from one of my Scotch ancestors telling me to print all three for the price of one and get half a break with this bird Beaton, so here goes, though I still think it's a lot of hooey.

WALLY McD.
Why not the women and children first?

IRVING CUMMINGS
Neil Hamilton

wrote me a note in which he said that of course he was willing to be held up for one hundred dollars. Being Scotch, Neil wrote the note on a saltine wafer belonging to the Paramount studio cafe, and, being Scotch myself, I took it home and fed it to my goldfish, in my thrift destroying the only proof I had that Neil really ordered the page.

I'm worried.

W. B.
Anyway, the highwayman smiled.

Ronald Colman
I understand that the editor of The Spectator is of Scotch extraction. That explains a lot of things, particularly the extraction.

Charlie Chase
$ 

Darryl Zanuck

was the first person to buy a page in the Hold-Up number. He had so much time in which to prepare his advertising copy that he never got around to it.

I wouldn't work as hard as that guy does if they gave me the Warner Brothers studios.

W. B. 

$
Bughouse Fables

"Why don't you make this a habit, Mr. Beaton?"

d'ARRAST.

(With excuses to Paul Fung)
My dear Welford:

Shakespeare says it:

He that is robb'd,
not wanting what is stolen,
Let him not know't, and
he's not robb'd at all.

HENRY KING.
WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THIS, WATSON?

My dear Welford:

Acknowledging receipt of your letter of recent date, in which you solicit my financial support to exploit your so-called “Hold-up Number”, all I can say is that for unadulterated gall you win the “Pussy’s pajamas”.

Just because you hide behind a colloquial wisecrack by calling it a “Hold-up Number” you think you can approach everybody in the industry for financial support, notwithstanding the ruthless manner in which you have assailed us in your magazine. Half the time your opinions which are evidently based upon your own “snooping” ability are silly, because you evidently confuse your “snooping” to an eight-hour day. If you would give your own business the same amount of thought and consideration you are giving the industry’s, maybe you wouldn’t be in this financial jam.

I like you personally so I am going to give you a bit of advice. When I give advice I don’t have to take it up with any Board of Directors, so what I say goes. I admit I know nothing about the publishing business but I do understand financing, therefore that qualifies me to tell you how to run your business. My plan will cut your expenses over forty per cent and still enable you to maintain the same quality of publication. First, hire a “boogey man” to fire half of your organization. That throws the fear of God into the hearts of the other half. For fear that the second half might get fired too, they work twice as hard, therefore you do twice as much work with fifty per cent organization. Simple, isn’t it? You see in this way you cut production cost fifty per cent instead of forty per cent, so I am smarter by ten per cent than other people who have only tried to cut production cost forty per cent. At least I offer a remedy when I tell you to cut production cost fifty per cent. Be careful not to destroy the good will and loyalty of your organization because even you must appreciate that these are two vital requisites of successful business management.

I like the merger idea too. Don’t merge with anybody unless they can be of some help to you. I would suggest that you try and merge with the Hay, Grain and Seed Journal of Wheaton, Illinois, because you both have a great deal in common with each other because what you both sell eventually turns into bull.

In conclusion, let me say that you haven’t courage enough to publish this letter, but if you do I’ll contribute $100 for the relief of the starving polecats of Massachusetts.

Sincerely yours,

MIKE LEVEE.

Dear Mike: Send along the hundred bucks. It is understood that you are to protect The Spectator in case Joe Kennedy enters suit against it for infringement of copyright.—W. B.
October 13, 1928

THE FILM SPECTATOR

Page Seventy-nine
LOTTHAR MENDES

Paramount-Famous-Lasky
$ 

TAKE IT!
I do not choose to run.
RICHARD DIX

$

$
It would not be possible for The Spectator to be twice as good, but it is a matter for congratulation that it will come twice as often.

DOROTHY FARNUM.
O, it is excellent
To have a giant’s strength; but it is tyrannous
To use it like a giant.—Shakespeare.

What more can be said?

JOHN STAHL,
M. H. HOFFMAN.
Here's one hundred dollars worth of best wishes for The Weekly Spectator.

May it live long and be proper!

HECTOR TURNBULL.
Perhaps Welford is making it a weekly in order that he can be twice as fast in rectifying his past errors of judgment as he was in making them.

However that may be, I am glad to enroll myself among those who hail The Spectator as a weekly and wish for it a continuous and increasingly prosperous career.

JOSEPH M. SCHENCK.
$ 

SID GRAUMAN

was held up for this page, which is nice, but he failed to write anything to put in it, which is lamentable.

——

P. S.—Just saw Sid at Henry's. He told me to write something about The Spectator being a very fine paper, and about how glad he is that it is going to be a weekly, and to say something about wishing it every success—you know the kind of stuff.

But when Sid, or anyone else, spends one hundred dollars to say it, you can bet your life he means it.

W. B.

$
Anything for a quiet life!

JOHN BARRYMORE.
Dear Welford:

You shouldn't hold me up when I'm directing a picture called The Wolf of Wall Street. The title suggests too many things that I might say about an editor who sets out on a looting expedition.

I'll resist the temptation and content myself with telling you how genuinely glad I am that The Spectator is to be a weekly.

Success to both of you!

ROWLAND V. LEE.
Is there no other way out?

George O'Brien

$
He Wants to Know

Dear Welford:

Don't you think you're carrying this underworld craze just a little too far?

JOHN FORD.
Lewis Milestone

extends to Welford Beaton sincere congratulations upon the great success that he has achieved with his Spectator, and wishes to express his best wishes for the paper's success when it becomes a weekly.
No Force Necessary

Dear Mr. Beaton:

Enclosed is my check, cheerfully written, to make me a member in good standing of your company of victims.

Even though I am not connected directly with pictures at the present time, I am a devoted reader of The Spectator, and I appreciate its tremendous value to screen art.

My best wishes for its continued success as a weekly.

ELINOR GLYN.

New York City.
We printed this Hold-Up Number. It's funny that it never occured to us to hold up Mr. Beaton!

The OXFORD PRESS, Inc.

Edward Everett Horton
In "ON APPROVAL"
A Society Comedy
By Frederick Lonsdale

VINE ST. THEATRE
Bet. Hollywood and Sunset Boulevards
Make your reservations early, Mats. Thursday and Saturday,
Downtown ticket offices—Birkel
Music Co., Broadway Dept.
STORE, May Co.

GIFTs AND GREETINGS FOR ALL OCCASIONS

"A Thousand Gifts of Distinction"
OSCAR BALZER
Hollywood Gift Shop
6326 HOLLYWOOD BLVD. HOLLYWOOD, CALI.

Hotel Mark Hopkins
San Francisco

A place to rest near the shops and theatres.
New, comfortable, quiet, airy.

{ Anson Weeks' Orchestra playing 
nightly in Peacock Court }

GEORGE D. SMITH President and Manager
$ 

I trust that this will not occur again 

Reginald Barker 

$
Nowadays the moving picture hell is paved with good intonations!

And that's about all I can think of for the Hold-up Number.

Frank Tuttle
How directors ruin their romances
Inexcusable stupidities mar pictures
—By the Editor

Should be proud of Mary and Doug
Will Hays and the American spirit
—By K. C. B.

The ethics of public necking
—By the Young Man

Reviewed by the Editor

SINGING FOOL
EXCESS BAGGAGE
ROMANCE OF UNDERWORLD

HIS LAST HAUL
WOMAN DISPUTED
MANHATTAN COCKTAIL

By the Youthful Critic

MASKS OF THE DEVIL
STATE STREET SADIE

EXCESS BAGGAGE
MOTHERknows BEST

HEY, RUBE!
The New
Radiola Super Hetrodyne
Models
ARE HERE

Ask for a demonstration                      No obligation

E.A. Bowen
Music Company
5326 Wilshire Boulevard  ORegon 5206
Directors Fall Down in Handling the Romances

TAKE two romances, one in Mother Knows Best, and the other in Romance of the Underworld, both Fox pictures. Each romance is developed with the best of taste, is tender, sweet and appealing. When that in the former picture reaches its culmination in a betrothal, Madge Bellamy and Barry Norton are shown in a huge close-up, their lips glued together in a long and passionate kiss. When the other reaches the same point and Mary Astor agrees to marry John Boles, he takes her hand and kisses her tenderly. Both scenes tell the same story: that the girl is going to marry the boy. The one tells it blandly and vulgarly, and the other tells it tenderly and delicately. The girl in the former is a sheltered and innocent daughter of a mother who has guarded her carefully; we make our acquaintance with the other in an underworld dive where she hands her wages to a cheap crook. We have a right to assume that it is the sheltered girl's first kiss, yet it is part of an embrace distinguished alike for its passion and its lack of delicacy. It is totally out of keeping with the manner of the romance that led up to it. The story value of the kiss lies in the fact that it occurred as a symbol of the plightment of a tryst. To endeavor to interest us in the passion the lovers display is to introduce an element that has nothing to do with the story, even if it were done with good taste. This is true of practically all screen romances, the only exceptions being those in pictures that are frankly sexy. Every director in Hollywood has shot more love scenes than he has scenes of any other kind, yet in very few pictures that I have seen recently there have been love scenes that reflected credit on those who directed them. I object constantly to close-ups of kisses on the ground that they are vulgar and disgusting, but their own weakness is not one of esthetic. In practically every instance the only matter of importance to the audience is the story value of the kiss as a fact, yet practically all directors present them on the theory that the sole feature of the kiss that is of interest is the degree of facial distortion it causes. Motion pictures constitute the most respectable form of entertainment that is provided the public, something for which the public itself, not the producers of the pictures, is responsible. Censor boards have been wise in limiting the length of kisses, while producers have been unwise in putting unlimited vulgarity in the short length permitted them. In Mother Knows Best we have scores of examples of nice little touches that reveal the fine sensibilities of the director, yet when he comes to the culmination of his romance, he goes movie, takes his romance out of the atmosphere of sweetness and delicacy in which he has reared it, and makes it vulgar and stupid. The only excuse that the producers can offer is that the public likes its kisses served hot, yet in Romance of the Underworld the same producers give us a love story that is devoid of kisses. What kind of reasoning can it follow to produce two such totally different results? The truth is that one director adhered blindly to movie conventions and disregarded the spirit of his romance, while the other took into account the atmosphere he had created and did nothing to disturb it. Close-ups of kisses are about the last stand of vulgarity and commonness in pictures. They coarsen romances that should be beautiful; they please one per cent. in audiences and disgust ninety-nine per cent. Their inclusion in pictures is due to the fact that the majority of our directors lack the fine sensibilities that should constitute the major portion of their equipment for their jobs. Such directors can not see any vulgarity in a close-up of a kiss. To the vulgar mind vulgarity is a normal manifestation that is not recognizable for what it is. And as the mass mind of pictures still is vulgar, I suppose we will continue to have vulgarity as part of our screen entertainment. We will have to content ourselves with the few pictures for which we can be thankful for the good taste of their romances.

Why Do Directors Do So Many Stupid Things?

SOMEONE would do me a great favor if he would explain why so many directors insist upon cluttering up scenes with things that distract from them without adding anything in the way of story value. There is a typical example of this in Excess Baggage. Bill Haines and Josephine Dunn have had a pretty romance. He is taking a train to continue his vaudeville tour and she is at the depot to bid him farewell. If the picture has accomplished its purpose up to this scene, it has made the audience interested in the romance, consequently any tender scene between the two parties to the romance is important and it should be free from all distracting irrelevancies. The moment Haines takes Josephine in his arms the train begins to move. For the full length of the tender farewell, cars move past the lovers. The scene loses all its romantic qualities and becomes a sporting proposition: Will all the cars get by before the embrace is terminated? Jim Cruze probably will defend the shot on the ground that it was to plant the reluctance of Haines to leave his wife. If so, it fails for the reason that the mind of the audience would be occupied by worrying over the fact that Bill would miss his train if he didn't hurry. Every scene in a romance should add to the importance of the romance. This scene makes a lot of unromantic cars of more importance than the love story. To maintain the importance of the romance, Cruze should have had the conductor smiling indulgently as he looked at his watch, then at the
lovers, and the fact should have been planted that the train was held a few seconds to give the two a chance to end their embrace. This would have strengthened the romantic quality of the picture by showing the audience that the romance which it thought important really was important enough to keep a train from starting on time. As the scene is presented to us, it is just nothing. It is a little scene, but my reason for going into it at length is because you see something comparable with it in almost every picture. In The Singing Fool Al Jolson is a waiter. He is serving Edward Martindel, who asks that his beer be changed. Jolson goes after the fresh glass of beer, and by all the rules of ordinary common sense in directing, he should have completed his service to Martindel unless a fade-out intervened. When a thing starts in a sequence, it should be finished or swallowed up in a close-up. Jolson does not return to his customers. He enters Josephine Dunn’s dressing-room—she’s in both pictures—and remains there to do a lot of emoting. During the emotional scene I was wondering what was happening to the man who ordered the beer. Why distract my mind in such a way? What possible reason was there for showing the beer being ordered if it later was not going to be served? Jolson is not characterized as a comedy waiter, consequently we can assume that Lloyd Bacon’s reason for having him fail to serve the beer was to show how Jolson’s love for the girl occupied his thoughts so fully that he forgot his work. The waiter and the girl work in the same place, consequently see one another constantly. We have a right to assume that if he forgot himself for the short time we see the interior of the cafe, he would forget himself all the time, thereby making himself a stupid waiter, and at no place in the course of a picture should its hero be made to appear stupid. But no matter what was in the director’s mind, all he succeeded in doing was to make me think about a glass of beer when I should be thinking about Jolson’s love for a girl. Not five per cent. of the scenes we see on the screen realize their full possibilities. That is because few directors know what most of their scenes are about. They merely are mechanics monkeying around in a business to which mechanical rules cannot be applied.

**Lloyd Bacon’s Direction Makes the Jolson Picture a Masterpiece**

The most extraordinary thing about The Singing Fool—apart from the fact that it is the greatest single piece of screen entertainment ever offered to the public—is its demonstration of the amazing progress that Warner Brothers have made in handling sound. It is hard to believe that Lights of New York, The Terror, and the Jolson picture came from the same studio. In The Terror, which immediately preceded Singing Fool, we heard people whisper, but we did not hear their footsteps when they climbed uncarpeted stairs, and we saw doors slam, but we did not hear them. There is nothing of the sort in the Jolson picture. In cafe scenes we hear all the noises that belong to them, and at times Jolson has to shout to make himself heard above the din; through an open door we hear the full volume of sound made by New Year’s revelers; when the door closes the sound diminishes. Whether or not you like The Singing Fool is a matter of no importance. The thing that counts is that it gives us just one more hint of what we may expect as sound development proceeds. You may not like Jolson or the way he sings; imagine your favorite singing actor in such a part and you can anticipate a pleasure the future holds for you.

The Singing Fool, as splendid as it is, is not as important as a picture as it is as a milestone in the progress of the new art that so suddenly has come to the screen. It does only what I said over two years ago sound devices soon would do, but realization always is more impressive than a prediction. The story of The Singing Fool is frankly a number of episodes strung together to give Jolson an opportunity to display his talents as an actor and a singer. He has done nothing previously on the screen to prepare us for the excellence of his performance in this picture. In most of his sequences his action is as finished as we could expect from an artist with ten times his experience before the camera. Jolson’s singing has made it. It fills theatres and sells records, and millions of people have been charmed by the quality of his voice and his method of expression. All this makes the fact that I do not care greatly for his voice a matter of no importance whatever. When he sticks to his melody he pleases me, but when he becomes talky and sobs, the spell is broken. But, even so, every foot of The Singing Fool delighted me. As pure entertainment, as distinguished from the intellectual satisfaction one can derive from a Patriot, or the fundamental emotional appeal of a Seventh Heaven, the Jolson picture is the greatest I ever have seen. The major portion of the credit for this does not belong to Jolson. Lloyd Bacon is the man to whom we should doff our hats. Technically he made a wonderful job of his direction, and much of the sweetness and tenderness of the picture is due to his sympathetic handling of his story material. He avoids practically all the mistakes that I constantly am criticizing in other pictures. His grouping is at all times natural, and he displays common sense in his use of close-ups. He opens the picture in a striking manner by having the camera follow the principal characters until all of them are planted. A fine bit of direction is shown at the beginning when a waiter is sent to search for the proprietor of the dive in which the story starts. The camera follows the waiter in all his wandering until he finds his man. This picture definitely puts Bacon in the first flight of directors. There is so much of Jolson in it that there is not much room for other performances, but valuable contributions to the production are made by Josephine Dunn, Betty Bronson, Arthur Housman, Edward Martindel and a few others. And there is a baby, the most adorable infant that yet has graced the screen. There is not much of David Lee in the picture, but what there is, is enough to warm the heart of all beholders.

**Norma Talmadge’s Latest Has Good Points and Bad**

There are many things for which The Woman Disputed, the latest production starring Norma Talmadge, is to be commended, but it is not going to be accepted by the public as completely satisfactory screen entertainment. Among the good things in it is the performance of the star. I do not recall having liked Miss Talmadge better in anything in which I have seen her. She is admirable throughout. Another excellent performance is that of Arnold Kent, whose lamentable death a
A few days ago shocked the screen world. If he had lived, his work in this picture would have placed him among the few really fine young actors. Technically the picture leaves nothing to be desired. I do not know how to appor-
tion the credit for this. The screen says it is a "Henry King production, directed by Henry King and Sam Taylor." As both these capable directors are friends of mine, each of whom subscribed to a page in my Hold-Up Number, I want Henry to know that when I criticize anything here-
after he is to understand that I know Sam was responsible for it; and I want Sam to know that I am dead sure it was Henry's fault. But, as I come to scan my notes, I find that there is little in the direction with which I can find fault. There are some close-ups that contribute nothing to the production, but that more often is a fault of editing than of direction. Throughout the picture there are examples of effective grouping, and there are a few refreshing shots of the backs of the principal characters the lighting and photography are excellent. Norma enters her poor bedroom and lights the gas. Always when this is done on the screen the full battery of lamps is turned on and one can not detect a shadow in the room. In this shot the room is lighted as soon as the gas is ignited, but all the light comes, apparently, from the gas jet. This is such a simple detail that it is a wonder it is not attended to oftener. All the weakness of The Disputed Woman lies in the story, and it is weakness enough to make an indifferent picture out of something that would have made a powerful one if it had been handled properly. As the story opens we discover Norma as a street-walker. By a logical sequence of events she becomes respectable and makes a success of honorable employment. The picture reaches its dramatic peak when a spy, disguised as a priest, persuades her to give herself to a Russian officer in order to assure a victory for her country's army. The girl is much distressed, her moral compunctions battling furiously with her patriotic impulses. I could not sympathise with her. I could not see why, when so much was at stake, she should make such a fuss about returning for a brief moment to the avocation that formerly occupied all her time. That she makes a fuss was a situation fabricated solely to serve movie mechanics. Without the fuss there would have been no story, consequently the fault lies in the characterization given the girl, and in the con-
struction of the story. It was absurd to try to make tragedy out of the loss of something that she once held so lightly. If she had been discovered as a fine, moral, and sensitive girl, there would have been something big and noble in her sacrifice, but as we get it, it is uncon-
vincing and uninteresting. But even granting the char-
acterization, the big sequence is not handled properly. For much tiresome footage we have the girl protesting against sacrificing herself to save the lives of three people whom she never saw before and in whom the audience is not interested. It could have had no effect whatever on the story if the trio had been executed forthwith, consequently there could be no story value in any sacrifice that would be made in order to save their lives. The main situation —the sacrifice of a girl's virtue—was borrowed from Surrender, a Universal picture, but Universal was wise enough to make its girl virtuous.

Delighted to Give This Little Girl a Big Hand

DOROTHY ARZNER, our only active woman director, certainly is talented. She is coming along amaz-
ingly. Her latest picture for Paramount is Man-
hattan Cocktail, a title that in no way prepares you for the gorgeous and impressive opening sequence. By way of prologue we are taken to the Labyrinth at Cnosus, which Greek legend fixes as the abode of Minotaur, the bull of Minos, who fed on youths and maidens until he was slain by Theseus, with the aid of Ariadne. In settings extraordinary for their pictorial grandeur we see the procession of vic-
tims on their way to the lair of the Minotaur, and we follow Theseus until he assassinates the monster and re-
turns to Ariadne, with whom he flees. The lighting and photography of these scenes reach a perfection that does credit to screen art in its highest form. Miss Arzner di-
rected the sequence with a rare regard for the drama of the legend and the pictorial possibilities of the settings.

Nothing that has been given us in Ten Commandments, King of Kings or Ben Hur is more impressive than the prologue of this program picture. There is a dissolve from it to New York of to-day, dubbed in a title the modern Minotaur, a distinction that I claim should not be given our biggest city. New York has its faults, but apart from electing a man like Jimmie Walker mayor, it commits no major corporate indiscretions. There may be individual cases of it devouring youths and maidens, as there are of bootlegging and gang wars, but they are sins that can not be charged to the city as a community. The prologue of Manhattan Cocktail is so overpowering that we read in the title that introduces the modern story an indictment of the city as a whole, its classification as a monster that feeds on the virtue of maidens and the man-
hood of youths. No city is as bad as that, and I am afraid that the picture is going to be criticized on that score. I hope Miss Arzner will derive some satisfaction from the fact that I quarrel with the premise of her story. At least she makes me think of something besides close-
ups and punctuation, and few directors get that far. She

James Madison
(America's Most Versatile Author)
I write original screen stories, adaptations, titles, gags
and dialogue; also vaudeville acts*, musical comedies,
mistrel and burlesque shows—and do them all damn
well.

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*Francis X. Bushman is now playing the biggest Eastern theatres in
my new vaudeville act, "Old Friends", and pronounces it the most
satisfactory vehicle he's had.
and sweet without sacrificing any of its vigor. The two kiss but once, and then their lips barely touch, and only for a brief moment. I recommend this treatment to those directors who make their kisses disgusting. Very fine performances are given by Nancy Carroll, Arlen, Paul Lukas, Lilyan Tashman and Danny O'Shea. Miss Carroll has done nothing in any other picture to match her work in this one. She is a talented young woman. Such an excellent actor as Arlen is wasted in the conventional part he has in Manhattan Cocktail. He does very well, but he belongs in bigger things. Miss Tashman and Lukas carry the heavy roles, and both acquit themselves as the splendid artists they are. The O'Shea is new to me. He is a young man worth watching. He has a pleasing screen personality, is at home in front of the camera, and seems to be brimming over with ability. There is a good idea in Ernest Vajda's story, but it is told a little crudely. The device by which Lukas contrives to have Arlen arrested is clumsy, and easily could have been made more plausible. But it is a good picture nevertheless. It should please any audience, and Hollywood should see it, not because it was directed by a woman, but because it was directed so well.

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Only Thing It Lacks Is a Powerful Theme

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F.B.O. Making Them to Suit European Tastes

F.B.O. is making concessions to European psychology. It is taking into account something that should have been apparent to the film industry when pictures first were made: the fact that Old World people are more deliberate than we are. Europeans take their occupations and their diversions with equal seriousness; they hurry at neither and are willing to devote to each the full measure of time necessary to its perfect accomplishment. We are different in this country. We hurry everything, and when we have seen the beginning of a motion picture, we are consumed with yearning to see the end of it. Pictures have to cater to this idiosyncrasy, which has led to sharp cutting by snipping frames off both ends of scenes and close-ups. We have not sent abroad the same prints that are shown in this country, but the chief difference between them has been the inclusion in foreign prints of sex stuff a little more frank than our censors will pass, and unhappy endings which, in our ignorance, we deem American audiences will not like. While we thus have made recognition of the intelligence of foreign audiences, we have not respected their predilection for unhurried contemplation of our offerings. F.B.O. has begun to do it. Never having gone in for sex stuff, this organization has been shipping abroad the same prints that have been used at home. Hereafter they will differ, but only in the matter of footage. There will be no frame-snipping, no jumpy cutting. I have seen one of its foreign prints, that of Mickey Neilan's His Last Haul. I have not seen the domestic print, which is more than one reel shorter than the one that goes abroad. The same sequences appear
in each, I am told, but in the domestic version they are cut to the bone to make the story move rapidly, while in the other they stretch out to their full length and carry the story along at a leisurely pace that can be followed comfortably. The F.B.O. people didn't want me to see the foreign print, as they were afraid that I would accuse it of dragging, but finally they took a chance. I saw His Last Haul in a little over seven reels, and you will see it in a little less than six, and if you derive as much satisfaction from your version as I did from nine, you will be repaid for viewing it. I can't recall any of Neillan's pictures that resembled this one. It has an interesting theme, that of the regeneration of two crooks through contact with one another and without any outside influence. Seena Owen and Tom Moore play the pair of crooks. Miss Owen's part calls for a rather drab characterisation and does not allow her much latitude in expression, but she is sincere and convincing throughout. Moore is excellent, as he always is. To me it is one of the mysteries of the screen that the Moore boys are not used constantly. Tom's performance in this picture could not have been surpassed by anyone I know who would fit him part. He is tough when he has to be, and tender and sympathetic in his love scenes. On the whole, Neillan's direction is acceptable, but I do not think he makes the most of his theme. And he is inexcusably careless in pets. Three crooks are frustrated in a hold-up, and in escaping, run headlong through a crowded street, the one sure method of attracting the attention of the police. In shot of the exterior of a Salvation Army hall we see on the front windows the sharp shadows of some people who are inside. When we move to the interior of the building we discover that there are no lights in it that could have made the shadows. I could not see that the shadows had any value, but if they did, the lights in the interior should have been arranged to make them possible. His Last Haul is not an exciting picture, but it is a satisfactory one. It opens with a scene of crooks in action, and then becomes a romance that is worked out in surroundings which we associate more with gunmen and hi-jackers. All the mistakes in punctuation that hitherto have been displayed on the screen have been assembled and inserted in the titles of His Last Haul.

I understand that Cruze shot the picture in a remarkably short time. It looks it. The good story is told in a way that makes it unreal and unconvincing—and it might have been both human and dramatic. The opening sequence is slow and uninteresting. A vaudeville show is in progress, and some boys have a row of ripe tomatoes in front of them on the rail of the balcony of the theatre. Even if the house were the kind that would tolerate such a thing—and it obviously was not that kind of house—it was stupid direction to keep the tomatoes in sight in order that the audience could anticipate the action. The whole idea was ridiculous, but it would have appeared less so if we had seen a small boy dive behind the balcony railing and come up with a tomato. The leading man makes love to his hostess, a married woman, in a room of which a full view may be had from the dining-room, where a dinner party is in progress. Later the husband has a row with the wife in the same exposed place. In course of the unwinding of the picture there are perhaps a score of incidents directed with as little thought as was expended on these two. When a man takes up his position in full view of a number of people and begins to make love to the wife of his host, the scene can hold neither drama nor romance for anyone who thinks. If Ricardo Cortez, the man in this instance, had led Josephine Dunn, the wife, into some secluded corner, the audience would have received some impression of the emotional value of the scene. Cruze, however, moved his people in a manner that made the scene nothing but a particularly stupid bit of movie routine. Haines is a small-time performer who suddenly is called to the Orpheum circuit. On his opening night in the big house his name is smeared all over the place in electric lights. Can you imagine it—an unknown man becoming a headline prior to his first appearance? The only thing that is featured in his act is the danger of his slide down a rope stretched from the gallery to the stage. The thrill lies in the possibility that he may fall off. If he does, he will fall on the heads of some people sitting in the audience. That is one of the many absurd things that the picture asks us to believe, all faults that intelligent direction would have avoided. A weakness for which the script can be held responsible is the fact that the whole story turns on an absurd premise—the old-fashioned idea that it will interfere with the box-office value of a girl star if the public knows she is married. Fan magazines all over the world continually carry stories about the home life of our married artists, and all the world knows who's married to whom, yet the same world is asked to take seriously a suggestion that it does not like its screen favorites to be married. Another thing that makes Excess Baggage a poor thing is the weird punctuation of the titles. Metro almost outdid itself in making it worse than usual. It is too bad that such a good story was murdered so brutally on its way to the screen.

In Which We Disagree

With Majority of Critics

**EXCESS Baggage** is a picture that I caught just as it was concluding its tour of the neighborhood houses. I wanted to see it for various reasons: Jimmy Cruze directed it, which made it important; Bill Haines was credited by critics with giving the best performance of his career, and all the reviews of the picture that I read agreed that it was very good. I had read no favorable reviews of Forbidden Hours, another Metro picture, but found it to be highly satisfactory. Having read the favorable reviews of Excess Baggage I anticipated a rare treat when I saw it, but could not make connections with it until only the other day. I found it dull and stupid, and relieved only by the fact that in it Haines comes nearer to giving a normal characterisation than he has managed to give in any other picture. The story had possibilities. As far as I know, it is the only one that has had as its central character the husband of a movie star. **ONE** of my favorite contentions is that we do not make as much use of long shots as we should. Most of our directors are equipped so poorly for their jobs that they can tell a story only by bringing their characters close to the camera and shooting a lot of close-ups which the cutters use in a vain effort to cover up the fact that the directors are incompetent. There is nothing put over in a close-up that can not be put over in a long shot. Hoots of derision from directors! But if one of them—or a dozen
of them—would like to wager something on it I will back my opinion that I can show how to shoot a long shot that will put over anything that a director thinks can be put over only in a close-up. Come on, you fellows. Describe your close-up action to me in writing and I will publish it in The Spectator together with my description of how to shoot a long shot to put over exactly the same idea. If I can't, I'll say so. Tell almost any director that you want him to make a scene showing a man bidding an old retainers affectionate farewell, and he could think of no way to shoot it other than in close-ups showing the expressions of the two people. He would explain that it would be necessary to show the benevolent smile on the face of the master, the grateful look on that of the servant. Lloyd Bacon has exactly that kind of scene in The Singing Fool and he shoots it in a way that proves every charge I have brought against close-ups. One exceedingly long shot takes in the entire cafe in which Jolson works. Three or four scrubwomen are its only occupants. Jolson enters in the background. He is so small that we recognize him only because we have seen in the previous shot how he is dressed and have seen him open the door to the cafe floor. He walks across the large room and pauses beside one of the scrubwomen. She straightens to her knees and looks up at him. They are so far from us that we can not see the features, but we can imagine the smile on the face of the woman as the popular entertainer notices her. He shakes hands with her, and gives her money, then strolls on. At no time in this sustained long shot is the woman close enough to us to register whether she is white or colored, but the idea of the scene is put over with more punch than it possibly could have been done in close-ups.

ONCE more, this time with Mother Knows Best, it is demonstrated that the public wishes to buy acting. The picture is going to make a lot of money for Fox because a big part was given Louise Dresser, a great actress. Madge Bellamy, the star, played her part no better than a score of other girls could have played it, but her luster will not be dimmed by the fact that Miss Dresser ran away with the picture, for the public is prone to give to the star the chief credit for a successful picture. Every time it has been given an opportunity to do so, the public has demonstrated that it is willing to patronize a picture that has an outstanding performance, no matter how old the performer happens to be. But in spite of all they could learn from this fact, producers continue to guard their stars against the possibility of real actors stealing their pictures. If Fox had followed this insane practice it would have cut Miss Dresser's performance in a way that would have made Miss Bellamy's stand out more prominently, but the picture would have been ruined, thus reducing the box-office value—not of Miss Dresser, but of Madge Bellamy, for to the extent that her name is given prominence in connection with a production does she get the credit for the success or failure of the picture. I understand Fox intends to star Miss Dresser. In proper stories she can be made a great box-office favorite, but even when she becomes such producers still will argue that what the public wants is something young and beautiful on the screen, not acting. You can assume from what you see on the screen that none of the other producing organizations has learned yet that Paramount is finding Jannings a good commercial proposition.

AS was to be expected, the appearance of the Hold-Up Number of The Spectator was followed by an avalanche of assurances by those who were not in it that it was only by some extraordinary misunderstanding that they did not get their applications for space in soon enough. A few have told me that they stayed out merely because they didn't want to go in, and a few others have told me that they did not approve of the idea back of the special number, and for that reason spent no money on it. To such excuses I listen sympathetically, and I have no quarrel with those who offer them. But the others, who woke up to the importance of the number only after the money of other people had made it important, rather weary me with their excuses. They do not need to make them; it is none of my business why anyone stayed out of the number, and explanations are not due me. But to assuage the grief of those who were too late I have come to a magnanimous and unselfish decision: I will extend the time for receiving hold-up copy for as long a period as it will take all the sorrowing ones to come in. Instead of expressing your sorrow and making your excuses, just send along your copy and your checks and all will be forgiven.

WHEN Edward Martinde made his appearance in The Singing Fool I hoped that the picture was going to show us that it had two singing fools in it. Martinde has a magnificent voice of the right quality for reproduction. We can get some idea of the possibilities of sound when we imagine a scene like this: Martinde, purely for story purposes, enters a friend's apartment. He has to wait. He seats himself at the piano, idly strums the keys, then his fine voice takes up the melody of some good song. He sings only a little of it when he is interrupted by the arrival of his host, and the story goes on. Such touches as these are the things that are going to make our sound films fascinating. By the very nature of the scene, no effort is made to present Martinde as a singer. Apparently he is an amateur who hums songs to amuse himself; then when his voice comes out magnificently—well, then you have something that you would not have if you led him to the footlights and had him sing an entire song.

ARTHUR S. Albin, manager of the Regent Picture House, Abbey-Mount, Edinburgh, Scotland, likes The Spectator. In course of a letter he says: "I read The Spectator with great interest. Your frankness in criticizing productions is particularly helpful, and whilst I do not agree with some of your remarks on the method of production, this variance of opinion may be largely due to the preferential differences of country. Your insistence on correct punctuation, however, is plante on pregnant soil. Errors in spelling, syntax, and punctuation are prolific and show little sign of diminution. Th fact that this fault can be so easily remedied makes it none the less irritating. We are watching with interest the developments of the new speaking pictures. Your country receives innovations (if I may use the word in this connection) much more readily than mine. The close
ups are certainly overdone on many films and are not popular on this side."

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A CORRESPONDENT thinks I do not pay enough attention to the interests of the extras. He writes: "Why don't you take a crack at the rotten grafting conditions in the casting offices—not only one, but all, Central included?" The main reason I have refrained from taking the desired crack is my ignorance of the fact that there is anything to crack at. If extras are getting the worst of it from casting offices, and will put the information in my hands in order that there will be something back of my charges, I will set forth right merrily on a cracking expedition and bawl things out with gusto. But I want facts. I will protect those who supply them for I have a general idea of the rottenness that prevails and am aware that any extra who exposes it never would get another job in any studio. However, I must have the names in order that I can check up and satisfy myself that the facts are authentic.

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THE brief glimpse we have of Betty Bronson in The Singing Fool at least reminds us of her existence. I am not acquainted with this young person in the flesh, for I have never seen her off the screen, but I have seen her on it often enough to convince me that if someone with intelligence had guided her picture career she to-day would be a sensational box-office success. There is something about her that no other screen girl possesses. I do not size her up as being endowed with any extraordinary talents as an actress, but she has sweetness, tenderness, and some gracious quality that allows her to take a short cut to my heart. It is a long way from being too late yet to put her where she belongs. A little brains back of her will do it.

* * *

AMONG the letters which are sent to The Spectator for publication are many dealing with talking pictures. They call me to task for my enthusiasm for the talkies, and in a variety of ways peculiar to the writers of the different letters they dismiss talking films as a passing fad. I do not publish the letters because all the arguments in them are based on the faults found in those talking pictures that have been shown thus far. Such arguments are silly. I have not seen one good talking picture, but I have seen enough in the poor ones to make me certain that silent pictures are doomed to extinction. If any one wishes to argue differently, and does not base his argument on the assumption that the talking picture will never be any better than it is now, I will be glad to publish his letter.

* * *

SOMEONE sent Jim Quirk a copy of "The Messenger of God" and he sent it along to me, apparently because he thought it would be good for my soul. As nearly as I can gather from a careful perusal of the publication, it is opposed to motion pictures. That opinion was arrived at after prolonged consideration of the following: "The movie is of absolutely no use in the world. It is a positive curse. It is Sodom in a nutshell, a day and night school of illfame, a recruiting office for an America without homes, the most convenient fountain for the white slavers to seize their powerless victims, and the sooner this mad invention is voted out of the world the better." The gentleman apparently is slightly prejudiced.

* * *

THE mailman is a source of comfort to me. He constantly is bringing me messages of encouragement from all over the country. Here is one from Mrs. Piercy Chestney, president of the Macon Better Films Committee, Macon, Georgia: "I agree so thoroughly with you in regard to close-ups, 'public' kissing, undressing of stars and players, conventional endings, Metro's titles, and other of your pet abominations, that I hale with joy every complaint you register. I wish you continued success and anticipate the regular weekly appearance of The Film Spectator with pleasure and profit."

* * *

THANKS TO THE MAIL MAN

In renewing my subscription to The Spectator I wish to tell you that if your campaign against those disgusting, big scenes of people kissing each other were the only constructive thing you ever did, every picture patron in the country would be under lasting obligation to your paper.

J. K. ROBESON, Knoxville, Tenn.

You harp too much on one thing. Can't you mention close-ups a couple of times and then go on to something else? Goodness knows there are enough things the matter with the movies to keep you busy tackling one in each issue, but apparently you think all the faults are close-ups, grouping to face the camera, and the lack of punctuation in the titles. However, the enclosed check for a year's subscription shows that I'm not too mad at you to read you.

R. G. HEATHERY, Boston, Mass.

Looking at The Spectator from the reader's standpoint, I quite agree with Mr. Heathery. I harp too much. But looking at The Spectator from the crusader's standpoint, I do not agree with him. Constant harping is the only thing that will cause reforms in pictures or in anything else. It is a question whether I am to conduct The Spectator merely to please its readers, or to use it in a manner that will make it a militant force for the improvement of pictures. "You've got us scared to death to shoot a close-up," said a supervisor in one of the big studios to me the other day. That means that The Spectator is making progress in effecting a reform. That has come at the end of a year of constant harping. It will take one more year of harping to make the reform complete. Will I cease harping, to please Mr. Heathery, or will I go on harping, in the hope of doing some good? I would like to hear from readers.

If you had done nothing more during the past year, your frankness in pointing out the shortcomings of Will Hays would prompt me to renew my subscription to The Spectator, which I do hereewith. The way all the other film papers slobber over the little politician disgusts me. I have done a lot of reading of current literature, but the list of those I read regularly is rapidly narrowing down to you and Mencken.

ARTHUR STRUTHERS, Minneapolis.

You, or some one else, have been sending me your paper for the past two months. Stop it. Your assumption of authority appalls me. You use too many I's, and you state your opinions with a pomposity that suggests that you do not admit that there is any room for argument. In short, sir, I am afraid you are stuck on yourself.

PIERRE LOLLIARD, New Orleans.

Do you, by any chance, happen to remember a vitriolic letter you received ten or eleven months ago with my name signed to it? Someone began to send me The Spectator, and I resented it. After
perusal of the first couple of numbers I put you down as a conceited youth who could not possibly know as much about pictures as you pretended to know. I indignantly demanded that you cease sending me the paper. You did not cease—for which much thanks. You're one of my old friends now, and I'd like to draw a chair up to your fire some winter night and smoke a pipe with you. But we're too far apart. Herewith my check for twenty-five dollars to extend my subscription for five years. Burn the other letter I wrote you and substitute this one for it in the files.

RICHARD LANCASTER, Richmond, Virginia.

Substitution accomplished. I am sorry that I can not anticipate Lancaster's visit to my residence. But if he should manage it, I want to warn him now that in selecting a chair to draw up to the fire, he must be careful not to take one that has a dog asleep on it.

I warn you, that if you cease at any time to publish on the cover a list of "pictures reviewed in this issue," I shall demand a rebate on even the paltry five. For why? Because I file The Spectator; and when a picture comes to town I run through the file until I find its critique, and then I look therein to see if I want to see that picture; and if you say it's a good one, I go; and I've not yet caught you off base.

STEWART EDWARD WHITE, Burlingame.

It's surprising how many letters I receive from people who tell me that they select their pictures as my friend White selects his. They shouldn't do it. I know that there are many excellent pictures which I do not see, and some that I criticize unfavorably might please other people.

Don't you think it would make The Spectator easier to read if your paragraphs were not so long without any breaks in them?

(Mrs.) ALICE THORNTON, Ridgefield, N. J.

Several people, some of them nearer home, have made the same suggestion that Mrs. Thornton makes. I agree with all of them. I would make the change if I were not afraid to. Rod La Rocque gave me some sage counsel in the Advice Number: Never tamper with a success. The Spectator has been an extraordinary success, and it is fair to presume that every individual feature of it, including the long paragraphs, contributed to the success. That is why I am afraid to make any change in it. That is why, even though it now appears every week, I continue to give its readers the same amount of my writing in two weeks as previously I gave them in one issue that covered the same length of time. I don't think they can stand any more of me, consequently I write about the same amount and cut it into two weekly chunks.
motion picture career, he is sympathetic all the way through the film; and he gives a good performance. He has an excuse for what clowning he does indulge in, as he is a small time vaudeville actor. Incidentally, he puts on a juggling act which is rather good, but which even his slide for life couldn't raise to big time.

The greatest weakness of the story of Excess Baggage lay in the fact that Haines, who features a slide for life in his act, hasn't got strength of mind enough to do it without his wife waiting for him at the bottom. His wife is a very remarkable woman, because she is given a year's contract for picture work without even a screen test. How James Cruze could blandly insert that fairy-tale in his picture is a great mystery to me. With a few more feet of film, the whole thing could have been arranged sensibly; and it would have strengthened the whole picture a great deal. Motion pictures always seem to get water on the brain or something when they try to portray themselves. There is a lot of tomato-throwing in the first part of the picture, which does not do it any good, and some stuff which is supposed to be comedy relief crops up occasionally, although it has nothing to do with anything. There are two sisters in a vaudeville team, and they exchange long and laborious wise-cracks while they are on the stage.

Cruze, who, by the way, directed, committed one of the most popular sins known to him and his colleagues. Haines and his wife get into a furious argument about twenty feet away from where a lot of guests are having supper. True, they are in the other room; but there is no door between them. The guests apparently hear nothing. Then Cruze caps that with another. The guests come down out of the dining-room and find the quarrel still going on, and they stand around and listen instead of tactfully retreating, as any sensible human beings would. In spite of the entrance of the guests, Haines and the wife keep at it hammer and tongs. The wife was played by Josephine Dunn, and it is the first time I have seen her when she had anything to do. She has a goodly amount of talent and should go a long way on the screen. She ought to be good at sophisticated comedy-drama. Ricardo Cortez did very well as the picture star, and the rest of the cast was quite satisfactory.

FIFTEEN Minutes With George Bernard Shaw was mildly amusing, but it was rather a disappointment, chiefly because it didn't last fifteen minutes. I had looked forward to hearing a little conversation along the line of his writing, something a little more interesting than his discourse, accompanied by illustrations, upon facial expressions. The value of the whole thing lies in the true picture it gives of the man who always has been a mystery to the general American public. He looks utterly incapable of the cutting things he sometimes says, but I think it is only fair to his newly-created public for Mr. Shaw to make another Movietone short the first time he feels like throwing a little vitriol. Anyway, bitter or sweet, I think he's a great man.

STATE Street Sadie is one of those peculiar half-and-half Vitaphone pictures where there is a little sound dialogue and then a long spell where it shudders at its own temerity. After The Lights of New York and The Terror, that type of Vitaphone seems flat; but it is a good idea commercially, since the public is eager for any kind of sound, and there is no reason why Warners should cut into the profits of their big, hundred per cent. specials. However, it will be but a short time until the public will begin to demand dialogue through the entire picture instead of just in patches here and there. While the Vitaphone itself in State Street Sadie is excellent and shows improvement over the last one I saw, the picture will never set the world on fire. It is a lot like Tenderloin, but the moths must have got at the story; because it lacks the entertainment value of the former picture. Having seen upwards of a dozen underworld pictures in the last six months, they haven't the attraction for me that they once had.

During the dialogue sequences of State Street Sadie the characters stand around like a bunch of wooden Indians while they speak their lines. Two men in one scene stood shoulder to shoulder, facing the camera, and turned their heads, sideways so they could converse. Nobody ever talks that way, and it is up to the Vitaphone people to make it possible for two actors to carry on a conversation in a natural manner and also get it into the microphone. Archie

Michael Curtiz

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Mayo, who directed, did some good work in the drawing of his characters, a phase of picture-making most directors seem to think belongs only in epics. Bill Russell is the head of a bunch of gangsters, but he scorns motion picture traditions in that he "does not go out of his way to kick a baby in the face or perform some other act of cruelty. He makes his gangster a human character, and thereby greatly increases his power. State Street Sadie has a very clever ending, a sound sequence where Eugene Pallette, the cop, arrests Conrad Nagel and Myrna Loy, the hooeymakers, for speeding. All the voices were good, and its humor left a clean taste in the mouth after all the shooting and sudden death in the picture.

"* * *

I it is surprising the number of screen directors who are unable to develop a romance with any skill and finesse.

George Seitz, in Hey, Rube! which was a good little picture except for its lack of love story, made no effort to have his characters fall in love naturally. He had very little time and space and all that, but he might have tried to develop that theme. His two principals apparently fell in love at the beginning, and their affection for each other didn't increase at all as the picture progressed. Among other things, J. G. Blystone, the director of Mother Knows Best, deserves credit because he did develop a romance. At first it was a sort of boy and girl affair, then as they got older and began to realize what an obstacle the girl's career was, the love scenes grew in power until they were climaxed by the scene where the man brought the girl back to life when she was practically dying. Except for the superfluity of gooey kisses, the love scenes were beautiful.

"* * *

His Last Haul is another underworld-Salvation Army story, noteworthy only because Marshall Neilan directed it. The story has been told dozens of times before, so there is nothing much in it to rave about. It flows uneventfully on, never becoming intensely dramatic, until it closes with what is known technically as an unhappy ending, although there really is nothing very sad about it. The two crooks go off to prison expressing hopes that they will meet again and all that. I have my doubts about whether they would or not. There were moments during His Last Haul when I nearly went to sleep, as it wasn't wildly interesting. Neilan used every time-honored method of squeezing a tear or two from the audience, but he did it well enough to keep it from being offensive. He worked with a group of children, and while they were good enough when he shot each one by himself, they were terrible in the group. They did this jumping up and down stunt which is supposed to register great joy. That is one of my pet aversions.

F.B.O. used great intelligence in casting His Last Haul, because they used people who fitted the parts they were supposed to play. The two principals were crooks, more or less hard-boiled. Instead of having a couple of juveniles play the parts, they cast Seena Owen and Tom Moore, who are good trouper in addition to looking the part. By looking the part I don't mean that they resemble criminals, since there is no standard physiognomy for lawbreakers; but they look old enough to have had a few experiences in life, a feat totally out of the reach of even the most talented of the younger players. Moore and Miss Owen gave very good performances.

"* * *

The superb performance which Louise Dresser gives in Mother Knows Best would have made any picture interesting, although Mother Knows Best needs no stimulant to make it one of the outstanding pictures of the year. However, Miss Dresser's work has much to do with its success, because the entire story centers around her, although Madge Bellamy is the nominal star of the picture. The power of Mother Knows Best lies in the fact that the mother is characterized as perfectly normal in every respect except for her attitude toward her daughter. If, in accordance with the usual motion picture custom, she had been made a hopelessly vulgar lowbrow, the entire lesson of the picture would have been lost. Miss Dresser achieved the highly difficult task of remaining sympathetic to a certain degree all through the film, and at the end

Box Office Titles
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Dramatic
Intense

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Black Face

Bootleg

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she completely captured the hearts of the audience. She acted a difficult part very cleverly.

The Movietone dialogue in Mother Knows Best is very good and put in opportunely, but there was no reason why the whole thing shouldn't have been done with sound. Its importance and box-office value would have been greatly increased if the Fox people had had nerve enough to Movietone the whole thing. Madge Bellamy's impersonations and singing came over very well and were an agreeable surprise. It isn't the usual thing to discover so much talent along other lines in screen actresses. Miss Bellamy has a splendid speaking voice, but the most interesting thing about it was the entire new personality it gave her, a very pleasing one, too. Her performance was splendid, and was by far the best thing she ever has done. Barry Norton, who played opposite her, did some very fine work. There is no doubt but that he can act, and he has a very pleasing voice. Albert Gran appeared briefly and silently.

* * *

DAD says that he is going to discourse learnedly upon love scenes and that he wants my views upon them. Unaccustomed as I am to public necking, I'll do my best; although I can't promise anything particularly illuminating on the subject. My biggest objection to the present method of putting love scenes on the screen is the long, disgusting kisses which seem to be standard equipment with our best motion picture lovemakers. The kisses aren't so bad at a distance, but they look terrible in a close-up. Every time I see a couple dive into a clinch with their mouths open, it makes me sick. A smile or a hand-clasp can prove just as much mutual affection if it is done correctly, and it is much better to look at. That very rarely is shown on the screen. Naturally, there are different kinds of love-scenes, because a couple of country bumpkins can't be expected to make love in the same way as a pair of sophisticated society people. The Garbo-Farrell team and the Garbo-Gilbert combination both are recognized as great lovers, yet they are absolutely different.

Directors always make me furious when they get their two principals and move into a beautiful garden or something for the love scenes. It is such an obvious attempt to get gasps of admiration from the audience that most people don't fall for it any more; it defeats itself by its own eagerness. Beautiful locations are all right when they can be brought in naturally, but not otherwise. A director who can't make a love scene beautiful without an artistic background doesn't deserve his job. Anyway, the two people are the things the audience is interested in, and it is not a good idea to have their attention distracted by a lot of roses or something. Neither is it a good idea to shoot the scene in close-ups against a screen or backdrop. A happy medium should be struck.

When sound enters the love-making game, an entire new technique will have to be absorbed by the actors. It will have to be well done, because audiences have a peculiar way of regarding spoken love scenes as intensely humorous, and the least little mistake causes much hearty laughter. However, another happy medium must be struck. A man in love doesn't make long, flowery speeches when with the female of his choice; he is more apt to be stricken dumb; at least when he is trying to speak of his great affection. It's silly but true. Therefore, I hope that none of the dialogue writers springing up hither and you will put a lot of beautiful rhetoric in the mouths of their ardent swains. A few clumsy words, if uttered with sincerity, are much more convincing than all the well written speeches in the world. The thought of hearing, as well as seeing, all these sticky kisses is terrible, but there may be some machine invented which will cut them out.

* * *

ABOUT the best stage entertainment in town at the present moment is The Shannons of Broadway, now playing at El Capitan Theatre. It really is quite a family affair, as Lucille Gleason plays the lead, James Gleason wrote it, and the Gleason dog is the life of the party during the first act. The only drawback was that the dog did not appear again after the first act. To me, at least, he had become a very definite member of the cast, and I missed him through the rest of the play. However, I enjoyed it far more than any stage show I have seen in a long time. It is by far the best thing Duffy has put on, and will run a long time. It contains some of the best written and some of the funniest lines I ever have heard, and there never is a moment when it lets down. There wasn't a poor performance in the entire cast, which was of mammoth proportions. I can't remember any of the names except Mrs. Gleason, and no one could overlook the excellence of her performance. I hope the three Gleasons (I count the dog as a member of the family) will combine again to give us something as good as The Shannons of Broadway.

Too Late for the Hold-Up Number

My dear Mr. Beaton:

Delighted to hear that our "Spectator" will at last be a weekly.

A request to express my appreciation, because something I eagerly look forward to, will now be given to me every week, becomes a joy—not a "hold-up."

ANDREW L. STONE JR.
ABOUT OTHER THINGS, By K. C. B.

SOMETHING I wonder if the motion picture people of Hollywood have a full appreciation of Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Fairbanks. I am moved to ask this because of the very delightful and informal way in which members of royal families from all parts of the world, and statesmen whose names and fame are known to the farthest reaches of civilization, drop into Los Angeles from boats and trains and are hurried away to Pickfair to be the guests of Mary and Doug. And what it is about it all that impresses me most is the obvious fact that the publicity departments of the two famous stars are not permitted to engage their services in broadcasting these social doings of Doug and Mary.

Imagine, if you can, what would happen if some of the others of our motion picture dignitaries should be privileged to entertain guests as distinguished as those who come unheralded to Pickfair. Think of the photographs that would be smeared all over the pages of our daily papers, photographs that would give much more prominence to the hosts than to their guests. Pickfair guests, of course, must pose for the camera, just as they would do were they guests of the Biltmore or the Ambassador or any public place, but you won’t find Doug or Mary in any of them.

And so it is that within the gates of Pickfair there is the beginning of an aristocracy in this make-believe world of motion pictures, something that has nothing to do with money or the making of it, and that has its birth and growth just in being nice. I’m proud of Doug and Mary, and of a photograph of Doug and myself that hangs on my wall and that was taken in the lean years of the long ago when no one could have guessed that some day distinguished ministers of state and royalty would come across the world to pay him homage.

* * *

Some Interesting Figures

As an evidence of what a man can get away with when he runs a column in a newspaper I quote the following from one of Arthur Brisbane’s daily contributions:

“No wonder American boys and girls grow. The nation’s food bill is twenty-three thousand million dollars. Forty-seven thousand nine hundred and eighty-five factories of different kind turn out food products, assisted by 6,372,609 farms. And 22 per cent. of the food plants produce nine-tenths of the food products.”

And now I’m going to tell one.

“No wonder American men and women and children are well clothed. The nation’s clothing bill is eighty-seven thousand eight hundred and five million dollars. Seventy-eight thousand, three hundred and one factories, large and small, turn out the goods. Two hundred thousand million silk worms make the silk, and three hundred thousand cotton pickers are required to pick the cotton.”

The only difference between my statistical paragraph and that quoted from Mr. Brisbane’s column is that it is possible Mr. Brisbane secured his figures from some reliable source, whereas my figures were made up entirely in my head. But as neither of them mean anything to anybody, what does it matter?

* * *

I Think She’s Terrible

As one, who, during the mature years of his life, has associated much with show folks, I suppose I should feel charitably inclined towards May West. But I don’t. I think the mess she has fought her way into back in New York is a disgraceful thing. I can understand a producer, with or without an unclean mind, trying to gum-shoe onto a New York stage and past the police officials a play the propriety of which may be questionable, but when someone who has already served time in jail for presenting stage filth, deliberately sits down and writes and aids in the production of a play having sexual perversion as its theme, when the law specifically bars such subjects from the stage, and ballyhoos the statement that it is going to run, despite the police—well, I think, such a person gives evidence of having allowed her perverted mind to weaken her mentality and that a psychopathic ward were better for her than the theatre.

I’ll admit I’m a little bit narrow and perhaps prudish in connection with the stage, for never have I been willing to admit that there was room on the stage for anything that would be out of place in a gathering of nice people in my drawing-room or yours. Long ago, however, I seem to have been outvoted in this and therefore I have schooled myself so that a bit of dirt won’t spoil my evening. It still bothers me, but I don’t think it is the dirt so much as it is that I am usually accompanied to the theatre by some one for whom I have a great respect and I resent the fact that if we must hear this dirt we must hear it in the company of a lot of persons who seem to like it and want more of it. If I could choose my company, perhaps it wouldn’t be so bad.

* * *

My Spirit of America

BACK in New York a couple of weeks ago Will Hays said, that of all the men he knew, Jimmy Walker best typified the spirit of America. If I didn’t know that Will is temperate in his habits I would attribute the remark to gin. But Will doesn’t drink, not that much anyway, and I don’t know why he said it. I won’t even admit that Jimmy typifies the spirit of New York, excepting, perhaps, that part of New York that keeps late hours and wines and dines away from home. And, anyway, what does Will know about the spirit of America. He’s a little bit of a Presbyterian from Indiana, who, because of his ability to do a lot of things in a little while, was catapulted into political prominence. And then, when the motion picture people wanted a prominent man, with a dash of religion in him, so that they would have something to point at if anyone threw any bricks, they chose Will.

What It Should Not Be

AND, anyway, I resent this knocking of the Spirit of America. I don’t want my Spirit of America to hold a high office and keep running away from it and then
October 20, 1928

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going home with nothing more to tell the reporters than that it could get liquor anywhere in America. I want it to be true to the job it holds, and if it were the head of a large city filled with scandals and problems that had to do with the welfare of its people, I'd want my Spirit of America to stay at home and help in the cleansing and the comforting of its body politic. And, too, if in the blistering days of summer the streets of this city were filled with thousands of women and children seeking relief from the close, hot rooms in which they lived, I'd like to think that though perhaps my Spirit of America couldn't do much about it, it might at least stay home and do what little it could.

A Little Bit of Love

I WANT that my boy, who is twelve years of age, should be typical of what I want the Spirit of America to be. And I think perhaps he is nearly that. He tries hard with his studies and comes straight home from school and plays an hour or two and takes his bath. And if his father and mother are going out for dinner, which they do more than a father and mother should, he says: "Oh, heck, ain't you ever going to stay home?" But if, in answer to the question that he asks each day the moment he comes home, he is told that his father and mother are not going out, his reply is always: "Gee, I'm glad!" And then he grabs whichever of the two has answered him and gives a bear hug and beats it away to play. And I want my Spirit of America to be like that.

Sometimes It's a Bad Spirit

Of course, this boy I speak of isn't always good. But he's never bad in an affirmative way. It's a sort of a negative badness. He just forgets sometimes to do things that he's told to do. I can't get him to screw the top back on his tooth paste tube. But he never forgets to wash his teeth both morning and night, and perhaps that's more important. And always he keeps his body clean, though his hands and face soil more easily than any human face and hands I ever have known. He can stand up, and not touch anything, and soil all three. His requests for money are rare and usually are warranted. He knows more about motion pictures than I ever hope to know, and would sooner ride in a hot, stuffy railway coach than in a big, comfortable automobile. He hates castor oil, but doesn't mind that accursed gum that somebody left lying around the house and of which I chewed a stick one night. He knows a girl of his own age whom he is going to marry when they both grow up.

A Word on Truthfulness

But maybe I'm boring you. Let's just finish this by saying that the big reason why I want the Spirit of America and my boy to go through life hand in hand is that he never lies. Once or twice, on impulse, he has said "no" when he should have said "yes", but right away he has recognized it as an untruth and has begged to be permitted to withdraw his answer. He tells me everything that happens to him, good or bad, or if he did it or if someone else did it. He loves his mother and father and in his quieter moments he loves his sister. But, as I have said, above all he is truthful and that's what I want my Spirit of America to be—truthful to whatever task is given it, truthful in word, and truthful in deed—and having this one great virtue I wouldn't mind even if it were cracked, once in a while, or maybe wrote a song.

August's Six Best Photoplays!

As selected by MAE TINEE motion picture editor of

The Chicago Tribune

In the issue of September 2

1. ANYBODY HERE SEEN KELLY?
   (A William Wyler Production—Universal)

2. LILAC TIME
   (A George Fitzmaurice Production—First National)

3. THE CARDBOARD LOVER
   (A Robert Z. Leonard Production—Cosmopolitan—M.-G.-M.)

4. HIT OF THE SHOW
   (A Ralph Ince Production—F.B.O.)

5. THE TEMPEST
   (A Sam Taylor Production—United Artists)

6. WARMING UP
   (A Fred Newmeyer Production—Paramount)
Hollywood Easily Stirred

A CROSS the third page of the Los Angeles Examiner some days ago a seven column head-line said: "Hollywood Stirred as 'Pavlowa' Girl Ask Chaplin's Help." As I had been around on the day before in circles that would have known of any seven-column stir affecting Chaplin I was somewhat surprised, grieved and curious. And so I read the story. And such a silly story it was. Just some girl, sane or demented, I couldn't tell which, who said she was the sister of Anna Pavlova and that if she could see Charlie Chaplin she felt sure he could identify her as such. That was all, excepting that she had called at the studio but hadn't seen Charlie.

What, therefore, was the seven-column head-line all about? Nothing at all, excepting that it was intended to bait the reader into a belief that here was a scandal about Charlie Chaplin. There wasn't any dirt in the story and so they put some in the head-line. And because there are many readers, who, because of inclination or lack of time, would read just the head-line and not the story, there then would be created, in the minds of these readers, a belief, or at least an impression, that Charlie Chaplin was mixed up in some woman story.

Can't you imagine some man going home to his wife and saying:

"I saw a head-line in a paper a fellow had in the car, something about Charlie Chaplin and some Rosoian girl or somebody."

And can't you hear his wife say:

"Isn't it awful the scandals these motion picture people get into?"

And then, maybe in the evening, the neighbors would drop in and, if the radio didn't make too much noise, they'd go back to the head-line and use it for the music and write their own words.

What this country needs isn't so much a good five-cent cigar, as it is a libel law such as they have in England. Over there a man's name is almost as much his own property as is his dog, and if you kick it around it's likely to cost you a lot of money or a stretch in some quiet, old, musty, stone prison.

An Afternoon of Bliss

MOTION pictures are none of my business in the columns of The Spectator. But as one who is endeavoring to rear a girl and boy, and who, therefore, must be more or less conversant with pictures from the standpoint of those who pay, and pay, and pay, I hope I may be permitted to edge in a paragraph or two about the afternoon of Wednesday, October three.

Anyway, on that afternoon, I went with the editor of The Spectator, and his son Donald, to the Warner Brothers studios. Arriving there we entered a projection-room, just the three of us. Out of the darkness that encompassed us, a few moments after our entrance there came the opening music and the titled beginning of The Singing Fool. And there it was, in that projection-room on that October afternoon, I found that I could cry in a gathering of three as easily as I ever had cried in a crowd. And I was glad that I was there alone with relatives, because after a while, when the sobs came, there was no need for me to cough in shame as I always have to do in a crowd. I just let myself break down entirely and as the tears dropped and mingled with the hair on the back of my hands I'd shake them off and cry some more. And one time, when my grief was almost choking me, I recall that Donald reached over and felt for my hands and finding them wet, changed to my shoulder and patted me and said:

"There, there, Uncle Ken; it's all right, it's just a picture."

He sees so many pictures death don't mean nothing to him.

And so I sat and cried through two of the most wonderful hours I had ever known, and when some rough employees of Warner Brothers laughed at me as I came blindly stumbling out I didn't care; I just shook hands with them and muttered something through my tears.

I don't care what the editor of The Spectator is going to say about the picture, and maybe I'm breaking down mentally or something, but any time anybody whom I have known as long as I've known Al, can make a filter out of me in a projection-room with a low ceiling and a dozen chairs, he's got something and you've got to give the kid a hand.

And I forgot! Betty Bronson did it, too. Just the moment I'd see her coming into the picture I'd start to cry harder, because I knew I'd be doing it in a little while anyway.
Madge Bellamy

In

"Mother Knows Best"

Now at Carthay Circle
DO YOUR DUTY—
A First National picture. Directed by William Beaudine; from the story by Julian Josephson; continuity by Vernon Smith; photographed by Mike Joyce; art director, Max Parker; film editor, Stuart Heisler; titles by Gene Towne and Casey Robinson.


EXCESS BAGGAGE—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by James Cruze; based on the play by John McGowan; continuity by Frances Marion; titles by Ralph Spence; settings by Cedric Gibbons; wardrobe by David Cox; photographed by Ivan Morgan; film editor, George Hively.

The cast: William Haines, Josephine Dunn, Neely Edwards, Kathleen Clifford, Greta Granstedt, Ricardo Cortez, Cyril Chadwick.

HEY, RUBE!—
An F. B. O. picture. Directed by George B. Seitz; from the story by Wyndham Gittens and Louis Sarecky; continuity by Windham Gittens; titles by Randolph Bartlett; photographed by Robert Martin; edited by Ann McKnight.


HIS LAST HAUL—
An F.B.O. picture. Directed by Marshall Neilan; story by Louis A. Sarecky; continuity by W. Scott Darling; photographed by Philip Tannura; titles by Randolph Bartlett.

The cast: Tom Moore, Seena Owen, Charles Mason, Al Roscoe, William Scidmore.

MANHATTAN COCKTAIL—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Dorothy Arzner; story by Ernest Vajda; screen play by Ethel Doherty; photographed by Harry Fischbeck; assistant director, Paul Jones; titles by George Marion, Jr.; film editor, Doris Drought.


MASKS OF THE DEVIL—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by Victor Seastrom; from the book, The Masks of Erwin Reiner, by Jacob Wassermann; treatment by Svend Gade; continuity by Frances Marion; titles by Marian Al-picture, and Ruth Cummings; settings by Cedric Gibbons; gowns by Adrian; assistant director, Harold S. Bucquet; photographed by Oliver Marsh; film editor, Conrad A. Nervig.


MOTHER KNOWS BEST—
A William Fox picture. Directed by John Blystone; from the story by Edna Ferber; scenario by Marion Orth; story supervisor, Charles Klein; costumes by Harry Collins; photographed by Gilbert Warrington; titles by William Kurnell and Edith Bristol; film editor, Margaret V. Clancy; editorial supervisor, Malcolm Stuart Boylan; movietone dialogue by Eugene Walley; staged by Charles Judels and David Stamper.


ROMANCE OF THE UNDERWORLD—
A William Fox picture. Directed by Irving Cummings; suggested by the play by Paul Armstrong; screen story by Sidney Lanfield and Douglas Doty; adaptation and continuity by Douglas Doty; photographed by Conrad Wells; edited by Frank Hull; supervised by James Kevin McGuinness; titles by Garrett Graham.

The cast: Mary Astor, Ben Bard, Robert Elliott, John Boles, Oscar Apfel, Helen Lynch.

SINGING FOOL, THE—
A Warner Brothers picture. Directed by Lloyd Bacon; story by Leslie S. Barrows; scenario by C. Graham Baker; photographed by Byron Haskins; assistant director, Frank Shaw.


STATE STREET SADIE—
A Warner Brothers picture. Directed by Archie Mayo; story by Melville Crosman; scenario by E. T. Lowe Jr.; assistant director, Frank Shaw; photographed by Barney McGill.

The cast: Conrad Nagel, Myrna Loy, William Russell, Georgie Stone, Pat Hartigan.

THE WOMAN DISPUTED—
A United Artists picture. Directed by Henry King and Sam Taylor; adapted by C. Gardner Sullivan; from the play by Dennisen Clift; art director, William Cameron Menzies; photographed by Oliver Marsh, A. S. C.; technical advisors, Capt. Marco Elter and Col. Alexis Davidoff; wardrobe manager, Frank Donnellan; assistant director, Robert Florey; film editor, Hal C. Kern.

The cast: Norma Talmadge, Gilbert Roland, Arnold Kent, Michael Vavitch, Boris de Fas, Gustav von Seyffertitz, Gladys Brockwell.
Announcement

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The Patriot
An
Ernst Lubitsch
Production
Can anything good come from a supervisor?

Producers can get their dialogue for nothing

K. C. B. discusses several matters of interest

Reviewed by the Editor

VARSTY  TWO LOVERS
MICHIGAN KID  WATER HOLE
INTERFERENCE  BEGGARS OF LIFE

TAKE ME HOME

By the Youthful Critic

SINGING FOOL  TAKE ME HOME
RIVER PIRATE  BEGGARS OF LIFE
MANHATTAN COCKTAIL  WOMAN DISPUTED

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E.A. BOWEN
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Can Any Good Come From a Supervisor?

Several times since I have been reading it, The Spectator has made disparaging remarks about supervisors. They have been handled without gloves in other papers that I have read, but I haven’t run across anything that makes definite charges. What’s the matter with supervisors, anyway?


Let us take our time about answering Mr. Miller. The other members of the family are at the opera; it’s just chilly enough outside to make a fire inside agreeable; two dogs and a cat are asleep in front of it, and I’ve lifted the telephone receiver off the hook. Thus isolated physically and untrammeled mentally I feel equal to discussing even supervisors, but I won’t be hurried. It takes many brilliant minds to make a great motion picture, but no motion picture will be great unless in its sum total it expresses but one mind. All the brilliant minds that have anything to do with it must function to their full capacity, but there must be a focal point to which they all converge. The focal point is the one mind that the picture should express. It may be the mind of the author, the director, or the supervisor. The fact that the great majority of pictures are lamentable examples of screen art is attributable to the further fact that they endeavor to express all three minds. Clarence Brown made a fine picture of Flesh and the Devil because he studied Suderman, the author, and expressed him on the screen. In this picture neither the director nor a supervisor asserted his mind, the author’s being the one that was expressed. The result was a fine production. If the director had ignored the author, as ninety per cent. of the directors do; and if the supervisor had ignored both of the others and had endeavored to have his conception of the story filmed, the picture would have been a poor one. Tell A, B and C a funny story. For the sake of our argument, let’s make it mathematical and say that each of the trio laughs ten times while you are telling the story. Each of them will not laugh when the other two do; his ten laughs will be provoked by what appeals to his individual sense of humor. The three go forth and tell the story to their friends. No two tell it alike, as they put their separate personalities into the recitals. But each garners his ten laughs. In other words, each realizes all the possibilities of the story although no two tell it alike. Now suppose it is decided to make a motion picture out of the story. A, the author, writes it and puts his personality into it. It is given to B to direct, and C is appointed to supervise the production. What will it be like when it reaches the screen? Each of the three can tell the story, in his own way, in a manner that brings out all its values, but the one stresses this point, the other that one, and the third an entirely different one. When they have to tell it jointly, their minds have no common meeting point. By the time the story reaches the screen it does not reflect either of the three minds, and consequently it is one of those inferior productions that constitute about ninety-five per cent. of the film industry’s output. As our studio forces are constituted, we have few supervisors who know anything about writing or directing a story, the two prime essentials of a motion picture. The supervisor, then, is the one member of the trio who is no use whatever to the production—and he is the one who has the greatest power. The others must bow to him, although the sole reason for his presence in the studio is to serve as a nut that tightens the political machine of his boss. Mr. Miller of Spokane need not take my word for it that supervisors are a nuisance that afflicts screen art. He can learn it in his neighborhood house. In a month he will see, say, eight pictures, seven of which will be bad. They are the supervised ones. The eighth will be a Flesh and the Devil, or a Patriot, which was not supervised and which expressed but one mind.

Dealing With the Gentle Art of Writing Stories for the Screen

HOLLYWOOD writers who are trying sincerely to supply the screen with the stories it needs, can not derive much encouragement from the frequent newspaper announcements of executives making trips to New

Announcing Just One More Special Number

SINCE the Hold-Up Number of The Spectator appeared I have been inundated by an avalanche of requests to repeat it every year, to issue this or that special number, or to continue to follow the hold-up business in any way that suits my fancy. These requests come from readers who know that I am opposed to the practice indulged in by publications of preying upon screen people, and come in spite of the fact that when I announced the Hold-Up Number I stated that it was the only indiscretion of the kind that The Spectator ever would commit. But my ethical standards can not stand against the pressure from the outside. I yield.

The Spectator will publish one more special number which will levy tribute on the screen industry.

It will be its fiftieth anniversary number and it will appear on the second Saturday in March, 1928.

One reason for announcing it now, aside from my desire to appease those who are so insistent with their advice, is to give Sid Grauman and Jack Warner ample time in which to send in their advertising copy.
York to look over the plays for possible screen material. I suppose that sometime it will occur to some bright producer that the place to look for stories is Hollywood. There are enough trained writers here now to supply the screen with all the stories it can use, but if there were not, and it were necessary to look to the stage for material, I can imagine no more expensive or inefficient method of conducting the search than that of executives who journey to New York for the purpose. The best way to find out if a play contains promising screen material is to read it, not to see it and thereby be influenced by some other person’s conception of how it should be presented. Unfortunately for the screen, those executives who journey to New York every now and then can not read a play or story and grasp its screen possibilities. In the case of a play, they must see it produced before they can estimate its screen values; and when it is made into a picture different values are brought out. It is rather bewildering that this industry, which is big enough to pull off a hundred million dollar merger every week or so, is not big enough yet to build up a writing organization that will supply its needs and make it unnecessary for it to use writers who have had no experience in writing for the screen. It was predicted generally when sound came to the fore that at last the day of the trained writer had dawned. But again we see the industry relying on outside help. Famous writers are being brought to Hollywood to write dialogue for talking pictures. This is a folly that is going to have the effect of spoiling pictures until producers recognize it as a folly. The screen’s greatest fundamental weakness is that those who control it have no knowledge whatever of its raw material—its story material. They believe that because A wrote some seething dialogue for his own stage play, he can take B’s screen story and write equally bright lines for it. This is a fallacy. The only man who can write the dialogue for B’s screen story is B. He has lived with his characters until he knows exactly what each would say under a given circumstance, and when each would say nothing. As he writes his story the speeches fall naturally into place and are integral parts of the characterizations. When A takes B’s characters and views them only as things that he must make articulate, it is almost impossible for him to preserve the personalities that B gave them. As a matter of fact, the importance of dialogue is over-estimated greatly by producers. If they would consult any experienced author, they would discover that dialogue is something that writes itself. The biggest part of the task of a novelist or a playwright is to work out a plot and fit his characters into it. This done, and the situations built up, the characters take matters into their own hands, and thereafter the author becomes merely a reporter who describes what he sees and puts down what he hears. He hears his bright characters say bright things and his dull characters say dull things. His dialogue must fit the characters because it originates with them. After an experienced author has his story set, he is unconscious of creating anything further. His novel would be a sorry affair if he filled it with dumb characters and handed them to someone else to tell them what to say. But that is what our motion picture producers are doing and will continue to do until they grasp the fact that they are turning out poor pictures, and find out why. To achieve its nearest possible approach to perfection, the talking picture must have in it no more talking than is absolutely necessary. To pay a big price to a man to contribute to it only its dialogue, is to put a premium on verbosity. And it is a waste of money. If the producers would patronize the skilled writers available to them now, they would find that they were getting their dialogue for nothing. It would be in the scripts, and each line would be exactly what the character uttering it would say in the given situation. For every dollar a producer pays to have some one stand on the sidelines and push alien conversation into a smoothly running story, he will lose another hundred at the box-office. But could you make him believe it? You could not!

**Paramount’s First All-Talkie**

**An Engrossing Screen Drama**

PARAMOUNT’S first all-talking picture, Interference, has gone East for release. I saw it, or heard it, or sawed it, or whatever else we are going to call it, when the technicians were giving it its final massage before it embarked on its journey. A couple of reels would be run, and then there would be time out for a conference, during which someone would open the projection-room door and tell us how the final game in the world’s series was getting along. All of which means that I viewed the picture under the worst possible circumstances, which made it necessary for its good points to stand out boldly to escape being overlooked. And they stood out. Roy J. Pomeroy, who directed Interference, and who is responsible for the technical progress that sound has made in the Paramount studio, further opens our eyes with this production to just what we may expect from the new art that has come to us. No picture that I have seen previously uses sound so intelligently as Interference does. It is a tense drama, played out by cultured, educated people. Such people do not shout and rant. Thus Pomeroy presents his characters to us. When Clive Brook, the doctor, tells William Powell, the patient, that he (Powell) can not live long, the conversation is low-toned, and the scene is made tense by virtue of being handled as lightly and in as casual a manner as if the two men were discussing golf scores. And what a scene! When you see it you are going to get a new concept of the possibilities of sound in pictures. The stage never presented a scene as intimate. On the stage, the same two men would have to speak in a manner to carry their voices to the gallery. On the screen, they talk only loud enough to be heard by one another, thereby retaining the status of the conversation as a confidential exchange between doctor and patient, and the microphone will carry it to the most distant seat without lessening the impression that it is not meant for other ears. When talking pictures approach their perfection as nearly as our finest stage productions do theirs now, the latter are going to look like some rather indifferent imitations of screen entertainment. Not only will all-talking pictures completely supplant silent pictures within a year, but in less than five years they will supplant stage productions. I’ve been of that opinion for some time, and Interference confirmed it. You may have regarded Brook and Powell as good screen actors, but you will not know how good they really are until you see them in this talking picture. Their voices are perfect and they read their lines mag-
Epitaphs
By LOWELL C. FROST

I
Will Hays
I smiled and smiled and gave my benediction
Unto the least of those who saw me first;
I shall not meet the others (pray God!) in heaven:
Lacking my blessing, for them I fear the worst.

II
The Producer
I ruled the Industry,—no matter how;
And unknown thousands trembled at my nod.
But this is different, and I'm wondering now
If Will Hays fixed it up all right with God.

III
The Extra
I was a rotten actress, but I had my choice—
To be a star, or stay an extra—so
I flipped a coin: "Heads I'll be a star!"
God or the devil touched it: tails it fell.

IV
The Director
I wonder how they'll handle Judgment Day?
A big scene ... no extras ... and mobs, no end!
We'll have a long shot showing the whole works ...
And then ... oh, yes!—a close-up showing God!

V
Welford Beaton
O God, if I have any credit in Thy book,
Give me a good front seat on Judgment Day!
Whence may I see the good ascend to Heaven,
And others that I wot of go to Hell!

nificantly, not because they have had stage training, but
because the screen has taught them that they must feel
strongly if their thoughts are to be photographed, and
in the new art when they feel strongly, they can not help
speaking strongly—can not help putting the drama they
feel into the lines they speak. Evelyn Brent and Doris
Kenyon have big parts in Interference, and, as in the
cases of the two men, they come to us as new people
whom we never saw before. They are alive, vibrant,
human. I have praised many of Miss Brent's screen
characterizations. As a villainess she has no peer, per-
haps no equal, but in this Paramount talking picture she
puts more villainy into one spoken line of a dozen 
words than I ever before saw her crowd into a whole
performance. And, at that, the other three principal characters
excelled her in the impressiveness with which they speak
their lines. Don't get the notion that I think Interference
is a perfect talking picture. I am quite sure that Ben
Schulberg and Roy Pomeroy will agree with me that it isn't; but for a first attempt, it is an extraordinary success,
and the little things in it that will have to be over-
come are trivial compared with the many big things that
make it even now the most engrossing drama that ever
has been brought to the screen.

* * *

Will Nancy Carroll Step to the Front and Take a Bow?

ASSORBING and repeating studio gossip is not one of
my mental diversions, a weakness for which I am
reprimanded at the dinner table every evening after
a day spent on sets and in executive offices. Sometimes
I hear a particularly choice morsel which I vow I will
take home and insert after the salad in order to jazz up
the dinner for the feminine members of my family who
are partaking of it, but somehow or other I forget all
about it, and my day in the studios is voted a failure by
the majority of my family. But I am not completely im-
pervious to gossip. It seems to me that I read, or some-
one told me, that Nancy Carroll began to high-hat the
whole universe after reading all the favorable comments
on her work in Abie's Irish Rose, and to bring her back
to earth Paramount had cast her as the feminine lead in
a Western. If this be so, Nancy has the laugh on Para-
mount and on all the rest of the world. I have seen the
Western, and even at the risk of giving Nancy another
dose of high-hatitis, I must admit that she gallops off
with it by giving a performance that is positively brilli-
ant. And the Western itself, The Water Hole, starring
Jack Holt, is such a splendid picture that it is no punish-
ment for Nancy to be in it. But all its inspiring scenes,
superbly photographed; its virile atmosphere, its rapidly
moving story, fade in retrospect, and the one feature of
the picture that stands out in my mind as the most vivid
impression of it, is Nancy Carroll's face with a multitude
of expressions flitting over it, with intelligence written
all over it, its provoking impishness, its aggravating im-
pudence, its charming tenderness, its pathetic despair, each
definite and clearly defined, each in its proper place and
telling us just what she wants to tell us. Her walk, her
every gesture, are integral parts of her characterization.
When she stands with her feet apart, her hat on the back
of her head, her hands on her hips, tantalizing Jack Holt
who is trying to tame her, she is a delight; and when we
see her, a small figure in a long shot, desperately battling
to win her way to water through the burning desert sands,
there is tragedy in every plodding step she takes. It is a
role of many phases, and she is at home in every one of
them, giving a performance that for evenness and under-
standing makes the acting of practically all the rest of
our pretty girls look trivial and amateurish. This picture
won't make Nancy, for Westerns don't make people, but it
shows that she is going to develop into a box-office magnet
of considerable power, provided, of course, that she has
sense enough to keep her head and not to make a nuisance
of herself by getting the idea that she is a person of
importance. A chilling thought comes to me: Is it really
Nancy who is the heroine of my one piece of gossip, or
someone else? Well, anyway, the advice will do her
good. The Water Hole as a Western is a maverick that
has strayed away from its herd and is untrue to its brand.
For one thing, it has no chase; and, for another, only
two or three shots are fired in it. It has no sheriff with
a drooping mustache and no coat, nor cowboys who wear
sheepskin tents on their legs. Perhaps it isn't a Western,
but I think that the fact that Jack Holt is its star with an
extensive hat and a six-shooter, makes it one. F. Richard
Jones directed, and did it so well that the story and Nancy
Carroll's acting interested me so much that the direction
did not obtrude itself on me. That is why I know it was
good. There are a few attractive interiors, but for the
greater part of the production the sublime sets that God
built out-doors are used. The grandeur of some of the
scenes is indescribable, and I can imagine how it will im-
press audiences in those parts of the world which nature
constructed when it was uninspired. The only blot on
the picture is the final fade-out. It is the inevitable huge
close-up of a vulgar kiss. We see Nancy's mouth open and Jack Holt try to stick his head in it. How can a director do so many clever things all the way through a picture and such a stupid thing at the end of it? The Water Hole is good enough to play the biggest house in the country. I hope it will do so well that Paramount will give us more like it. A few of the sort might restore Westerns to popularity.

* * *

In Course of Which the Life of a Bee Is Saved

GOOD, old Western melodrama has put on cap and gown, and Frank Tuttle has led it by the hand through the cultured pathways of Princeton. Varsity is a nice little picture, chiefly because of Tuttle's intelligent direction and an extraordinarily effective performance by Chester Conklin. I argued recently that it is good business to allow featured players to steal pictures from stars, for all any star needs is a reputation for always appearing in good pictures. Paramount apparently took my advice a long time before I proffered it. Varsity is Buddy Rogers' first starring picture, and Chester Conklin runs away with it. Buddy needs all the strength he can get. He still is not of star magnitude and after seeing him in Varsity I doubt if he will be. He seems to be lacking in that one quality that every real artist must have—depth. Perhaps he can develop it, but it means hard work and a willingness to learn. In the same picture is a girl who has nothing much to do, but who gives one the impression of a latent power that is ready to express itself if given an opportunity. Mary Brian is not the kind who leaps into fame as Janet Gaynor did; she develops slowly and painstakingly, but you can put it down as one of my predictions, 1928 series, that in five years her name will be in electric lights all over the world, and that she and Richard Arlen will be joint stars of some of the greatest pictures that Paramount will produce. And in order not to stray too far from Varsity while extending the series of predictions, I would like to venture a guess that Frank Tuttle will be directing some of these greatest pictures. All his pictures that I have seen thus far have had more or less trivial stories, but I have noticed that when there is anything like a big moment in one of them, Tuttle grabs it and handles it with an assurance and sincerity that marks him as a director much above the tasks assigned to him. There was a unique twist to my viewing of Varsity. I saw the silent version, but previously had seen and heard the sequences to which sound was applied, without knowing where they fitted into the picture. The result was that when the silent version reached one of these sequences, my imagination supplied the sounds, consequently I do not feel myself competent to pass judgment on the silent version beyond saying that I am satisfied that it is going to prove to be a thoroughly entertaining little picture. The sound version will carry the finest movietone sequences that I have heard. Roy Pomeroy has done marvelous things in his laboratory, and when Paramount gets settled down to the production of the inevitable picture, the all-talking, I believe it is going to give us something notable. The fact that since writing the previous sentence I have saved the life of a bee may help to explain my difficulty in making this paragraph what it started out to be, a review of Varsity without ramifications. I am writing beside my swimming pool into which a bee must have taken a header, for I discovered it swimming around in circles, frantically pursuing a course that was getting it nowhere. By using a stick, and leaning over until I darned nearly fell into the pool, I slipped a landing field under the bee and swung it into a honeysuckle vine, thereby doing my one good turn of the day, which leaves me free to be as catty as I feel like in all the rest of the writing I do to-day. There are places in Varsity—if I must go on with it—where it strikes a deep note of tenderness and pathos. Chester Conklin is responsible for it. His performance is, I think, the best he ever has given, and it alone makes the picture well worth seeing. I always have credited Conklin with great ability as an artist, but I scarcely was prepared for the beautiful performance he gives in this picture.

* * *

It All Depends Upon How Interested We Are in Hoboes

BEggARS of Life interested me hugely, not because of possessing qualities that I think will interest the average audience, but because it is an interesting cinematic study. It has a consistent story from beginning to end; it was directed by William A. Wellman with the force and conviction that he is putting into his productions on an increasing scale; it contains excellent performances by Wallace Beery and Richard Arlen, and the story is told in scenes and settings that preserve its atmosphere and enhance its drama. Can you think of anything else that a picture needs to make it successful? There is just one thing, and Beggars of Life lacks it: it must be about something in which we can take a personal interest. Nearly nine reels of nothing but tramps will not find favor anywhere, even when dished up with the trimmings I have mentioned and which are all that are necessary to make a different kind of picture successful. Jim Tully's books, I understand, achieved a certain success. I suppose Beggars of Life had a respectable number of readers, but if one hundred people view the picture for every one who has read the book, the picture still would be a lamentable financial failure, the point I am making being that just because a certain story was a success as a book, it does not follow necessarily that it will be a success as a motion picture. I do not understand why anyone wants to read Jim Tully's uncouth utterances about tramps, and still less do I understand why Paramount believes that anyone will care to follow the utterances for nearly two hours while they are being interpreted on the screen. But on behalf of Paramount, I would like to add that the only way it can determine as a fact what the public wants, is to provide it with every kind of entertainment and allow it to demonstrate its preference. I criticize Paramount neither for making Beggars of Life, nor for making it in the manner in which it was made. All I can say is that it is a really fine picture which did not interest me at all, for I am interested in hoboes only when they do things that I would not expect hoboes to do; and the picture, with meticulous care, shows us hoboes doing only what we would expect from them, and I can't derive any entertainment from that. Wellman handled the romance between Louise Brooks and Dick Arlen with sympathy and good taste, but I could take no great sentimental interest in it, but whether the fault is mine or the picture's
I don't know. Perhaps it was because Miss Brooks was not equal to the demands of the romantic scenes, which made Arlen's splendid work greatly overshadow hers. This young fellow has a marked ability for submerging himself in a role. In Beggars of Life he is not a movie actor; he is a good-for-nothing young tramp who is not quite past the possibility of rehabilitation. The more I see of Arlen on the screen the more I am convinced that he has the making of a great actor. He is wasted in conventional leading roles, but when he gets a characterization into which he can get his teeth he gives us something worth while now and which promises us something really brilliant in the future. The old Wally Beery comes back to us in this picture, Wally the actor who can act, not the buffoon of those terrible comedies. He is just a tramp, like everyone else in the picture, but he makes his characterization stand out as a fine piece of work. I don't know how Paramount is going to figure it out with both Bancroft and Beery on its hands, but I hope it hands some of the plums to the latter. The romance is the big part of Beggars of Life, but I am afraid it is not going to carry the picture into popularity for the reason that we see too many romances in settings much more pleasing. As a five-reel production it would be better.

* * *

You Can Carry Even a Good Fight Just So Far

T he names of Renee Adoree, almost my favorite motion picture actress even though I never have seen her off the screen, and Conrad Nagel, whom I am stalking to see if he can give a poor performance, caused me to pay one of my infrequent visits to a motion picture theatre to see Michigan Kid, which I found to be a Universal picture directed by Irvin Willat, instead of a Metro production as I assumed it to be. And instead of being either a prize-fight or crook picture, as I imagined it must be, it turned out to be a really interesting drama of gold rush days in Alaska, a virile, human drama built on tried and true lines, but containing good acting and reflecting great credit on the director. Perhaps the outstanding single impression of it that I carried away with me was the excellence of the performance given by Lloyd Whitlock as an unprincipled scoundrel. I expected Miss Adoree and Nagel to do as well as they did, but I never before saw Whitlock in such a prominent part and was not prepared for the very fine quality of acting that he displayed. The fact that he looks like a gentleman makes him an ideal type for a certain kind of heavy, and I no longer have any doubt about his ability to handle a big part. Willat's direction was most intelligent throughout. I don't think I ever saw any other gambling hall sequence directed as effectively as he directs one in Michigan Kid. I know something about such resorts, for I've been a long time in the West and have a dreadful past of which my Hold-Up Number was but a mild manifestation, and can commend Willat's skill in faithfully reproducing the atmosphere of an Alaskan dive without resorting to the exaggeration that generally characterizes such scenes on the screen. He shows his versatility by making the romance between Miss Adoree and Nagel charming and tender, and then swinging into drama that is tense and gripping until it loses some of its impressiveness through faulty editing. Nagel and Whitlock have a fight which is carried on the screen long past the point of story value. It is a terrific fight which each combatant apparently intends to wage until one of them becomes a corpse, and the fate of our fascinating heroine depends on the outcome, but my cultured neighbors assembled in the Beverly Hills theatre were laughing outright before it was half over. After each of the contestants had been socked on the jaw a dozen times hard enough to knock his head off the thing became funny, which ruined all the drama that led up to it. For this I blame the editor, but I blame the director for not having the heroine tear a table to pieces and brain the villain with one of its legs long before the fracas had time to become ridiculous. One of the most absurd things we do on the screen is having our heroic heroines mugging on the sidelines while their sweethearts are having their features exaggerated by rough gentlemen who glory in such frenzied exercises. But as thrilling as the fight could have been made, it was nothing to the thrill that followed it. A forest fire winds up Michigan Kid, and it is a real fire through which the hero, heroine and heavy fight their way in a canoe that is tossed about like a cork on a raging torrent that rushes through the inferno of flames. It is one of the most stirring sequences that I have seen in a long time. I suppose that trick photography played its part, but if so, I don't want to know it. It thrilled me, and I am content with it. It took all of Willat's good direction and three excellent performances to offset the wretched lighting and photography that characterize the production. Whitlock blows out a lamp in a mountain cabin and it does not darken the place in the least. The three principals sleep in another cabin that remains brilliantly lighted long after they go to bed, although there is nothing to indicate where the light comes from. The photography throughout is thin and lifeless. However, I found Michigan Kid highly diverting, and Mrs. Spectator, who protested about being dragged from her fireside, thanked me for taking her when she kissed me good night.

* * *

Trying to Solve Riddle of Why a Good Picture Fails

T he fact that Two Lovers was exploited as the last picture in which Vilma Banky and Ronald Colman would appear together gave it a good start at the box-office. No doubt it will return a profit to Sam Goldwyn and will rank as a financial success, but as far as I can judge by the numerous reviews of it which I have read, it has created less of a stir than any other production in which the distinguished stars have appeared. I saw it the other night. I thought it uninteresting, but I became interested in trying to figure out why it did not interest me. I could find no fault with Fred Niblo's direction. He had an excellent cast to work with, and he used it effectively in telling his story. The production is elaborate, as Goldwyn's always are, and it was lighted and photographed in a manner that brought out all its pictorial possibilities. In fact, the picture, for its entire length, is a succession of treats for the eye. It is full of action, of virile swordsmen, marching soldiers, dashing horsemen, and all the other ingredients necessary to make a narrative move swiftly and provide excitement. And still it drags. It is not hard to determine the reason.
Miss Banky and Colman became our most notable team of romantic players by appearing always in productions in which the romance was the dominating note. Their love stories have become screen idylls. In Two Lovers the romance strikes a minor note. It is important only for its effect on the welfare of a community. The story deals only with the welfare of Ghent, something that no one is interested in. It is history, and history is a fact, not fiction. We know that the troubles that Ghent suffered at the period of the story have been settled long ago, and a romance that is inserted in a story solely for the purpose of settling them again before our eyes, carries its own suggestion of being something that is dead and gone. One of the film industry's incomprehensible obsessions is that mythical kingdoms have no screen value, but Two Lovers would have been a much more entertaining picture if it had been frankly a piece of fiction, and not something warmed over for present day consumption. Such treatment would have rid it of its predetermined outcome. It made it no more interesting to me that I did not know what happened to Ghent; I knew it was history—nor presumed it was, which is the same thing—and I could not enthuse over the warmed-over dish. I wanted a romance that was important for its own sake, and not one that was important only for its effect on the fate of people who have been dead for over a century. If it had been laid in a mythical kingdom, I could have imagined myself living in its period and taking a contemporary interest in it, for there would have been no cold and unrelenting facts to remind me that the whole thing was settled before it started. Historical dramas are all right as screen material, but they should deal with the fate of empires, with epochs of world importance; and they should have figures as great as Napoleon in them. Ghent doesn't intrigue one as the main consideration of a story. As a background for a romance it would do, but I can say the same thing for Glendale. In Two Lovers the romance is viewed only through a network of political intrigue, which dominates it. If Sam Goldwyn ever brings Banky and Colman together again, as he undoubtedly will, I hope it will be in a romance that will absorb us to the exclusion from our consideration of facts that history settled long ago.

* * *

Mickey Neilan Does the Right Thing by Our Bebe

The story that resulted in Take Me Home, a Paramount picture starring Bebe Daniels, has been done on the screen a thousand times, but, thanks to Mickey Neilan's direction, I don't think it ever before was quite so entertaining. It's a backstage story in which Bebe loves Neil Hamilton and Lilyan Tashman tries to get him away from her. In the end Lilyan is vanquished, of course, but only after a knock-down-and-drag-out fight with Bebe which is one of the high spots of the picture. It was directed by Neilan with a keen regard for its comedy possibilities. In fact Neilan was at his best all the way through, sprinkling the film with those delightful little touches that distinguish his direction when he is going strong. He is a spotty director, but this time reveals all his high spots. One of the most amusing sequences in the picture is that in which the romance between Bebe and Hamilton gets under way. While the two of them are eating corn on the cob, Hamilton is afflicted with hiccoughs, and Bebe's efforts to cure them will convulse any audience. In all her scenes Bebe responds enthusiastically to Mickey's direction and gives one of the best performances in a long time. She does her best work in the comedy scenes, but handles her serious moments acceptably. The picture, however, is not all hers. Hamilton makes it a fifty-fifty proposition by the excellence of his performance. He is one of the best leading men we have, being equally efficient in comedy and drama. Miss Tashman, introduced in a title as "cool in an emergency and warm in a taxi," gives a splendid performance. I imagine that feminine eyes will feast on the clothes she wears and her manner of wearing them. That fine comedian with a soul, Joe E. Brown, is in Take Me Home, but does not have a great deal to do. I would like to see one of the big producers give him a real chance. Ernie Wood as a hassled stage-manager contributes a fine performance, and Doris Hill lends charm to a small part. Paramount has given the picture a fitting production. The back-stage scenes are particularly impressive, and Neilan directed them in a manner that makes them convincing. He gives us many attractive views of the stage, one particularly beautiful one being shot through the strings of a harp. The picture abounds with clever titles which add greatly to its entertainment value. The final fade-out is silly. Bebe and Hamilton have been married for five years and have two beautiful children. The last we see of the picture is the two youngsters being spanked. It is a jarring note for which there is no excuse. If punishing two attractive children is someone's idea of comedy, I shudder to think what he would present to us as his conception of tragedy. But all the rest of Take Me Home is good entertainment and exhibitors need have no hesitancy in booking it.

Although I constantly am complaining about the abuse of close-ups, I don't think anyone has a greater appreciation of their value when they are used properly. Who can forget the superb close-up of John Barrymore in The Beloved Rogue? It ran for several hundred feet during which we followed the complete thought process of the poor devil who was to be banished from his beloved Paris. That close-up impressed us because we were allowed to contemplate it without interruption, which means that the film editor is entitled to about as much credit for its success as the actor is. I saw another close-up the other day that would have been almost as notable as the Barrymore one if it had been cut with as much intelligence. In Beggars of Life, Wallace Beery, a tramp with designs on Louise Brooks, realizes gradually that she loves Dick Arlen, that this love is something queer but worth while, and that he'd better be good and help the lovers get away. Beery's whole thought process unwinds before us in a long close-up. But in the cutting-room they did not understand this close-up. They measured off so many feet of it, according to rule three, paragraph seven, chapter thirty-six of "Editors' Manual for Cutting Motion Pictures," and inserted a close-up of the girl, for which authority can be found in every chapter in the book; thereby destroying the continuity of Beery's thoughts, the one thing that excused the close-up being in the picture at all. I suppose thus far this year I have
seen more than one hundred close-ups handled with the
same stupidity that robs Beery of the credit for doing
something really fine in Beggars of Life. I sought to dis-
regard the frequent interruptions made by sharp cutting,
and as well as I could I pieced together mentally the
isolated fragments of the long close-up and viewed it as
a whole. As well as I could judge, if it had been shown
without a break, as a really intelligent person would have
shown it, it would have been the second best close-up that
I have seen.

THE screen has too great a disposition to draw its char-
acters in monotones—all-good heroes and all-bad vil-
lains. I believe each of these characters would be more
convincing if he had a dash of the other. In Michigan
Kid Lloyd Whitlock returns to his cabin and is greeted
affectionately by a friendly old dog who one can see at
a glance is a fine old gentleman who would be a com-
fortable companion to have in front of a fire or at heel
on a morning tramp. Whitlock rewards the dog’s mani-
estations of love by kicking him out of the way. The
fact that he was a thief and a would-be murderer appar-
ently was not enough to impress upon the audience that he
had villainous tendencies. He had to kick a dog to show
how bad he really was. I am surprised that Irvin Willat,
whose direction of the picture generally was so intelligent,
did not grasp the opportunity presented by the presence
of the dog to add a fine touch to the characterization of
his heavy. Whitlock should have fondled the dog, should
have returned his caresses; we should have seen that he
had at least one good streak in him. It would have con-
tributed to the drama of his villainy if we had seen him
in his treatment of his dog, but ruthless and mur-
derous in his designs on the hero. One of the elemen-
tal things in drama is having people do the kind of things
that we would not expect such people to do. A manifesta-
tion of this is the fact that gentleman crooks are more
popular on the screen than the underworld conception of
a crook. We do not expect gentlemen to commit crimes,
which makes dramatic the fact that they do. There is a
tragic contrast in the character of a man who loves a
dog but tries to commit murder. Willat overlooked an
opportunity to bring out such contrast. I will make
no further favorable references in The Spectator to Lloyd
Whitlock until he assures me that as soon as the kicking
scene was shot he put his arms around that old dog’s
neck and explained that it was done for art’s sake. Until
I know that a handsome apology was extended I’m offen
both Lloyd and Irvin.

DESPITE the fact that perhaps a score of millions of
dollars will have been spent in the next six months
to provide the big producing organizations with facilities
for the making of talking pictures, silent pictures still
have a few champions. On the programs of all the pro-
ducers there are provisions for some of the silent ones for
next year’s release. By the time that their release dates
come around there will be at least twenty-five hundred
theatres wired for sound pictures, quite enough to make
each good talking picture return a handsome profit, even
if it had no silent version to increase its earnings by
playing in the unwired houses. Producers who do not
realize now that every important picture released next
year must have sound, are going to be put to a great and
unnecessary expense in reshooting such pictures when the
realization comes. In another six months houses in
all the big cities will be wired, and silent pictures will
not be accepted by the public. The blindness of producers
who can not see this is going to cost them a great deal of
money.

ONCE I said in The Spectator that I hoped to see the
day when the inevitable fight between the heavy and
the hero would be settled in one punch, instead of being
dragged out as they always are. I’ve seen the day. In
Water Hole Jack Holt and the capable heavy, whose name
I did not get, square away for a fight. Jack lands the
first blow, the only one. It knocks the heavy over a cliff
and into the next world, which effectively eliminates the
menace from the romance, and spares us the sight of two
husky actors playing pig-a-back. In going over my proofs,
I find that I did not mention John Boles in my review of
Water Hole. He gives a splendid performance, the only
one in which I have seen him given an opportunity to
extend himself. In a sequence in which he becomes almost
demented through thirst, he reveals powers as a dramatic
actor that I did not know he possessed. It is seldom that
our handsome leading men have roles that they can get
their teeth into. Boles has such a part in this picture
and he takes a huge bite.

WHEN I viewed Michigan Kid, reviewed somewhere
up-front, I was attracted by the sweetness and gen-
eral attractiveness of a little girl who played Renee Adoree
as a child. The cast had been presented on the screen,
but I could not remember all the names, largely because
I made no effort to. I was sorry, for I wanted to men-
tion the good work of the talented miss. When the pic-
ture ended I was both surprised and pleased to see the
cast shown again with the explanation that it was re-
peated to give those who viewed the picture an oppor-
tunity to check up on the names of any of the actors whose
performances pleased them. It is the first time I have
seen a picture with such a sensible innovation. Why isn’t
it done oftener? The casts always are run at the beginning
of a film, at a time when we are not interested in the
performers who are not known to us already; but almost
every time after a picture has been run we wonder who
it was who gave such a good performance in one of the
minor roles. If the system that Universal uses in
Michigan Kid were adopted generally, our curiosity would
be satisfied. Oh, yes—the name of the sweet youngster
is Virginia Grey.

THE thin line that exists between comedy and tragedy
is demonstrated by the performance of Chester Conklin in Varsity. Conklin wears his walrus mustache
that has assisted him to draw laughs from the whole
world; he indulges in his established mannerisms that
have been part of his comedy characterization, and to all
outward appearances acts in precisely the same way as
he does when his only concern is to cause as many laughs
as possible. Yet in Varsity he will cause more tears to
flow than smiles to spread across faces. His mechanics
are the same as he uses in comedy, but back of them in
this picture is a note of pathos, of a great weakness and
at the same time a great strength. No comedian can become great unless he could be great also as a tragedian. I don’t believe Charlie Chaplin has to devote as much thought to making us laugh as he has to keeping us from crying. And some day I hope to see Charlie in a part that calls for tears. What a performance it could be!

PROMPTED, no doubt, purely by a desire to boast, I would like to remind you that when the sound stampede first struck Hollywood, I comforted the people in pictures by telling them that they need not worry about their voices as any passable talking voice could adjust itself readily to microphone requirements. At that time there was woe in the ranks of actors who thought they would be supplanted forthwith by people trained to speak on the stage. Producers had the same idea, and there was much scurrying to New York to look for new people, something which I said at the time was an insane thing to do. By this time all our stars and feature players have been given voice tests, and the truth of what I said at the beginning has been demonstrated. The first thing you know, some adventurous producer will take The Spectator so seriously that he will listen to it and cease making a fool of himself every little while.

MAURICE D. KAN, writing in The Film Daily under the heading, “All or None”, has this to say: “We are fast leaning toward the belief that it should be all spoken dialogue or none. In The Singing Fool talking lines are outrageously mixed with written dialogue titles. Likewise in Lonesome. First the characters talk; then their lips move and you don’t hear anything. It is a dramatic falsetto as sour as it can be; a jarring, annoying note that should be smothered at once.” The Spectator said the same thing six months ago and has kept on saying it ever since.

ABOUT the time I started The Spectator the Beery-Hatton comedies were at the peak of their popularity. I criticized them severely and claimed that no permanent success could be built on such trash. My Paramount friends pulled big grosses on me to prove that I was wrong and that the public wanted just what it was getting. Well, I’m still making Spectators and Paramount isn’t making any more Beery-Hatton comedies.

THE HOLD-UP NUMBER

... and I would like to add that you should get out such a number every year. You can put me down as one who would be willing to be held up every twelve months purely for the pleasure of reading such a number as the mail man has just brought me. It is unique, witty and intensely interesting. When you announced it, I think you said something about never doing it again. That is one resolve you should not stick to.

DAVID TORRENCE.

That makes just an even forty letters and notes in a similar strain that have reached me since the Hold-Up Number was published. The number seems to have made a hit, and he’s a pretty wise guy who has sense enough to retire with a bow when he has made a hit. There never will be another Hold-Up Number of The Spectator. The secret of its success was the freshness of the idea behind it, and I can’t keep the idea fresh by warming it over once a year. The next special number of this publication will be its Fiftieth Anniversary Number, which will appear in March, 1976. Due notice will be given of the advertising rates, which will show a slight increase over those for the Hold-Up Number, as I expect that by that time I will have to get out a sound version also.

Your Hold-Up Number was a delight, a scintillating issue that is a credit to American journalism in general. But now that you have become a hold-up man, how can you continue to criticize other publishers for getting out special numbers which prey on us? (I am almost afraid to write you since you have started a Mail Man column. Don’t use my name.)

J. T. M.

Readers need not be afraid to sign their names to letters to me. When I am not sure that it would be wise to publish a name, I will use initials. As for the subject matter of the above comments, I have undergone no change of heart. I still think that the kind of special numbers that we have been getting are cheap grafts and that screen people are fools for falling for them. I hope the Hold-Up Number of The Spectator will have the effect of making all of them look ridiculous. All the advertising that anyone in the creative branches of picture-making needs is a small announcement appearing regularly in The Spectator.

I suppose now that you have made one clean-up, you will begin a series of special editions honoring some picture mogul as Variety does once every so often — a Zukor number, a De Mille number, a Griffith number, and so on.

R. D. M.

I had thought of that. I looked so enviously on all the money Variety makes with its special numbers of the sort that I decided to get out a Peter the Hermit number. I outfitted a pack train and journeyed into the mountains to lay the matter before Peter. I found him combing fleas out of a dog’s coat, and as he had another comb, I began on one of his burros, capturing thirty-two fleas by sundown. I had to chase the last one nearly a mile, and when I got back to camp Peter had my supper prepared. It consisted of a walnut on a leaf of lettuce. I ate as much of it as I could, then lit my pipe, which Peter termed a filthy practice, and explained the object of my trip. I told him that my banker was so encouraged by my Hold-Up Number that the board of directors of the bank had decided to call in another of my loans, which made it necessary to honor someone by using his name as an excuse for getting more money. But Peter protested that he still was an upright citizen, and chased me out of camp. Next week I am going to sound out Farina on the idea.

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THE Singing Fool is undoubtedly the greatest entertainment ever offered to anybody, anywhere. It is a Warner Brothers Vitaphone picture starring Al Jolson, and it is something no one should miss. Even if it had been shot without sound, it would have been a noteworthy piece of work, as Lloyd Bacon’s direction and Jolson’s acting, even without his voice, were exceptional. The Vitaphone itself, as is customary with the Warner sound output, is far better than anything done up to date. Voices are far clearer, and there is not nearly so much mechanical sound in the recording. One scene, New Year’s eve in a cafe, is impressive just because of the volume of the sound caught by the microphone. Thrill after thrill is piled up, until the auditor realizes that he is seeing one of the greatest things in the development of motion pictures. There is plenty of singing from Jolson, and how that man can sing! He isn’t such a wonderful actor until he starts to warble, but he has everybody faded when it comes to putting over emotion with music.

The difference between a topnotcher and a dub never has been very tangible, but Jolson, in The Singing Fool, comes closer to making it concrete than anybody yet. He is a star all right, and has an unusual skill at extracting sympathy. I’m going over all this about Jolson, because the picture was wrapped around his personality. I don’t think Warners will duplicate their triumph in this picture for some time, since they have put so much into it. It will take them years to work up enough advanced material to outdo The Singing Fool. Certainly, they will have to go a long way to equal the entertainment value of this picture. It has everything, including unusually good direction. Lloyd Bacon, to my knowledge at least, never did anything as good as this. Very few directors have. Toward the beginning of the picture, he uses a shot I haven’t seen before. A waiter is hunting for someone in a cafe, and the camera is put in his place and moves through the rooms just as the waiter would. It was a very sensible shot, and I’m surprised that it hasn’t been done before. I will be eternally grateful to someone connected with The Singing Fool for not having Jolson rush back to his worthless wife and slobber all over her. Most motion picture heroes don’t seem to have sense enough to get rid of the women who have broken their hearts. When Jolson finally got away from his last encounter with the woman, and hadn’t taken her back, I was greatly relieved.

After Jolson, the acting honors go to little three-year-old David Lee, who is going to take the country by storm as soon as The Singing Fool is released generally. Babies are great natural actors, anyway, but this boy has a personality which strikes one the minute he appears on the screen. He must have intelligence, too; because he had to speak lines and do quite a lot of acting, all of which he did splendidly. Josephine Dunn was given a chance at an unsympathetic part, and she did very nicely. Betty Bronson was good in a part which didn’t offer very great possibilities, and the man who played Blackie Joe deserves mention. There was a welcome glimpse of Edward Martindel. He is a fine actor and ought to be used more often. Helene Lynch completed the fine cast, although she had no chance to demonstrate how well she can act.

The main fault of The Woman Disputes was its incoherency. It never seemed quite sure of what it was all about; and, as a result, it wandered along rather vaguely until it ended. It dragged, too. There were moments when I thought it never would end, but it did, with a very good closing scene. Undoubtedly, the scrambled condition of the picture was due to the fact that two directors, Henry King and Sam Taylor, worked on it. Rhyme or reason can’t be expected in a case like that. The more I think about it, the more muddled it becomes. There didn’t seem to be one definite plot, and one character who was in the first part of the picture dropped out of sight nearly to the end. I think it is bad business to lose a character completely if he is to be used again. His significance in the story is forgotten, and his reappearance interrupts the action, because the audience has to stop and think where it has seen him before.

Norma Talmadge was starred in The Woman Disputed, and she gave a fine performance. Her work always is consistent and good. However, the real acting honors of the picture belong to the late Arnold Kent. It is fitting that such a brilliant artist should leave behind this splendid performance as a sort of monument to his memory. His death, just when he was winning general recognition of his talents, was a great tragedy. Gilbert Roland was unimpressive in a rather straight role. Vavitch, Gladys Brockwell, Nicholas Soussanin, and Gustav von Seyffertitz completed an unusually strong cast.

There was nothing particularly outstanding about Manhattan Cocktail, but it was entertaining; and as that was all it aimed at, it was a worthy little picture. There was plenty of action in it, and never a slow moment. Ernest Vajda’s story was well written, and Dorothy Arzner put it on the screen smoothly. It was opened by a rather elaborate prologue laid in ancient Crete, which was very beautifully done. The prologue

Spoken Screen Laughs

must be able to compete with those uttered by human personalities. Ask our niftiest fun-makers such as Al Jolson, Howard and Howard, Leon Errol, Rooney and Bent, Klein Brothers, etc., and nine out of every ten will volunteer there is no more prolific or experienced writer of sure-fire, up-to-date comedy material and dialogue than the undersigned.

JAMES MADISON
(America’s Most Versatile Author)
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THE STARRED, THE KILLED.

There was very little opportunity to get any artistic effects; because the action all took place in locations where there was nothing of any beauty to film. There were a few shots where the country wasn't so bad looking, and Wellman made the most of them. One place where he used the camera cleverly was in the scene where the two principals were walking down the railroad track. He got both of them in camera range, where most directors would have broken it up into individual shots. Another good bit was a scene where Louise Brooks describes a murder. It is much the same way in which Victor Seastrom showed thoughts in the Masks of the Devil. Miss Brooks' face was superimposed upon the action which took place during the murder, and thus the audience got her reaction to everything. It was very interesting.

Beggars of Life marked Wallace Beery's return to real acting after his exile to the comedy atrocities he and Raymond Hatton had to commit. He played the type of role which suits him best, that of a sympathetic heavy. His work was good in its serious moments, but his formerly splendid comedy rather has been atrophied by his recent work. Richard Arlen is beginning to get away from conventional leads, and in this picture he demonstrates that he is amply equipped with the necessary talent for more dramatic roles. His work was so good that I hope it will win him more parts with something to them. Louise Brooks was a great surprise. I haven't seen her before in anything which required any more ability than just the knowledge of how to stand around attractively. In Beggars of Life she became a dramatic actress and a good one. Her work showed unusual power. Roscoe Karns also was in the cast.

* * *

BILL Howard, formally known as William K. Howard, has made another good picture in The River Pirate. It is different from anything Bill has directed before, but that doesn't make any difference to him, versatility being one of his good points. The strong point of his direction lies in the single-minded interest he devotes to telling the story. In The River Pirate he had a strong story, and he never diverted from it for a minute; although he worked in many little sidelines, all of which helped the picture. He had a rather interesting shot where two characters walk into the scene from either side. He also swung his camera from one to the other without cutting. The friendship between the boy and the man was very well done, and there was an absence of any mawkish sentiment, which is usually the curse of screen friendships. Victor McLaglen and Nick Stuart played the two friends for all they were worth, so naturally it was good.

There are very few directors with Howard's ability for injecting comedy which never seems forced or strained. He has one sequence in a clothing store which is very funny, and there are others all through the picture. Victor McLaglen, who is starred, does them very cleverly. His work all through the picture was very good and deserves the highest praise. Nick Stuart is a revelation. I never have seen him before when he had any chance to act, but in The River Pirate, his work is brilliant. Earle Foxe does as well as usual in a characterization which is rather new to him. Donald Crisp is splendid as the detective. The cast of The Pirate also contained one of my favorite directors."

* * *

ROWLAND V. LEE
Director

THE FIRST KISS
PARAMOUNT-FAMOUS-LASKY
actresses. Whenever Lois Moran is in a picture, I know I am going to enjoy it, because she always is good. Incidentally, she has one of the most likeable screen personalities I have ever seen.

ANYBODY looking for a good sea story to put upon the screen may read Hate, Arthur Howden Smith's latest book, and hunt no farther. It has everything in it, and could be adapted to the screen very easily. When The Divine Lady is released, several producers are liable to be killed in the rush to do sea pictures. Somebody ought to get in on the ground floor and buy Hate. Incidentally, that's a great box-office title. If somebody buys it and butchers it, it will be criminal, because the book as it is has all the elements which go to make up a great motion picture.

BEBE Daniels is being put into more serious things, if we are to judge from Take Me Home, which is her latest. Marshall Neilan directed it, so it isn't entirely devoid of humor; but the humor is incidental instead of being the main feature of the picture. Strangely enough, it was a story of the stage, and neither of the principals became a great star. Can you imagine that? The novelty of it made me like it. The story was told clearly and logically, and any story which is told that way is bound to make a good picture. The object of pictures is to tell stories on the screen and tell them well. So many people try to disguise poor story construction with a lot of extraneous bits which have nothing to do with it. Neilan puts in a lot of funny little things; but he is justified, because he tells his story well. He has a scene in a park, where Neil Hamilton gets the hiccoughs. By the time Bebe has him definitely cured of them, she has them herself. It was one of the funniest its I have seen in a long time. There is a fight sequence between Bebe and Lilyan Tashman which also is very amusing.

In Take Me Home, Neil Hamilton was supposed to have come from the country to get on the stage. He wears a suit which has been out of date for the past five years, and which is no more typical of the country than a silk hat. In this day and age, people in the country are just as up-to-date as those in the city; and motion pictures ever appear to think of that. It was rather a surprise to see Hamilton not perfectly dressed. He wears clothes better than anybody in pictures, nearly; but I'm glad to see that he is getting parts where he can do something. The ending of Take Me Home was silly. Herman Mankiewicz always has written good titles, but in this picture, he seemed to be seized with inspiration or something, because he never has done such good stuff before. The titles contributed a great deal of humor to the picture. Beside those already mentioned, the cast of Take Me Home contained Joe Brown and Doris Hill.

THE individual who protested to Mr. Quirk, who sent it to Dad, that pictures should be abolished must have seen The Passion Song. It would make practically any movie fan see the error of his ways.

STARRING a suddenly popular new player always has been a risky business; but in the case of Charles Rogers, Paramount has done the job very well. A couple of poor starring pictures would have ruined Rogers' drawing power, but another like Varsity will put him permanently at the top of the heap. To begin with, Paramount gave the job to one of their best directors, Frank Tuttle. Then they prepared a strong story, and assembled a sure-fire cast, which was headed by Chester Conklin, who never gave a poor performance in his life. The picture was bound to be a success. I don't mean this as any reflection on Rogers, who is a clever actor himself; on the contrary, I think it is a compliment to Rogers' value that so much care is lavished on his first picture. All the preparations were not wasted, for Varsity is the best college story I have seen. There are none of the usual bromides such as the hero running all the way from the next county to win the football game in the last minute of play, and the girl is not the daughter of one of the professors. Because of those two departures, I would have enjoyed the picture in spite of anything else.

The college stuff in Varsity was only incidental, anyway. The main theme of the story could have been told anywhere. I daresay the plot has been done dozens of times before, but it seemed new to me; and certainly it

---

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was freshly handled. Tuttle's direction was highly intelligent, and there were none of the usual silly things which crop up in this type of story. It struck me as being about the first college picture which real collegians could not object to. Rogers did very well as the boy whose whole career is threatened by his tendency toward drink. Chester Conklin was splendid, of course. His part offered the greatest opportunities, and he made the most of them. Mary Brian played opposite Rogers and did fine work. She always is good.

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"CASEY AT THE BAT" (Directed)
"NOW WE'RE IN THE AIR"
"HOT NEWS"
"THE FLEET'S IN"
"SOMEONE TO LOVE"

DEMMY LAMSON
RUTH COLLIER
Inc.
ABOUT OTHER THINGS, By K. C. B.

A ND now comes William Randolph Hearst with a private war between himself and France. It appears that Mr. Hearst went to Paris purely in his private capacity as a citizen of these United States bent on doing nothing more than to play around for a little while. Then somebody connected with the Universal Service, a news agency of which Mr. Hearst is proprietor, was given, purloined, or gained through bribery, a copy of a letter being sent by the government of France to its representatives in foreign lands, the letter having to do with a secret naval agreement entered into between France and England. Universal Service thereupon cabled the letter to the United States and the next morning France and England awoke to the knowledge that they hadn't any secret any more.

England didn't take the matter very seriously, although a few of its statesmen on the opposition benches took advantage of it to pan the government, an advantage that is never overlooked in English politics. France, however, felt that the confidence it reposes in correspondents of foreign papers, had been imposed upon, and ordered out of the country the reporter who had secured the letter, a quite fit and proper thing to do, and that undoubtedly would be done by this country were the positions reversed. Also, it arrested the reporter and held him for seven hours in an effort to make him tell just how he got the letter. All the reporter confessed, according to his story, was that Mr. Hearst told him to file the letter for publication in the United States.

Of No Importance, Anyway

I t really wasn't a very terrible agreement and not, in any way, intended to injure Uncle Sam, but it was a scoop for the Hearst newspapers and so they have gone on bragging about it and stirring up all of the trouble that could possibly be made from it. As a matter of fact, if the agreement had been given out by the two governments, merely as a matter of news, it would have caused but little comment and no excitement at all. But, inasmuch as the letter was stolen, or what you will, and secured by a Universal Service representative, it behooves Universal Service to point to it as a remarkable piece of newspaper work performed by one of its bright young men.

Anyway, at present writing, Mr. Hearst, in all of his papers, is at war with the French and has threatened them if they ever find themselves in a predicament similar to that in which they were when we sent our great army to France, that very likely we'll tell them we don't know anything about it and it doesn't interest us in the least. But, of course, it's just a private war and if you and I don't want to interest ourselves in it we don't have to. We can just skip over it and go over to the sporting page or the comics. Personally, I'm much more interested in learning what happened to Flint, the clerk in Nebb's hotel, or if Gus is ever going to make anything out of his asbestos kimono for hot dogs.

* * *

Sympathizing With Harold

I CAN imagine Harold McCormick seating himself at the breakfast table, unfolding his napkin and placing it upon his lap, and then reaching for his morning paper and in a hesitant manner drawing it to him. I can then further imagine him half closing his eyes, so that his view of the paper is dimmed, then opening the paper and spreading it before him. With this done, there is then a gradual raising of the eyelids, and if he throws the paper aside before his eyes have been completely opened, the butler will then know that through the McCormick eyelashes there has come a vision of fogged black head-lines telling of the struggles of Mme. Ganna Walska to keep in the public eye and get her two million five hundred thousand dollars worth of gowns and jewels out of the New York custom house.

It's a pretty tough spot for Harold, this being the husband of Ganna. If he crosses to Paris to see her, or she crosses to America to see him, it is never a private affair. Right away the papers make it a great public event, in which enterprise they always seem to be aided and abetted by Ganna. Apparently she likes it, just as much as Harold dreads it, for they do say he is a pleasant gentleman of modest mien and that while Ganna is in Paris looking after her dress-making establishment and her theatre and trying to fight her way into grand opera, Harold is quite content and happy at home in America.

Disturbing Messages That Come

I t must, therefore, disturb him greatly when he reads in the paper or is apprised by cable that Ganna is on her way to America. If, from a study of her past performances, he could find assurance that she would just slip in without causing a lot of commotion and trouble it wouldn't be so bad. But always she does an

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McPherson and there is nothing for Harold to do but
run around in circles until the storm has subsided and
there is, at least, a momentary lull.

In the matter of the customs troubles that Ganna's
last entrance through the Port of New York has stirred
up, and as one of the one hundred and ten million Amer-
icans for the protection of whom our custom laws are
made, I would be perfectly willing that all the customs
inspectors, just the moment they saw Ganna get off the
boat, would close their eyes until she was clear of the
pier. Not only would this be a kindness to Harold, but
it would save the Port of New York and the department
at Washington a lot of trouble, and, in addition, would
relieve the readers of the daily papers of their constant
worry about what is happening to Ganna.

Why Worry So About Me?

ONE of the closing paragraphs of a letter brought
by the postman to me contained the assurance that
"this letter is not intended to depress you." Pre-
viously, for four paragraphs, the letter had told of the
immediate necessity of making cemetery provisions for
the hereafter. These four paragraphs had within them
a lot of language that surely never could have been written
for intelligent persons, any more than was the line of
apology quoted above.

Any intelligent person would know that all the writer
of the letter wanted was that he should sell me some-
thing. Whether it was a lot in his cemetery or some
stock, I don't know, but there was held out to me the
promise that if I would sign and return the enclosed card
there would be sent to me some valuable information.
But instead of just telling me that, the writer tried to
frighten me, or make me cry, or something. He told me
"there was no escape from that sad day," and continued
with a lot of other information of which I have been pos-
sessed since I was a little bit of a boy back in Canada.

Selling me a lot or some stock in this cemetery, which
the letter says is the largest in California—which could
make no possible difference to anyone who happened to
be buried in it—is a perfectly legitimate enterprise, but
I resent the assumption on the part of the letter writer
that he can move me with talk of "silent halls of death"
and "consecration of memories" and "permanent shrines,"
etc. If he had just said: "Dear Sir: If you have made
no cemetery provisions for yourself and family, which,
you will agree is a desirable and necessary thing to do,
we would like to send a representative to speak with
you"—if he had just said that, he would not have stirred
up in me a resentment that will remain with me past the
need of one of his lots.

And if the man who wrote the letter happens to read
this, I want him to cut my name off his mailing list. This
is the third or fourth I have received and I am in good
health and there is no reason why he should worry about
me so much.

Rolled Gold Cuff Links

THE same mail that brought me the cemetery letter
brought one from the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.
to whom I am indebted in the sum of forty-eight
dollars, the balance due on my new Britannicas, and which

"Just a hell of a big chunk of boloney—that's the picture business. But for
the grace of God, the big bums that run it would still be cloak and suit sales-
men, street car conductors and such. If I never see one of you swelled-headed,
four-flushing producers again it will be too damned soon."

—and Richard Clarke tears up a $2,500 a week contract and leaves the business flat. Pursued
perpetually by his reputation, confronted constantly by his own face, he battles in to the heart of big
business—and finds it rotten to the core. The people in it are so much meaner, so much more selfish,
so much more greedy than those in the picture business that he comes back and starts all over—from a
different point of view.

It's a humorous, dramatic and melodramatic story called Busting Out.

John F. Goodrich
6683 Sunset Blvd. Granite 9525

October 27, 1928
I am obligated to satisfy at the rate of fifteen dollars a month. And the letter, or rather the printed circular, says that if I will send my check this month for the balance in full, that they will then send to me, post-prepaid, a set of Krementz Rolled Gold Cuff Links, guaranteed by Krementz to last forever!

"We have been fortunate," the circular says, "in making arrangements whereby we are enabled to offer to a limited number of our subscribers this wonderful chance to secure a set of these links." Imagine the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 342 Madison Avenue, New York City, doing a thing like that! What in the world do you suppose ever put it into the head of any official of that old organization that a man who had purchased a new Britannica would be interested in gold cuff links? Why, bless their old souls, I haven't worn a pair of gold cuff links for years and years. And try as I may, I can think of none of my friends upon whose cuffs I have seen the color of gold for just as many years.

Here I am, therefore, with this wonderful offer before me and nothing I can do about it, excepting, perhaps, to say to the officials of the Britannica Company that if the cuff links really are gold, and I have no doubt they are, that they'll just send mine back to the manufacturers and get credit for them, and then tell me the amount of that credit, I will be glad to send along my check at once for the balance. But not for the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., or anyone else, will I go back again to the use of gold cuff links.

Reviewed in this Number

BEGGARS OF LIFE—
A Paramount picture. Directed by William A. Wellman; story by Jimmy Tully; adapted and supervised by Benjamin Glazer; photographed by Henry Gerrard; assistant director, Otto Brower.


INTERFERENCE (Sound Version)—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Roy P. Pomeroy; from the play by Roland Pertwee and Harold Dearden; based on a Lothar Mendes Production; photographed by J. Roy Hunt and Parciot Edouard; assistant director, George Yohalem.

The cast: Clive Brook, Evelyn Brent, William Powell, Doris Kenyon, Louis Payne, Brandon Hurst, Wilfred Noy, Tom Ricketts, Donald Stuart, Raymond Lawrence.

MANHATTAN COCKTAIL—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Dorothy Arzner; story by Ernest Vajda; screen play by Ethel Doherty; photographed by Harry Fischbeck; assistant director, Paul Jones; titles by George Marion, Jr.; film editor, Doris Drought.


MICHIGAN KID—
A Universal picture. Directed by Irvin Willat; from the story by Rex Beach; adapted by J. Grubb Alexander; scenario by Peter Milne; photographed by Charles Stumar.

The cast: Conrad Nagel, Renee Adoree, Lloyd Whitlock, Fred Esmelton, Adolph Milar, Maurice Murphy, Virginia Grey, Dick Palm.

RIVER PIRATE—
A William Fox picture. Directed by William K. Howard; story by Charles Frances Coe; scenario by John Reinhardt and Benjamin Markson; assistant director, Gordon Cooper; photographed by Lucien Andriot.


SINGING FOOL, THE—
A Warner Brothers picture. Directed by Lloyd Bacon; story by Leslie S. Barrows; scenario by C. Graham Baker; photographed by Byron Haskins; assistant director, Frank Shaw.


TAKE ME HOME—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Marshall Neilan; story by Grover Jones and Tom Crizer; screen play.

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The cast: Bebe Daniels, Neil Hamilton, Lilyan Tashman, Doris Hill, Joe E. Brown, Ernie Wood, Marcia Hariss, Yvonne Howell, Janet MacLeod, John W. Johnstone.

TWO LOVERS—
A United Artists picture. Directed by Fred Niblo; from the story "Leatherface" by Baroness Orczy; adapted by Alice D. G. Miller; photographed by George Barnes, A. S. C.; assistant director, H. B. Humberstone.


VARSITY—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Frank Tuttle; story by Wells Root; screen play by Howard Estabrook; photographed by A. J. Stout; assistant director, Russell Mathews; editor-in-chief, David O. Selznick.

The cast: Charles Rogers, Mary Brian, Chester Conklin, Phillips R. Holmes, Robert Ellis, John Westwood, John Cassar.

WATERHOLE, THE—
A Paramount picture. Directed by F. Richard Jones; photographed by C. Edgar Schoenbaum; assistant director, George Crook; editor-in-chief, Albert Shelby LeVino.


WOMAN DISPUTED, THE—
A United Artists picture. Directed by Henry King and Sam Taylor; adapted by C. Gardner Sullivan; from the play by Dennison Clift; art director, William Cameron Menzies; photographed by Oliver Marsb, A. S. C.; technical advisors, Capt. Marco Elter and Col. Alexis Davidoff; wardrobe manager, Frank Donnell; assistant director, Robert Florey; film editor, Hal C. Kern.

The cast: Norma Talmadge, Gilbert Roland, Arnold Kent, Michael Vavitch, Boris de Fas, Gustav von Seyffertitz, Gladys Brockwell.

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LLOYD BACON

Directed

"The Lion and
The Mouse"

"Women They Talk
About"

"The Singing Fool"

With Warner Bros.
Up to Warner Brothers to deliver the goods

Metro's poor pictures due to their disorganized lot

Effect of sound on writers, directors, actors

Religion, prize-fights, skunks etc.

by K. C. B.

Reviewed by the Junior Critic

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CAPTAIN SWAGGER
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Up to Warner Brothers to Deliver the Goods

WARNER Brothers can buy up all the theatres in the country, and merge everything that there is to merge, but they will never get anywhere unless they make good pictures. As producers they have not been noted for the quality of their output, and until they get their minds off the stock market and away from Wall Street, that quality is not going to be improved. As long as the banks stand by the Warners as they are doing now, the brothers are occupying a very comfortable place in the amusement world, but it is a place that only good pictures, not the friendship of bankers, will maintain. The cold-blooded bunch behind the Warners will sell the brothers out and make a new alignment the moment they find that the Warner products are not satisfying the public. The advantageous position the Warners hold in sound development is what prompted the bankers to make them big figures in the great merger. Whether or not the brothers have brains enough to hold the position probably did not occur to the bankers, or, if it did, it did not disturb them, for Wall Street has methods of unloading even dead horses on the public at a figure that returns a handsome profit. There has been nothing in the past performances of the Warners to warrant the belief that they are capable of turning out motion pictures that will maintain for them the high position to which they have been raised by the capidity of Wall Street. In The Singing Fool they have a fine piece of property, but it was the easiest kind of a picture to make, for it consists almost entirely of Jolson and hokum, two most satisfactory ingredients, I'll grant them, but capable of being mixed but three times a year. Of course, if the Warners intend to become exhibitors instead of producers, they can buy pictures to fill their requirements, but as I understand it, they are more ambitious than ever to do big things in the producing line. By the grace of the New York bankers, they have control of First National, a control which they will hold only as long as the bankers deem it wise, and they will be expected to produce pictures there that will yield a return on the investment in the Burbank plant. They have their own large investments in plants to take care of. When they were relying only upon their own picture brains to take care of their finances they constantly were skating on the thinnest of ice. If The Jazz Singer had not come along when it did, they would have broken through and been immersed in the chilly waters of bankruptcy. If their picture brains before the advent of sound did not keep them in a comfortable financial position, how can the same brains be applied to sound problems and function with any more satisfactory financial results? To this the brothers probably would reply that they can buy all the brains they need. Obviously that is their way out; they can buy brains, but unless they have undergone a complete change of heart with their elevation to their present proud position, they will not allow these brains to function after they have been bought and paid for. The only wise plan for the brothers to adopt is to thank their lucky stars that they have blundered into an enviable position and to resolve that as they have demonstrated in the past they can not maintain a steady output of pictures of quality, they had better hire people who have the brains to do it, and that they, the brothers, would be wise if they kept their hands off and allowed the brains to function. The Warner Brothers are not strong enough to hold their present position, and I doubt if they are strong enough to let others make it possible for them to hold it.

Disorganization of Metro Lot Responsible for Poor Pictures

The Motion Picture News of a few weeks ago contained an interesting article on stock gambling by executives of the film companies. The fact that so many pictures are of inferior quality is ascribed in the article to the fact that the minds of the executives are on the stock market instead of being on the pictures they are making. I do not agree with The News writer. I believe most pictures are bad because the executives and supervisors do not occupy their minds wholly with the stock market, or something else that will keep them off

DON'T WORRY!

PRODUCERS are murmuring about the high cost of providing synchronized scores for sound pictures. They won't have to worry about that for any length of time. All their sound pictures will be all-talking, and how are they going to have an orchestra playing while their characters are talking? In six months scores for pictures will be among the things that the new screen art has discarded. An all-talking picture may have a little music to introduce it, and a little to wind it up, but the day for symphony orchestras playing all through a picture is disappearing rapidly. To make the elimination of music gradual the wise producer is going to take advantage of opportunities to introduce musical scenes in his pictures. Of course we will hear the orchestras playing for screen dances, and orchestras in the background at other social functions, but there will be a growing disposition for pictures to show groups around pianos, hand organs in street scenes, characters whistling and other things of the sort. Ultimately we will have both grand and light operas on the screen, but meanwhile we will sprinkle music through the kind of pictures we see now.
pictures. I do not know of my own knowledge if the stock market is a subject of constant concern in studios, for when I visit one of them I generally smoke a pipe with some nut with a creative brain and a sublime ignorance of bulls and bears, and do not encounter those who would care to talk of anything except pictures. But I do not doubt the truth of the story. Someone has told me that the condition is worse on the Metro lot than on any other, and the inferiority of M.-G.-M. pictures is pointed to as proof of the harm done by the interest the studio officials take in the rise and fall of stocks. It is said that on that lot directors and players are among the biggest stock gamblers. I do not think that Metro is turning out inferior pictures because there is too much stock gambling on the lot, as the News article contends. I think that the reverse is true: that there is a great deal of attention paid to stock gambling because so little interest is taken in pictures. If directors and players did not seek distraction from the wretched production conditions that prevail on the lot they would go mad. No art is more sensitive than that of the screen. The output of a studio reflects the atmosphere that prevails on the lot, and Metro pictures are wretched, not because Mayer, Thalberg and other high officials play the stock market, but because the whole atmosphere of the lot is wretched. I enjoy visiting the Paramount lot, for the place has a buoyant spirit that it is good to inhale; everyone likes Ben Schulberg and I never hear any knowing. It is much the same on the Fox lot. Every man and woman on the pay-roll is dead certain that Winne Sheehan is God's supreme gift to pictures, as well as being a decent fellow whom it is a pleasure to work with. Because such feeling exists on these two lots, Paramount and Fox are turning out the highest grade pictures that ever have come to the screen. Their average quality is high and it is maintained because there is no letting down in the enthusiasm of the personnel of the producing organizations. There is no feeling of enthusiasm on the Metro lot. Those with picture brains are not allowed to exercise them, and they might as well spend all their time watching the fluctuations of stocks as part of it in bemoaning the lack of efficiency in the offices to which they have to report. Under the conditions that prevail on the lot it is out of the question to expect good pictures to come from it. The strange thing about it to me is that the Eastern bankers, whose money is jeopardized by the chaotic condition, let it go on year after year apparently without making a protest. Until a revolution occurs on the lot, and people with real picture brains be given an opportunity to express themselves on the screen, Metro will continue to drag behind the other big producers in the quality of its pictures. There are several hundred people on the pay-roll, but Mayer and Thalberg number as friends only the handful who compose their personal cabinets. There are some pleasant fellows in the cabinets, but they have about as much right to be dominating the production of motion pictures as I would have to steering the Graf Zeppelin back to Germany.

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**Dialogue Not Important Even in a Talking Picture**

During the thirty years of its development screen art has been devoted to the single purpose of perfecting its method of story-telling to permit it to tell a story with the fewest possible words. In this endeavor it has been signally successful, for it has achieved a talent for writing great literature with the camera with a sprinkling of words here and there to make its meaning clearer. Now it is threatening to toss aside all it has learned during its thirty years, to ignore the fact that it does not rely upon words, and is displaying a disposition to talk itself to death. In its three decades it has survived more acts of insanity than all the other industries in the country have to their credit. That it has not grown sane by contemplating its insanities, is indicated by the manner in which it is approaching the problem that the introduction of sound presents. Let us consider one angle of it: dialogue. The inherent weakness of pictures always has been that, taken as a whole, those who dominate them do not know what it is all about. We have a sharp reminder of this in the action of the majority of studios in hiring people to write dialogue for sound pictures. People who know what dialogue is, could not make such a blunder. Tell a motion picture producer that the dialogue is the most unimportant feature of even a stage play, and he will blink—that blink of perfect noncomprehension. And yet it is true, even though the producer will tell you that it can't be, because a play is nothing but dialogue. The words that are used in the course of the presentation of a play are but the trimmings that are hung on the solid framework of the plot and situations. "Yes!" is an ordinary little word, yet it can denote a woman's surrender, a ruler's abdication, and uttered with withering scorn, with a rising inflection—"Yes?"—it could be the dramatic highspot of a great stage drama. Yet however used, it still is a simple little word of three letters. As a speech in a play it gets its significance from the manner in which it is used as part of a scene. The building of the scene is the work of the original author. He it is who builds his drama, who shows us the erring wife at the feet of her husband, confessing her fault pleading for forgiveness; who puts into the mouth of the husband the one word—"Yes?"—spoken with loathing that calls her liar and a thing unclean, one little word that chills us when we hear it. Motion picture producer will admit that we have in Hollywood plenty of screen writers who could put this scene on paper—but they have to send to New York for someone to write in the on simple word with three letters! This would not be so bad if the dialogue writer would be content with writing the one word, and the producer would be content with paying for it. But neither one would be content. The dialogue expert would write a long speech to show who a clever chap he was, and the producer would pay for i
cheerfully, for the only way he can estimate the value of money is by the bulk of the thing it buys. As I pointed out in a recent Spectator, the problem that sound presents is the elimination of as much sound as possible. We have learned how to tell screen stories with the use of but few words, and even now, when the screen has been made articulate, we must continue that development and get away from speech as much as we can. The way to do this is to allow the authors of our stories to build their scenes and to write in the incidental words that the characters must speak as the story progresses. These authors know their characters, they know what each would say in the position in which he finds himself; they are the only ones who can write the dialogue intelligently and without sacrifice of scene or characterization. The words they write are unimportant. The big thing is the situation, which lends meaning to what words are used. To import people only to write these words is absurd. But producers will continue to do it. They're a queer lot.

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Sound Pictures to Be More Silent Than the Silent Ones

Up to the moment of writing—I may discover something new to-morrow—the most intelligent use of dialogue that I have encountered is in Interference, Paramount's first all-talking picture, and it will be excelled by the dialogue in Half an Hour, if I can judge from some rushes that I have seen. I'm rather well up on Interference. I have seen it as a stage play, a silent motion picture and a talking motion picture. The one version that stands out as the finest entertainment, the most intimate, artistic and interesting presentation, is the talking picture version. By bringing the players close to you in the big scenes, you get a sense of their drama, as you never could get it from the stage play; and making the players articulate makes the silent version an absurd thing of moving shadows and imitation emotions. My prediction in the previous issue, that within a year only talking pictures would be made and that within five years there would be no more stage productions, was based on my experience in viewing Interference in its three forms. The world never before has been handed an art as pliable, as limitless in its possibilities, so inviting to creative brains, as this new thing that catches an actor's voice, a nightingale's song, a cataract's roar or a bumble bee's hum, and makes it heard around the world. There are some who look upon it as a visitation and for them I have a word of comfort: The sound version of Interference is going to be more silent than the silent version. If they will read that again, they will find that it means what they thought it meant the first time. Some months ago, in combating the ideas of those who bemoaned the din that sound pictures were expected to make, I claimed that they would be more reposeful than the silent kind if they were made properly. That conviction, of course, was only the product of reasoning, for I had nothing actual upon which to base it. Since I have seen Interference in its two screen forms I find that my guess was correct. In the silent version the actors have to put more energy into their acting, as they are denied words as an aid to expressing their thoughts. This excess energy has the same effect on the nerves of the viewer as noise has on the nerves of the hearer. Put a deaf man and one who can hear, in a room in which a maniac is destroying the furniture, and you will find that the nervous strain on the two will be equal. The silent version of Interference will be presented to a continuous accompaniment of music, more or less discordant and distracting, according to the degree of understanding of the orchestra leader or organist. Through the sound version of the picture the actors move smoothly and without a great display of emotion. Their words put over their meaning. Their voices are the low-pitched, cultured voices of sophisticated people, for the picture happens to deal with life in high society. And when the picture is presented there will be an opening overture and a closing march, and no other music. All the time the film is unwinding we will see the figures of the characters moving quietly through their scenes, and hear only the low tones of their voices, a slight noise when a door closes, and a faint tinkle when a phone bell rings. And although it is vibrant with drama, and acting so excellent that it excites you, the sound version of Interference, I repeat, will seem to you more silent than the silent version. This will be true of all properly made sound pictures if the rest of the producers can get the intelligent grasp of them that Paramount already has. Importing people to write dialogue, to make a character noisy while robbing him of his soul, is not an exhibition of the necessary intelligence. Sound pictures will not make much progress in most of the studios until there is a revolution in personnel which will bring to the top the people with brains enough to understand what a sound picture should be.

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It Takes More Footage to Make a Picture Talk

As we compare the sound and silent versions of Interference we learn some things that are interesting. Every scene in the sound version appears in the silent version, while there are perhaps a score of scenes in the silent version that do not appear in the sound version. In other words: it takes, say, twenty more scenes,

HAIL, LOCKE, AND FAREWELL!

My favorite author, William J. Locke, is with us. From the pages of his books well-worn slippers come to you—on feet that are stretched out to a log fire—the tobacco jar near at hand, and a dog panting gently because he is too lazy to move back from the heat—outside cold rain beating furiously on the windows—a country road with a doctor on his way to a patient—but before the fire, peace, comfort, and a flow of philosophy strongly impregnated with wit, or humor with a sturdy philosophical foundation. I have Locke to thank for many perfect hours. He has what I like, and what I am confident nine-tenths of the world wants: good, old hokumish humanity, with tenderness, humor and sound philosophy. It is too bad that he will not be allowed to put it on the screen. When he goes back to England in four or five months without having accomplished anything in Hollywood, I hope that in the scathing articles he writes about us he will insert something about there being a few people here who knew that the screen wanted just what he had to give it, but they weren't the people who were in a position to do anything about it.
and also titles, to put over the story without dialogue than it takes to put it over with dialogue. Then, you will say to yourself, the silent version must be longer than the sound version by the amount of footage required for the twenty extra scenes and the titles. Good reasoning, but it is not borne out by the facts. The sound version of Interference is just nine hundred and seventy-eight feet longer than the silent version—7,534 feet to 6,556 feet. I was surprised to learn this, as the sound version, by reason of its higher entertainment value, impressed me as being considerably shorter than the other. This difference in length of the two versions is a matter of economic importance to producers, and of operating importance to exhibitors, but it is not a matter of concern to the public, which is interested only in the entertainment value of a picture and not in its length. If the present six-reel silent picture story can not be told with dialogue in less than seven reels, and if the market continues to demand six-reel pictures and fails to absorb all the longer ones made, it is obvious that there must be a revolution in the writing end of the business. Paramount cut every scene and every unnecessary word that it was possible to cut from the sound version of Interference, and still had a picture that was nearly a reel longer than the silent version. I place the problem in the lap of the industry and leave it there for someone else to worry about. Of more interest to me is the emphatic manner in which the sound version of Interference disproves a contention of my good friend, Joseph M. Schenck, who is quoted by Edwin Schallert in Motion Picture News as follows: "Voices on the screen do not bring personality to the listener as the silent picture brings the personality of the player before the eye of the spectator." After seeing all the talking pictures released thus far, others not yet released, and rushes of some not yet completed, I take exactly the opposite view. I go farther, and claim that even stage performances do not project the personalities of their players across the footlights as vividly as sound pictures project them from the screen. When Clive Brook and William Powell enact their biggest scene together in the talking version of Interference, it comes to us with many times the compelling force of the same scene, although done magnificently, in the silent version, and vastly more intimate and more revealing than the same scene done on the stage. The two players, one the doctor, the other the patient being sentenced to death, speak in low, intimate tones impossible on the stage, and so close to the camera that it enables us to see the movement of every facial muscle, as well as to hear the catching of a breath, a sound so faint that it never would reach the orchestra pit. Clive Brook sometimes smokes a pipe with me in front of my fire, and his personality does not come to me more vividly across the few feet that separates his chair from mine than it came to me from the screen when, as Dr. Marlay, he was telling Bill Powell that he (Powell) might die at any moment. And when I saw Ruth Chatterton in the rushes of Half an Hour, her face apparently a few feet from mine, the impression that a close-up gives, and heard her gasp when she was told that her lover was dead; when I heard her low sobs that came muffled from the cushion in which she later buried her face, she was more alive to me, more of a personality, than she was when I sat back of the camera and watched the scenes being shot. The compassionate glances of Robert Edeson, who sought to comfort her; the low, sympathetic note in his voice as he addressed her, brought his personality to me more in one scene than it has been impressed upon me by the scores of big parts I have seen him play. I am talking, mind you, of accomplished artists when I mention these two, artists who have been brilliant on both stage and screen, not artists who have striven for recognition in the other mediums, only to achieve it suddenly in the scenes I saw on the screen. There will be more personality displayed in one sound picture than in a dozen silent ones or an equal number of stage plays.

** Sound Will Weed Out Incompetent Directors

THAT stage training is necessary for success in sound pictures is a contention that I have been combating since sound became a major subject of discussion, and the industry is coming around to the same view. Applied subjectively, what an actor learned on the stage will help him in the new art, but when he applies his stage training objectively, when he starts to do a thing on the screen in a certain way because he did it in the same way on the stage, then his stage training begins to do him a positive harm. The screen actor need not speak with either the distinctiveness or the volume that must characterize his stage utterances. His voice must carry only as far as the person to whom he is speaking. The microphone attends to the job of carrying it to the man in the back row. The actor is taught to speak on the stage with great distinctness in order that his lines will be clear to those in the rear seats. The man in the front seat could understand what he said even if he made no particular effort to make his words perfectly clear. The sound reproducing device as applied to motion pictures puts everyone in the front row. To me, that is the most extraordinary thing about it. Sitting in a projection-room with William C. de Mille while the rushes of Half an Hour, which he directed, were being run, I caught the sound of Ruth Chatterton's sighs so faintly that I felt that my row of seats marked the extreme range of the sound and that the man behind me could hear nothing; yet in the biggest theatre in the country the man in the seat farthest from the screen will hear the sighs with the same feeling that the sound just managed to reach him and could go no farther. The sighs are a manifestation of the grief that Miss Chatterton felt when the scene was being shot; on the stage, recorded by her physical reaction to them, for they would not be heard by even an orchestra leader; on the screen, a living, audible part of her characterization. But behind the voices that do go over, and the personalities that can go over, must be intelligence, the one hurdle that all screen actors, with or without stage training, must take to be successful in the new art. Sound puts a premium on brains as silent pictures have not done. The pretty girl who pleased the eye, and did not outrage the mind too much by the simulation of an emotion she could not feel, will not be able to fool the ear when she uses words to express the same emotion. Artists who have been successful on the screen will have an advantage over their confreres from the stage, for the former have had to think deeply to have their thoughts recorded by the camera, while the latter always have depended more on their voices to put their thoughts over. As the micro-
phone takes charge of the voices and makes them equal, the superior pantomimic powers of the actor trained in screen technic will give him an advantage. The greatest weedling out that will be caused by the advent of sound will be in ranks of directors. Not more than one-tenth of those whose names are big now will be prominent two years from now. The majority of our present directors get by to-day only because they adhere closely to all the conventions that make screen entertainment grow tiresome to those who pay for it. Only about one in ten directors has anything new to present in each of his pictures, and he is the only one of the ten who will survive in the new art. The development of sound will have a tendency to reduce the number of close-ups, and when the average director is robbed of his close-up, he will be found to have precious little left. And sound will relieve screen art of another blight that infests it now—the director who is permitted to write his own story. This practice has reduced the art to a low level. There never has been any more reason why a director should write his own story than there has been for him designing his own sets or photographing his own scenes. No producer would dream of replacing his art director or his cameraman with a director, yet in his blindness he has allowed the director to take over another job that requires a skill as specialized, that of writing the story. Gradually this absurd practice will disappear, and then we will begin to get good sound pictures.

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Viewing the Same Picture With Sound and in Silence

HAVING seen the sound version of Interference only a few hours before I saw the silent version, I feel that I scarcely am qualified to review the latter intelligently. I found that my consideration of the various sequences was affected by the fact that my imagination persisted in making a sound version of it by recalling the voices of the actors as I heard them in the other projection-room. But I have no hesitation in giving it as my opinion that in its silent form Interference is a fine motion picture, well directed by Lothar Mendes and superbly acted by the same cast that thrilled me with the brilliance of the performances in the other version—Evelyn Brent, Doris Kenyon, Clive Brook and William Powell. That is about as far as I can go in recommending the picture to those who will see the silent version, but I can recommend the sound version without reservation as one of the most engrossing productions ever brought to the screen. Perhaps you can gain an idea of the relative impression the two versions made upon me when I tell you that when I began to write this paragraph, my intention was to review the silent version without reference to the other. I find I can not do it; I find I can not recall all the points of interest in the version I saw, for my mind is dominated by the version I heard. I merely am going through a phase with this one picture that the public shortly will go through with pictures generally. Having seen living, breathing, speaking people on the screen in one version, I am not content with seeing unreal shadows moving through another; having heard them talk in the one, I think it absurd in the other to see their lips moving without any sound issuing from them. But as evidence that my critical sense is not confused beyond the power of functioning, I can recall a fault I have to find with both versions. They have the same ending, and it is an ending with which I do not agree. Powell, who in both versions demonstrates what a magnificent actor he is, loves Doris Kenyon, who is married to Brook, and to protect her good name, murders Evelyn Brent to keep her from giving a certain story to the papers. Both Miss Kenyon and Brook know what Powell has done, and why he does it, yet when Bill is led away, with that unforgettable line from the stage on his lips: "For delivery to Bow street jail—marked 'fragile,'" there is a cut to the husband and wife indulging in some platitudes that dispel the drama with a snap—and the picture fades out. The fade-out should have been the door closing behind Powell, or, if there had been any reason for returning to the husband and wife, they should have said something about Powell's great sacrifice, to bring the picture to a close on the biggest thing in it. As soon as Powell confesses to the murder, all interest of the audience in Miss Kenyon and Brook ceases, and the only thing it is thinking of is the poor wretch who is being led away to die in jail. It should have been left with that thought. Another defect in the silent version that I can recall is the faulty cutting of a close-up of Miss Kenyon. Before Powell went to war she was his wife; his death being announced officially, she had married Brook. Betty Brent comes to her and announces that Powell is alive and in London, where the story is laid. If the scene has any value from a dramatic standpoint, it is to give the audience an opportunity to see how Miss Kenyon reacts to the crushing blow. Miss Brent makes her announcement, and the moment Miss Kenyon gives the first intimation that she understands it, there is a cut to Miss Brent. It is one of the bewilderingly stupid things you see in so many pictures. There was no more story reason why there should have been a quick cut to Miss Brent than there would have been for giving us a cut to the Grand Canyon. Both story and drama gave the scene to Miss Kenyon, for the sole interest of the audience lay in her reception of the stunning news. In the sound version she plays the scene out without a cut, probably because there was no place where a cut could be made—just one of the many blessings that sound will confer upon us.

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WHEN Lon Chaney was with Universal he was given pictures like The Hunchback of Notre Dame and Phantom of the Opera, great productions which Universal exploited so extravagantly that the public got the idea that Chaney was a great actor, and he did nothing in either picture to change the minds of those who viewed it with this preconceived notion of his acting ability. Since he has been with Metro they have capitalized the vogue he established by his grotesque characterizations in the Universal pictures, by means of presenting him as almost everything except a beetle. Off hand, I can remember that I liked him immensely in Mr. Wu, in which he gave an intellectual and convincing performance, but I can remember no other Metro picture in which he impressed me. I have seen him without some weird make-up in two films and in both of them he was terrible, all the blame for which I ascribe to the stories. I can't remember the name of the first, but the second is While the City Sleeps, which I found to be quite soporific as its title. I can not un-
understand why such an organization puts a man of Chaney's box-office strength in such a puerile excuse for screen entertainment. His characterization is something to laugh at, and the story is so obvious that it is ridiculous. Donald and I amused ourselves by taking turns at stating what was going to happen, and we never missed it once. I have neither time nor space to waste by reviewing the picture in detail, but I would like to protest against a man of Chaney's age making love on the screen to such an attractive child as Anita Page. It is disgusting, and is no less a crime against good taste because in the end he does not get the girl. Anita gives a commendable performance, one that indicates that she has a future. Wheeler Oakman and Carroll Nye also manage to relieve the gloom somewhat with excellent performances. Nye is a clever youth. The picture reaches the peak of its melanchoha in its comedy scenes.

THE sound version of Interference will convince any skeptic that screen art is going to be advanced tremendously when all our pictures give tongue. In this first attempt by Paramount in making an all-talking film sound is used more intelligently than I have seen it used in any other picture. Evelyn Brent and William Powell have a scene in which he tells her that he is through with her. She begins to sob, and moves out of the scene to throw herself consolatorily on a divan. Powell is left alone in a medium close-up—even if there be no such classification for a shot, you will know what I mean—but all the time we see him planning what he is going to do next, we hear Miss Brent's sobs although we do not see her. Such an effect is impossible to obtain in a silent picture. While our ears keep the girl's grief as part of the scene, our eyes have only Powell to watch. In a silent picture the only way the same thing could be done would be by frequent cuts from one to the other. Thus sound makes the sequence much easier on the eyes. In another scene, Powell walks along a short hall leading to Evelyn's apartment, and before we see him we hear his voice, and we continue to hear it until he has entered the scene fully. It is the first talking scene I have seen in which the microphone apparently advanced with the person who talks. Off-stage talking is going to play a large part in sound pictures, and it is going to make the pictures flow more smoothly in avoiding cuts to the people who do the talking. And it is going to save the cost of sets. We hear quite a lot just now about the high cost of talking pictures, but I believe that when the studios get a better knowledge of how to make them, they will be cheaper than silent pictures. I base this guess on the belief that when characters talk, the sets to which they have to be moved will be reduced at least one-half.

A SPECTATOR reader in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, sent me a cartoon which he clipped from the New Orleans Item, but which originated in the New York World, which gives the incident a geographical sweep. The Spectator's Southern friend apparently presumed that I would say something about the cartoon. I don't see why I should. It is titled, "The Angelic Host Against Tammany," and shows all those who have brought discredit on recent Republican administrations, the group including a half dozen or more who are, or who have been, in jail. In the center, with wings sprouting and a lovely expression, is Will Hays. There are two reasons why I refrain from even mentioning the cartoon: I am for Hoover, and Hays is someone of whom Hollywood should be proud, as it is proud of anyone who draws a salary of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year. The rest of the world should forget the oil scandal and think only of the salary. That's what we do out here.

SOME of the voice tests that I have heard in sound projection rooms have an amusing slant to them. At least three-quarters of the well known girls whom I have heard, speak in strongly affected tones. Just fawney that! One famous girl star has developed an English accent that would tartle England. The girls should get over this silly habit before it gets any worse. They want to keep constantly in their minds that the microphone catches the slightest suggestion of a false note. They may be able to fool the milkman with their affectation of culture, but they can't fool the microphone. Up to date these girls have been successful in selling their personalities to the public. A big part of their personalities which there was no market for were their voices. There is a market for them now, but to match its personality each voice must be absolutely on the square. The girl who persists in talking in an affected way will talk herself out of pictures.

ONE of the interesting little things done in the sound version of Interference was showing us only one end of a telephone conversation, but allowing us to hear both ends of it. Betty Brent is at the phone. We hear what she says and we hear the other voice as she hears it through the receiver, but we do not see the other speaker, Doris Kenyon, until the end of the conversation. In another scene a doctor calls up Clive Brook and tells about a patient that is being sent to Brook. We don't see the doctor at all, but we hear what he says to Brook. Cuts are saved in this way, and one of the major problems of screen art is the elimination of as many cuts as possible. As sound develops there will be a drift towards the elimination of unnecessary close-ups, but it will be slow. Few of our present directors are sufficiently skilled to make scenes without close-ups, and because they do not know how to avoid them, they defend them with various arguments, all of which are silly.

WHILE Oscar, my favorite motion picture actor, was polishing my shoes on the Paramount lot the other day, we indulged in a serious discussion of his artistic career. The upshot of it was that I became his manager. We had a tough time agreeing to terms, but finally it was settled that I was to have all he earned by acting and he was to retain all he made by shining shoes. When I told him the terms of some of the contracts in effect in Hollywood he agreed that I was treating him generously. I am open to propositions.

LAST spring I wrote in The Spectator that after seeing Emil Jannings in several dramatic and tragic roles I was convinced that he would shine also in a comedy part. I argued that it was unwise to keep a real artist in one line of parts, when, by giving him diversified roles, he could extend greatly his army of admirers. I ventured
the suggestion to Paramount that it put Jannings in a comedy to be directed by Ernst Lubitsch. And Paramount now announces that Jannings will do a comedy directed by Lubitsch. If only for my sake, I hope our two distinguished Germans will make good. My batting average on predictions is fairly high now, and I want to maintain it.

RONALD Colman writes something in Two Lovers. He does it in a close-up, and it is plain that he writes but one line and a half, for his pen goes back to the starting point but once. What he writes is shown in an insert. There are four lines. Sam Goldwyn will tell you that it is a little thing that no one will notice. My daughter drew my attention to it.

BEBE Daniels, in Take Me Home, is distressed when an ink-bottle upsets on one of her dresses. When registering her displeasure she makes a ball of the garment while the ink is still wet. The one sure way of making the job of reconstruction complete. If she had acted naturally she would have exercised every care to keep the ink from spreading.

THANKS TO THE MAIL MAN

Believe it or not, it's a pleasure to pay for The Film Spectator. For it is an exceedingly lively and meritorious sheet; and the opportunity to reward merit is one of the few pleasures left to sensitive souls.

Yours very sensitively,

GEOFFREY SHURLOCK.

I did not know that a paper with your point of view was published in Hollywood. I appreciate your courage.

MRS. ALFRED C. TYLER,
Evanston, Illinois, Chairman of Committee on Motion Pictures, General Federation of Women's Clubs.

I never can understand why anyone deems it takes courage to write what one conceives to be the truth about motion pictures or about anything else. I don't see what there is to be scared of...

... your excellent journal, which I happen to know is almost indispensable to several of the London newspaper critics.

CHARLES WINDSOR,
Harrow-on-Hill, Middlesex, England.

I think your idea of a fiftieth anniversary number is simply too cute for anything. Put me down for ten pages.

FRANK TUTTLE.

This is the top note of a pile that is accumulating, all of them ordering space in the next Hold-Up Number of The Spectator which will appear on the second Monday in March, 1936. At the Masquers Club the other day I sold fourteen thousand dollars worth to the fellows who were having lunch at the table at which I was sitting. Frank's order brings the grand total to sixty-seven thousand dollars, and I am now writing to hear from Tom Miranda, who took one-tenth of an inch in the recent Hold-Up Number.

I believe that your attitude and your familiarity with pictures, together with your courageous methods, will certainly have an effect on the movies. Many of us a long way from Hollywood rejoice to think that you are right on the job, dare to say the things that ought to be said and that you are going to keep it up. I believe in you and wish you all kinds of success.

LE ROY E. BOWMAN,
National Community Center Association, Columbia University.

In listing on the cover of your paper the pictures reviewed you make no distinction between your own and your son's criticisms. Sometimes, in the same issue, you both review the same show, but when you don't, one picture will be listed on the covers of two different issues. I am free to confess, that this idea of double reviewing has never appealed to me. I should think producers would resent these cook-book opinions of youth and the so-called experts. They take up space, in my way of viewing it, that could be better put to other use because so largely they seem just reflections of your opinions.

P. H. PARKE, Glendale.

I believe I already have yielded to the force of Mr. Parke's first complaint by mentioning my reviews and Donald's separately on the covers. As for his second: It is an old contention of producers that they are compelled to make their pictures for fifteen-year-old minds. When I started The Spectator, Donald was fifteen years of age and I thought it would be a good idea to let producers know how near they were coming to the mind they were aiming at. Donald has aged along with the paper, and I believe that his department is sufficiently popular with Spectator readers to justify its continuance, although his age has not remained stationary. Granted, then, the wisdom of publishing his criticisms at all, what possible objection can there be to both of us reviewing the same picture in the same issue? Why not give you both opinions at the same time? If we wrote for different papers, both of which Mr. Parke received in the same mail, he would turn from one to the other at the same sitting and think nothing of it. Why put it on one page in The Spectator to the other? Donald's opinions are not reflections of mine. There are persons on every lot who can testify to the fact that when Donald and I leave a projection room after seeing a picture, I refuse to discuss the picture in his hearing. I do not discuss it until after he has written his review, and he never has changed a line he has written to square his review with mine. The faults in most pictures are so obvious that it is inevitable that both of us will notice them, but any reader of The Spectator knows that we differ frequently.

Your comments are stimulating and refreshing, and I also enjoy the department conducted by your son, for I think we can learn a great deal about motion pictures from the young people's reactions.

MRS. H. C. GROVER,
Better Films Committee, Rutherford, New Jersey.

It is only since I began to read The Spectator regularly that I have noticed how the use of so many close-ups spoil pictures. But don't you think that some times close-ups are justifiable?

ARTHUR CORDINGLY, Buffalo, N. Y.

I believe so firmly that there are times in pictures when close-ups are not only justifiable, but necessary, that when I

S. George Ullman
—eminent artists' representative, will handle no writer unless thoroughly sold on him. He handles me. He will handle no original screen stories unless personally convinced of their entertainment value and box-office architecture. He is handling six of mine. Confer with him about them—and about me.

JAMES MADISON
(America's Most Versatile Author)

330 North Citrus Ave., Los Angeles ORegon 5627
RILEY, the Cop is an enigma. John Ford made it for Fox, and it is one of the funniest pictures ever turned out by any studio. However, I can't understand how they can put Miss Farrell, Mr. McDonald and Missed Dzego, but there scarcely is a moment when it isn't very funny. The people who made it must have had a wonderful time, because some of the gags are so funny that even the people who made them must have been amused. That's a great test of whether or not something is funny. If the men who have to spend their time creating the laughs can find something funny in them, they are good. I am sure that the Riley the Cop set was the merriest one on the lot while the picture was being made. It was a great surprise to see someone like John Ford, who can put pathos on the screen so well, make scenes which bordered on slapstick and still be amusing. Riley can not be criticised like other pictures, since all that matters was whether or not it was funny, which it certainly was. Ford had some rather pretty scenes, and, as usual his lighting was very good. However, there was too much going on for anyone to pay any attention to the sets. We saw the picture at a preview, so I suppose it will be tightened up considerably. It will be funnier than ever, because there were moments when the action slowed down a little too much.

One of the funniest scenes I ever have seen in any picture is the one in Riley the Cop where Riley, played by Farrell McDonald, walks up to a group at a railroad station. A woman is going away, and she is languidly kissing several men good-bye. Riley waits his chance, and when she turns in his direction, he kisses her. It doesn't sound funny on paper, but on the screen it becomes a classic. Other good bits were the sequence in the beer garden, Riley's farewell to Germany, and the closing scene. A bit of humor which ran all the way through the picture was the way in which Riley was identified by the size of his feet. I sincerely hope that Ford will make something like this again. In addition to the other things, he made a rather pleasing little romance between Louise Fazenda and Missed Dzego, and Missed Dzego and the last people on earth who should do a love story, according to motion picture beliefs; and the fact that they do it very well proves my contention that there can be romances between older people on the screen.

McDonald plays the leading role in Riley, the Cop, and Miss Fazenda plays opposite him. The two of them manage to be terribly funny, particularly in the scenes where they make faces at each other. They are brilliant comedians or comediennes, to give Miss Fazenda a break. I don't know how to say that gracefully. Maybe I should have said humorists. Anyway, they were funny. David Rollins and Nancy Drexel provided the youth of the cast. Rollins has a fine screen personality, and Miss Drexel is attractive, though she had little to do. I didn't get the names of the rest of the cast, but all of them were good.

ONE of the most satisfying pictures, from a critical point of view, which I have seen in some time is Ned McCobb's Daughter, which is William Cowen's first directorial effort. The story is closely knit and well told, and Cowan put it on the screen well. He never got away from it for a minute. At the present time most of the directors are trying so hard to show how clever they can be in handling a camera that they don't pay as much attention to the story as they should. In addition to sticking to the story, Cowen directed very smoothly. He made no effort to attract attention to his work, thereby making it good. He uses some old-fashioned mistakes in one or two places. Bob Armstrong walks into a scene with the camera in back of him. He walks up to Irene Rich, and then makes a detour; so he won't obstruct a clear camera view of Miss Rich. Typically moving picture things like that detract from the realism of the picture. There is one thing I will give Cowen credit for. George Barraud murders a man, and hides his body in the apple bin. We see the murder, but are spared the sight of Barraud hoisting him in among the apples. Also, his body is transferred to a truck without the audience seeing it done. The average audience is not interested in the gruesome details, but most directors think it necessary to show everything. Incidentally, while the dry agents are searching the cellar where the body is concealed, the suspense is terrific. As a rule the outcome of a scene like that is known to the audience, but the story of Ned McCobb's Daughter is such that anything could happen.

The popular ending for pictures these days seems to be the one where the hero is dragged off to serve a few years for everything from murder to mayhem. Ned McCobb's Daughter ended that way, and F.B.O.'s His Last

Our particular pride is that we are able to please folks who are particular about the kind of printing they get.
Heul became so enthusiastic that it ended with both principals going to jail. The ending of McCobb's Daughter was highly satisfactory, but the entire story was good in that respect. There was nothing in it which was an insult to the intelligence.

Pate assembled a strong cast for this picture. Irene Rich had the title role, and her work was very good. Robert Armstrong played opposite her. I have enjoyed his work in his previous pictures. He was not the sympathetic part he has in this. George Barraud, who made the stage version of Interference such a treat, plays the heavy. He gives a very good performance, but his wonderful voice is wasted in silent pictures. Theodore Roberts has a very small part, but he is fine in it, anyway. Edward Hearne and Dan Wolphere are the only other members of the cast I remember.

TWO Lovers might have been a very good picture, but something missed fire, and it was one of the most uninteresting films I have seen lately. Nothing in it mattered. All the characters could have been slaughtered, and it wouldn't have made much difference to anyone but them. It is hard to say what really was the cause of all the lack of interest, except that Fred Niblo, who directed, failed to make his character very human. Incidentally, there was an attempt to spread out until they completely killed what interest they might have had. The heroine of the piece was so full of inconsistencies that she failed to win any sympathy for herself, and by the time the action reached the point where the hero required some compassion for himself, I was so bored that his sufferings interested me not at all. Another thing about Two Lovers which I didn't like was the fact that Vilma Banky and Ronald Colman seemed so aware of the fact that it was their last co-starring picture. Neither seemed to care whether or not he put any pep in his performance. They both looked as if it were an old story to them, as it doubtless was. The whole thing was half-hearted.

Niblo used a lot of this, a multiplication of action which didn't speed up the picture to any great extent. However, he had one sequence in a swamp which was a wonder. He marshaled hundreds of men through the mud, which came about up to their necks. It was very impressive. There was one title in the picture which should go down in history. It read simply: "The history of Two Lovers." I doubt if the audience could follow it at all. Another thing about Two Lovers which I didn't like was the fact that it was rather slow and full of woody patches. It was brilliantly acted and directed, and that was what saved it. There were four principals, and all of them were splendid. Perhaps the best thing I can say for it was that it followed the play very closely. One of the funniest habits of producers is to buy plays and then change them so that there's nothing left of what they originally bought. That has started the idea that pictures are unable to put books and plays on the screen well; and that nullifies the box-office power of the name; because people will not go to see the screen version of a play they know, since they are rarely filmed well. That's rather long and involved, but the idea is there.

The interesting thing in connection with Interference is the opportunity to speculate upon the great effect of sound. The use of dialogue in this picture would bring it from a rather uninteresting story to a highly dramatic one. The scene in the doctor's office where he sentences a man to death is impressive enough in the silent version, but it would be tremendous with sound; the whole thing would have been speeded up and improved. Lothar Mendes' direction was very good, as he told his story smoothly and efficiently. The two masculine members of the cast, Clive Brook and William Powell, had the greater opportunities for acting, and they made the most of them. With the possible exception of George Barraud, who played it on the stage here, there is no man in pictures today who can play the part of Philip Voose as well as Powell. He was superb in this. Brook has a long string of brilliant performances to his credit, but he out-did even himself in this. Evelyn Brent was at her best in a heavy characterization, and Doris Kenyon was very good.

WHILE the City Sleeps, is Jack Conway's contribution to Harry Crocker's Motion Picture Museum, since it has carefully gathered together all the stunts used in the Dark Ages of film making. As a rule I enjoy the old knock-down-and-drag-out melodramas, but there was too much drag-out to this. In fact it dragged out about two reels too much. It is one of the underworld pictures which have been done so much lately, and is not good, by reason of unintelligent direction. The story wasn't much, either. Lon Chaney was starred; and if I see another of his pictures where he loses the girl at the last moment, I am going to keep away from them permanently. There is no reason for that old, moth-eaten situation to crop up.
up all the time, because the girls he plays with are usually
young enough to be his daughters. He is a good enough
actor to get along without any romances cluttering up his
pictures; but if they must have them, they ought to pro-
vide a woman somewhere near his own age. He ought
to quit straight parts, at which he is only good, and do
made-up roles, at which he is splendid. When he can make
himself up to look like a bad dream, it is criminal to let
the gift atrophy.

The picture was about half over before the story got
under way, and when it did get going, it was rather veiled
by clouds of bullets. There was enough lead flying back
and forth to completely wipe out the entire cast. Inci-
dentally, Chaney was given a number of bullets on every
side, and never got hit. The police had a great stunt
anent the forcing of doors. They would stand directly in
front of them and hurl insulting remarks at criminals
they knew were on the other side. Naturally the crooks
shot through the door, and the poor, dumb cop got drilled.
Fortunately Chaney always was standing behind the man
who got shot, so nothing ever happened to him. It is
absurd to imagine that trained policemen didn't know any
better than to stand directly in front of a door like that.
There were half a dozen other gags just as bad as that.
Every old trick was used. Every time a door opened or
closed, someone would be disclosed hiding behind it. The
weak but honest boy was freed from the lethal clutches
of the gang. The picture ended with the detectives arrest-
ing the boy and bringing him back to the girl. There
wasn't a bromide they missed. They even had the old
trick of having Chaney arrest a man who, when he turned
around, revealed that he had impersonated the real one
to throw Chaney off the trail. They used Chaney's fallen
arches as comedy relief.

Anita Page was the girl in the case, and she did very
good work. She is more at ease before the camera than
she has been hitherto, and her work reveals a polish which
augurs well for her future. Carroll Nye plays the boy
who makes an unfortunate choice of playmates. He does
that stuff well, but I'd like to see him sometimes when he
is outside the shadow of jail. Polly Moran, Lydia Ye-
mans Titus, Wheeler Oakman, and Mae Busch completed
the cast. Oakman is a heavy who should be used more
often, because there is no one who can touch him at a
certain type of heavy characterization.

BEYOND the presence of Sue Carol in the cast, Captain
Swagger possessed very little which was outstanding.
Sue is my favorite screen actress, and I get a great
kick watching her steady progress in the art of acting.
However, I must discuss the picture as a whole
before I can allow myself the pleasure of telling how good
she is getting to be. The story isn't much, but it is well
directed and produced. There are some beautiful sets,
and E. H. Griffith, the director, shot them well. Rod La
Rocque and Sue do a Russian dance which is rather good
—but long distance. Sue doubles dance better than they
do, it must be admitted. They should stick to acting. This
stunt of showing picture actors, who are supposed to be
stars in some other line of entertaining doing their stuff,
isn't good. They're usually bad, and it hurts their char-
acterizations a great deal. There were some funny scenes,
ABOUT OTHER THINGS, By K. C. B.

RECENTLY I read a complaint, voiced by a minister of the gospel, that while the population of his community had increased four fold in a given number of years, church membership had remained almost at a standstill, the inference being, according to the ministerial mind, that morally the people of his community were drifting downward.

I don't believe it. All of us who are of middle age can remember when the churches of a city, town, or village, were its social centers. If you didn't, as a youth, go to Sunday school, or, as an adult, go to church, just think of the things you missed! Think of the strawberry festivals, and the church socials, and the garden parties, sponsored by the various church organizations, and in the summer the annual fairs. I am still for all the Christmas time the delightful anticipation and then the realization of the Christmas tree and the present you knew would be there for you!

I come of a church-going family, as did nearly all of the boys and girls of the generation to which I belonged as a youth. I went to church and Sunday school on every Sunday after dinner. I held my seat for years on Friday nights. I had to, whether I liked it or not, but, in any event, I helped to swell the attendance. And then I went away from home to another town, and, as I was free of home restrictions, I vowed that then and there my religious life had ceased. But I couldn't stand the lonesomeness of it, and the second Sunday after leaving the school in which there were boys and girls of my own age. And that's what thousands of others, similarly placed, did in those days, and youth builds churches just as eventually it builds everything.

Just a Matter of Competition

But times have changed. No more do youth and age depend upon the church and its auxiliaries for the atmosphere in which we live. There has been an increase in the number of those who sought out the churches because it was fashionable to do so, or because of their social activities, have drifted away and the grown-ups have taken their children with them. And so we find that in a community that has increased four-fold church memberships remain just where they were.

And, still, I don't believe there is less real religion in the world to-day than there used to be. A man's religion lies within him and he can take it wherever he wishes. It can be just as devout riding in an automobile out in the sunshine and the pure air of countryside; or somewhere atop a hill that looks out on the sea, perhaps, or on a lake, or deep down a canyon to a rushing stream attuned to whispering winds and songs of birds—just as devout it can be there as in a pew in church.

And yet, I think I'm glad that our two children like their rector at St. Stephen's church.

The Trip of the Graf Zeppelin

I DON'T know what may happen between the time I write this and its publication, but right here and now I want to go on record as saying that insofar as I am concerned it doesn't matter that they hang engines and propellers on it and build it in the shape of a cigar, it is still a balloon.

I've read nearly all that has been written of the trip of the Graf Zeppelin, and, notwithstanding Lady Drumm's most up to date report, the world will take a chance with anything he says will take me up in the air and bring me back again, but any time anyone asks me to sit down for breakfast in a dining-room that at any moment may up-end itself and pile everybody and everything into a corner, I just don't want to be there.

So far as I have heard or read no one has ever discovered any means by which a gale may be softened to a zephyr or the path of a cyclone changed, and until someone shows me how these things can be done I'm not going to believe that a balloon, no matter what its straight-way propelling strength, can be other than a plaything of the elements. I can understand a heavier-than-air machine roaring and fighting its way through aerial tempests, but I can't see a balloon, no matter what its shape, successful in battling storms no more severe than some of those that aeroplanes have conquered in the past.

And yet, I can not reconcile these views I hold and that are held by others of greater wisdom than mine, with the fact that wise and scholarly men, men versed in the science of aeronautics, are planning and spending millions toward a day they see that will send out upon their courses fleets of aerial ships patterned after the Zeppelin of to-day. Therefore, I may be wrong, but, nevertheless, I am not going to admit it until somebody shows me a load of Zeppelin passengers who haven't been scared stiff most all the time they were out of sight of land.

The Reporter and the Balloon

TALKING about these Zeppelin affairs, I'm much like the young newspaper reporter who induced its owner to let him go up by himself in a captive balloon at a state fair or carnival or some such thing, and while he was high up there the wind came along and tore the balloon high, and a high wind came along and tore the balloon loose from the cable that held it to the ground.

Having gained its freedom, the balloon quite naturally went along with the wind, and, after a while, as the gas in the bag escaped, the distance between the young reporter and the earth grew gradually less. Dropping lower, the first thing that happened was that the basket was drawn through the tops of the highest trees. Then it hit a church steeple and caromed off to be pulled through other trees, and, having no regard for the property of others, permitted itself to be dragged through a fence that marked the boundaries of a large plowed field. At this point the reporter was thrown out of the basket into the trees, and, relieved of his weight, the balloon went on its way for another mile or two.

When the farmers and others who had seen the balloon coming and had chased it in Fords and on foot reached the field in which the reporter had been dumped they found him dragging himself along, prone on his stomach and with his hands and knees both bleeding and the young farmer to reach him asked him if he had been injured. The reporter, with his face in the ground, said he hadn't.

"What's the matter with you, then?" asked the farmer.

"There's nothing the matter with me," said the reporter, as he craned his neck so that he might look up, "excepting that I'm just as far from the earth now as I ever want to be.

And that's how I feel about these German-made toys. They're all right if there isn't any wind and the cable doesn't break, but turn 'em loose and there's nothing to do but just let nature take its course.

German Science and Tennessee

BEFORE they left for home they should have gone with the Graf Zeppelin and circled once or twice the little town of Elizabethton in Tennessee. It would have been a fitting compliment from a German-made airship to a German-made town and round round the Zeppelin could have waved their hands to a group of three thousand American women and girls to whom German science has entrusted the beginning of the making of silk for the women of America to wear.

It began in a laboratory in Germany twenty years ago or thereabouts. They hadn't found it when the war came on but after the war they went back to work again. They were German scientists and what they sought was a method of making synthetic silk. And, as Germans have
a way of doing, they found it—found it with its chief component, the linters, or the thin fibre coating of the cotton seed. America being the largest market for the sale of silk, is more interested than China, that she should create the tariff barriers by bringing their secret across the sea and making their silk within the customs borders of the United States?

Water of absolute chemical purity was an essential in the manufacture of the silk. And they found it, in a great spring that flows ten millions of gallons a day, winter and summer, from the mountains of East Tennessee. Elizabethton, an old southern community of 2,400 souls, lay near by, and there it was that two years ago they erected the first unit of their factory, giving employment at once to 1,700 men, women and girls.

To-day Elizabethton boasts of a population of 12,000. In a little while they'll tell you down there that it will have grown to 150,000, not an undue estimate when it is known that with the completion of the work now under way there will be employment for 30,000 workers!

Recently, in New York, silk buyers were asked to select, from an assortment of the new silk and the natural silk, garments made from the former. And they couldn't do it. There was no difference in the silks!

As a scenario for a motion picture I offer this with no cost to the producer. * * *

What It Is All About

The presidential campaign of 1928, now about to close with the casting of the ballots and the counting of them, has been as prolific of issues as a mummy has of offspring. The only divergence of opinion upon any of the subjects that have been discussed is that Hoover thinks that prohibition is still in an experimental stage and that every effort should be made to the end that it shall be successful, while Smith believes that it has already proven a failure and should be modified along lines outlined by him.

Upon every other subject mentioned in the platforms of both parties or discussed in the campaign speeches of the candidates and their platform supporters there is no material difference between the two parties, but between the two candidates. There are, therefore, but two issues in this campaign, that of prohibition and the more important one that has to do with the qualifications of the candidates. And prohibition isn't really an issue except insofar as the voters may have an opportunity of expressing their views. There isn't any thing a president can do about it. This is an issue neither a legislative office, and only by legislation can the Eighteenth Amendment or its enforcement act be changed.

It used to be that presidential campaigns had as their principal bone of contention a Democratic desire for a low tariff or a Republican desire for a high tariff, but of recent years it has come to be generally recognized that tinkering with the tariff is a dangerous pastime and in our foreign relations? That is the question the voter must ask himself at the polls next Tuesday and the cross opposite the name of the man he selects will be his answer.

* * *

A Question of Manners

Somebody around the house has misplaced my copy of Liberty and for the life of me I can't recall the name of the fellow who writes the letters from Hollywood to an imaginary Dear Marg back East somewhere. If you read Liberty you'll know whom I mean and if you don't it won't make any difference anyway.

As one who has earned his living by writing such stuff as I have for several years past I hesitate to speak unkindly of a fellow writer. But when a magazine with the circulation of Liberty gives space to the slanderous stuff that this man writes of Hollywood it surely must be the duty of someone to arise and protest. I haven't read all of his contributions, but those I have read indicate that his principal occupation in Hollywood is in attending drunken parties.

That he frequently mentions the names of those whose guest he seems to have been leads to one of two possible conclusions. Either the writer of these letters is devoid of those instincts that should suggest to him that it is at least bad manners to shout from the house tops stories of drunkenness and gambling and wild carousal in a home in which he has been a guest, or if he is not disturbed by such publicity, which I am sure he must be, the writer is lacking in those qualities that he should have to know that as a guest, and presumably a friend, he should protect from public car and eye the fact that his friend's home has been the scene of drunken orgies.

Whatever the conclusion one may reach leaves the writer outside the pale wherein nice people live. I don't know this fellow craftsman who writes these letters, but I do know that if I were a guest in his home and there were gambling and drinking, I wouldn't write of it, no matter if he didn't care.

* * *

A Tale of Two Skunks

One hesitates to write of skunks, but for so long have I wanted to tell of the pair of them that make their home beneath our house, and could find no medium in which to indulge my wish, I am constrained to take advantage of the freedom I enjoy in the columns of The Spectator and to write of them and to pass through with it.

As I have said, there are two of them. They came to us, somewhere out of the hills, many months ago. Our first appraisal of their presence was unpleasant, so much so that I asked the patrolman who guards us over at night, what one did to rid one's home of such unwanted voluntary guests. Informed that there were thousands of them in the hills back of the house and that the destruction of two could make but little difference, I determined then to inform myself as to their manners and customs. My new encyclopedia told me they were friendly little fellows, susceptible to kindly treatment at the hands of humans, that their chiefest sport was in riding their neighborhoods of mice, and, taken by and large, they were not undesirable tenants of the vacant space beneath one's home.

Therefore, we adopted them, by spreading out at night, beside our kitchen door, their favorite foods. Knowing that we were kindly disposed toward them and that there was no cause for fear of us, they at once undertook to rid us of the mice that had infested us, in which endeavor they were successful. That our fear of them was dissipated not so easily was natural. It didn't completely disappear until one night, on a visit to the back porch, I nearly stepped on one of them. That it did nothing more than move aside and then slowly withdraw itself into the shadows outside the porch was indication that my intrusion did not disturb it greatly. I accepted it as a friendly gesture and since then we have lived in perfect amity.

I write these lines about our skunks solely in defense of all skunks everywhere. That they have been traduced is known to all of us, and what it is I now would have you know is that the things we have said of them have been but calumnies.

* * *

Ex-Service Men and Prize Fighting

In my mail there comes to me what purports to be an appeal from ex-service men asking for a no-vote at the coming election against the proposal to abolish prize fighting in California. It tells me that needy ex-service men will suffer if the present law is changed or repealed and they are deprived of the revenues which now accrue to them through the conduct of boxing matches, or prize fights, in the various centers throughout the state.

Thinking it over it occurs to me that this state is generous enough and rich enough to care for its dependent ex-service men in some other way than through monies
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granted to them by way of the prize ring. And, further than that, I don't believe it can be true that a vast majority of the ex-service men of the state of California have any interest whatever in professional boxing. I believe that it is not unlikely that one might find, if he were inclined to look for them, a number of ex-service men who resent this tying up of all ex-service organizations and all ex-service men with something that has always been close to the border line between the law and crime.

Not that I am opposed to prize fighting. I'm not. I love it. And it has never done me harm. I've seen a thousand battles—more or less—and I'm just as gentle and harmless as I ever was. And if some ex-service men want the game to continue it's quite all right. But I know that behind these circulars that have been sent out to the voters there is the money and selfish interest of the professional prize fight promoter. It is really his fight and because he dare not come out into the open he dresses himself in the uniform of the boys who served in France and with a crutch he goes hobbling out crying for votes that he may not starve.

And maybe I'll vote for him, at that, just because I know Tom Gallery and Zasu.

* * *

Reviewed in this Number

CAPTAIN SWAGGER—
A Pathe picture. Directed by Edward H. Griffith; story by Leonard Praskins; continuity by Adelaide Heilbron; production manager, R. A. Blaydon; assistant director, E. J. Babbage; photographer, J. J. Mescall; art director, Edward Jewell.
The cast: Rod La Rocque, Sue Carol, Richard Tucker, Victor Potel, Ulrich Haupt.

INTERFERENCE (Silent Version)—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Lothar Mendes; from the play by Roland Pertwee and Harold Dearden; adaptation by Hope Loring; continuity by Louise Long; photographed by Henry Gerrard; assistant director, George Yohalem.
The cast: Evelyn Brent, Clive Brook, William Powell, Doris Kenyon, Tom Ricketts.

NED McCOBB'S DAUGHTER—
A Pathe picture. Directed by William J. Cowen; from the stage play by Sidney Howard; adaptation by Beulah Marie Dix; assistant director, Roy Burns; photographed by David Abel; production manager, John Rohlf; art director, Edward Jewell; film editor, Anne Bauchens.

RILEY, THE COP—
A William Fox picture. Directed by John Ford; story and scenario by Fred Stanley and James Gruen; assistant director, Phil Ford; cameraman, Charles Clarke.
The cast: Farrell MacDonald, Nancy Drexel, David Rollins, Harry Schultz, Louise Fazenda, Del Henderson, Ferdinand Schumann-Heink, Mildred Boyd, Rus-

“Why did you buy the Gaiety and close my show?”

“Because I don't want the mother of the Kenyon heirs to be an actress.”

“If I ever suckle a child of yours, may my milk be as poisonous as the sting of the asp.”

* * *

“Do you, Anita, take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband?”

Her lips part. No sound comes from them.

“She does,” answers John Kenyon, grimly.

* * *

“. . . it is no more than fair to tell you that she has been my mistress for the past year.”

Anita faces her husband defiantly.

“How long have you, John Kenyon, alias John Kane, been keeping the apartment on Central Park West?”

“A man——”

“A man deems it his privilege to do as he damn pleases and I, a woman, claim the same privilege.”

* * *

“Who is the greatest man in the whole wor-ruld, mudder?”

“Your father, Blind John Kenyon,” Anita replies proudly.

* * *

It's a story called "COMPROMISE".

"GUTS" would be a better title—it's full of 'em.

John F. Goodrich
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WINGS
MATINEES AND EVENINGS—CHILDREN 25C, ADULTS 65C

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SUNSET
Replying to the Wampus and Miss McDonough

By Madeline Matzen

THE article published July 21st, 1928, in "The Film Spectator" made no charge against Mr. Kiesling, whom I have met only once. A protest was made against too much authority being given to any one publicity organization. Mr. Kiesling represented the Wampas—my complaint, or charge, was against the Wampas and their feminine half the Wasps. In paragraph four of "The Wampus Makes Reply" they endeavor to explain their reason for the new ruling. In replying to their explanation I can mention about half a dozen freelance writers, all doing excellent work, who have appeared regularly in various fan publications—and none of them have been guilty of peddling "shoe-laces, real estate" or publicity on any studio lot.

None of them have, to my knowledge, sought a job on a studio lot for they imagined when scouting for stories that they had a job. Most of them held credentials in the shape of cards signed by their editors. Here is a suggestion that I would like to have the Wampus answer—why should these non-peddling, non-begging, already recognized writers be obliged to obtain permission from the Wampus (in writing) before they are allowed to go ahead with their work? These writers are well known by every studio publicity department, it is quite unnecessary that they should be sponsored by the Wampus. And is it not an ungaullant gesture to place these "illegitimate writers" in the same class with shoe-string peddlers? A thing the Wampas have done by their protective measures in behalf of the legitimate writer.

As to fake credentials—I had a card signed by Mr. Roscoe Fawcett (which I have every reason to believe was not faked). This card had about six weeks to run when I was told by Mr. Kiesling that it was of no value owing to the new Wampus ruling. This being the case Wampus had taken over complete control of Mr. Fawcett's magazine. And yet the magazine is owned by Mr. Fawcett. This looks as though the Wampus had decided to dictate to its owner the policy of his magazine. What pressure was brought to bear upon Mr. Fawcett to bring about this condition I do not know. Anyway, it is a dangerous precedent to establish. I have been told by the representative of a well known fan magazine that whenever his editor comes to town (as he does once a year) that he (the representative) does his level best to keep him away from any contacts with press agents and the Wampus—this, lest the editor be unduly influenced.

When writing for the Fawcett magazine (a new and struggling publication) I met with decided opposition in one publicity department. The woman in charge of the magazine section told me upon each visit that it was a "dirty" magazine, etc. Photographs were grudgingly doled out to me. Other writers for the same magazine met with similar opposition. Discouraged they complained to Mr. Fawcett and he paid a visit to Hollywood. The woman in question was a member of the Wampus. During Mr. Fawcett's visit the new ruling was established. The woman in question is the most insistent of any upon signed credentials from the Wampus.

A letter from Jack Smalley (business manager for the Fawcetts) urges me to keep on writing for them and explains how much easier the Wampas and Mr. Kiesling are going to make work for the freelance writer. As I explained in my article, instead of making it easier for the freelance they have made it harder. It looks as though someone had been fooling both Mr. Fawcett and Mr. Smalley.

Having discussed the new ruling with various "illegitimate writers" I find their opinions coincide with mine. But they tell me that they are afraid to say so openly lest the Wampas bar them from every studio lot and deprive them of their chance to make a living. But I do not believe the Wampas would do such a thing—hence my article and this reply.

Miss McDonough says that "fan magazine writers are not eligible for membership in the Wampus". This is true but there is another side to this statement. While still a member of the Wampus a woman publicist was recently made feature writer on a well known fan magazine. Having landed the job she resigned from the Wampus. A member of the Wampas having been made editor of a fan magazine immediately resigned from the Wampus—but he obtained the editorial job while still a member of that organization. I could cite other cases like these. I am informed by several writers that often Wasp members (holding positions in certain studios) submit articles and sell them. These articles usually are printed under a nom de plume.

It looks as though it were the beginning of a monopoly and when a monopoly rules, the product of a necessity becomes inferior. Competition, and competition only, will add value to a product. When we glance over recent issues of the different fan magazines we know that the product has been worse than inferior.

Who cares what a symposium of men stars have to say about leap year proposals, about whether screen kisses thrill them or not, etc? Who cares what a woman star happens to think of her "art"? We know that with such an empty face she can not think at all and wouldn't know "art" if she met it dressed in a red label. Who cares to read the laudatory and often nauseous praise of paid press agents? Very few people. And certainly the ambitious stars and players do not agree to have their names and photographs adorning blah, absurd stories.

Not long ago a well known press agent laughed at me when I told him that I wrote my own articles. "Nobody does!" he said and explained rather grudgly "If I think of a good story I write it myself in the style of whichever staff writer I think it is suited to. Then I send for this writer and give her the article. Sometimes she makes a few changes in it but usually she sends it out as it is, with her own name attached. The contract writers seldom write all their own stories—you are a fool if you do, it's a waste of time."
All this was news to me. “Do you mean to say that certain staff writers are holding down their positions with your—er—brains?” I asked.

He smiled depreciatingly. “They get paid by their magazine—I have accounts with the various stars—besides, I just dash off the articles, it’s no trouble at all.”

If that is the sort of thing legitimate writers have to endure I am glad I am an illegitimate one” I thought to myself.

A magazine as a rule makes some pretense at literature, or at what the editor considers literature. But the fan magazines are shameless on that score—like the “Police Gazette.” But the amusing part of it is that the fan magazines consider themselves immensely superior to “The Gazette.” If occasionally a well written and intelligent article or interview is printed it is usually accidental. There is no standard apparently, most of the fan magazines are in the hands of the press agents. The editors can not be blamed for this condition, it is the fault of the advertisers and their publicists. The studios are of course the heaviest advertisers.

As fan magazines are perused by the picture fans all over the world it is no trouble at all to imagine why the motion pictures are not as much money as they used to for their producers and why the one time huge interest in pictures is on the wane.

To begin with the personalities (so often drab and commonplace) of the stars are over-exploited. In some cases false and utterly alien personalities are invented for them and broadcasted all over the universe via the magazines. Instinctively the fans sense this falseness and the star, or player, loses favor. And sometimes a star is exploited so needlessly and so continuously that we grow tired of hearing about him. I believe that the reason why the movie world is a poor place is that the thinking people choose stage plays and concerts instead (or stay home and listen to the radio) is not due to the fact that screen plays are usually poor plays but because of the puerile and utterly artificial nonsense that is printed.

Who is to blame for this condition? The press agent. Mr. Kiesling told me that nine out of ten of the publicists connected with the industry were Wampas or Wasp members. These organizations have woven a fine fabric of plausible and high sounding reasons to explain why they have built a steel wall about the industry, a wall which more or less excludes the freelance writer—and the shoe-string peddler. And yet the prices paid for the average fan article run usually between forty and eighty dollars. Stipends of three hundred a month are considered fair pay. There seems then to be a very small amount of money at stake—too small to be worth the great ingenuity displayed by these organizations to protect their interests.

An article in the June twenty-seventh, nineteen twenty-eight number of “Variety” might throw a little light on the matter. A picture is unsigned and is an expose of the graft existing on the west coast among critics and publicists.

Says “Variety” “Coast chatterers on the picture business for dailies and news syndicates have brought their racket to a point closely approaching a system” and to this statement could be added that most of the newspaper chatterers write for the fan magazines.

The Variety article goes on to say that “It is in frequent nowadays when the chatterers and critics of Los Angeles may be relied upon for their reports of pictures or reviews. They are, with an exception or two, commercially biased.” “The maximum for bribing critics in Los Angeles appears to be five hundred dollars.” and the article adds that salaries of “contacts” that are arranged for a stiff price, etc. Mention is made of a reviewer who receives a salary of thirty-five dollars a week from an L. A. daily, who is said to be the creator of the phrase “put the coin under my plate at luncheon.” This costly-luncheon-critic happens to be a prolific writer of articles for the fan magazines. We may accurately deduce from the above fact writing for fan magazines is not the poorly paying business that it appears to be.

I understand that Wampas and Wasp members are not employed by the dailies but inasmuch as ninety per cent of the industry’s publicists are members and in constant contact with the chatterers and critics they must be well aware of this condition. And being well aware of it why don’t they take steps to stop the graft? Why make it difficult for the “illegitimate” writer to earn a living and protect the legitimate writer—especially if west coast legitimate writers are working a wholesale graft on the industry?

To borrow an adjective from the Wampas “Board of Directors”—isn’t this situation rather “absurd”?

I always imagined that fan magazines and the motion picture gossip section of newspapers were written for the fans. But no, they are written for the actor, actress and producer who pays the most and pays the longest. An actress seldom seen in pictures, and hardly noticed when seen, throws off a much publicity in the Sunday issue of an L. A. daily as do Janet Gaynor and Laura La Plante together. The actress-seldom-seen-in-pictures’ greatest claim to fame is the fact that she owns a chain of flower shops—but she is listed high among the stars. If fame can be bought with trinkets or a fat check, if a star is made on paper and not developed as an artist by work and experience how then can the motion picture ever hope to endure as the world’s greatest form of entertainment? The answer comes from Wall Street and here in Hollywood there is a panic among producers. They blame it on the talking picture. The talking picture is in part to blame but the publicity of an artist can assume the responsibility for the “fed up” feeling that the public have in regard to pictures.

PAUL PEREZ

... has just completed titling his ninth consecutive Tiffany-Stahl feature, “Broadway Fever,” directed by Edward Cline. He has been engaged by Paramount-Famous-Lasky to title “Three Week Ends,” starring...

CLARA BOW

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THE FILM SPECTATOR
November 3, 1923

HOLLYWOOD VIGNETTES
By F. T. D.

YOUR Easter will never have doing telling us that in this land of forever summer there is a dreadful sameness, a conspicuous absence of seasons, and sun that is lacking for the persons, the tastes in mates of the saline qualities of our Eastern and Northern and even Southern borders. Ah, yes, but what is taste? I am mindful that our rolling hills are green even in February, that the Yucca then shows a profusion of sentinal-like stems wherever the enormous energy of the landscape-architect has not yet penetrated; that there is almost a waterless expanse (for a such a phenomenon) with the young quine. And the sun, that vagabond of spaces, does roll up out of the mists back of Boyle Heights almost every morning.

And flowering quince is somehow reminiscent of terraces and banks of red geraniums, and red geraniums are synonymous with Fifth Avenue, which was built expressly for them, I think—all old brown shingled houses with interesting windows. And I was there when Berkeley burned and all the old brown houses and geraniums were no more; sitting in a room on Telegraph Hill across the bay watching the flames. Someone in the same room thought he was Nero and began to fiddle; but it was a sad thing to see. And now there are new houses, but no red geraniums.

This morning my tailor burst into my house with my spare suit and saw my new Navajo rugs. He always bursts in, but there aren't always new Navajo rugs. He's a little East Side Jew, and Navajo is all new and deals in (I am told) a room in the house which has any difference at all. But he told me, after he had admired them a little, that some day he was going to Navajo and buy some real ones.

Down along Grand Avenue, from First Street southward, Someone used to wander to the little school-house book-store that still stands across from the library. And Someone used to pick daisies where all the big old houses are now. And in those days Third Street was the way "over the hill" to the farms out Hollywood way, a half day's drive from town—only 'most everyone soon began going around by the easier but less cosmopolitan dirt road which is now Sixth Street, and was then quite a bit out of the way. Someone doubts if Bobbin found the grade still going on Third. Someone is sitting beside me now as we drive over the smooth bricks of old Grand Avenue, and under her grey hair I suppose there are thoughts of what a wonderful thing it is to pick daisies along old hillside, because if she hadn't she would never have had the pleasure of recounting it to her all-unworthy son.

This has worked up to the point where it seems necessary to talk about Chaplin. I don't quite know how, but it has. Charlie is such a little man we might forget him if we didn't talk about him sometimes. His picture, The Circus certainly was a real Circus. Charlie gets things right. He doesn't guess. Once, when I was an undergraduate shopping and looking for local color in the districts the other side of the Plaza, I met him coming out of a dark street where, I have no doubt, he had been looking for local color, too. There was someone with him that looked like Doug, but I couldn't swear, because their collars were turned up and they were hurrining along, and his collar was turned up and we were hurrining along, too. But if it was Doug, I don't think he has learned as much about local color as Charlie. Doug gets the letter, but not the spirit. He finds out all about what the Gaucho wears and what kind of rope he swings and what his saddle is made of, and then his picture is just Doug looking like a Gaucho but remaining Doug all the same. Charlie's different. He reconstructs the Western street on his back lot to look like the frozen North, shows us a girl and tells us three times that she's GEORGIA, and I, who have been to Nome and St. Michael, and Seward and Juneau and Ketchikan, feel suddenly that everything is right with the world again, that we are all sixteen and going hunting for gold. ... Critics and aesthetes explain these things, but I don't attempt to.

I get the same feeling from Jack London, and I don't get it from Joseph Conrad. The highbrows would quarter and string me for that. When London writes about the sea I can feel rope, smell oakum, and taste the salt spray on my lips. Conrad was a sailor for thirty years before he began writing, but his description of the storm in Typhoon leaves me cold. His sea is not my sea; his people are not my people. In polishing up all those brilliant paragraphs, over which he spent so much time and so many bitter tears, he rears up a magnificent monument to what man can do with words, but it's a stone monument, and cold.

There is a certain sentiment of which one is inclined to grow impatient. In homely phrase it runs about like this: "I guess there ain't no grand old men no more." I guess that guess is wrong, I guess whoever guesses like that doesn't know grand old men when he sees them, or grand old things, or grand old thoughts. The direction of energy has changed, and men are seldom singled out now for valor in war (though we have had a share of that), but for progress in peace. This is a new age, and it holds many new wonders. I recommend for anyone who feels a little down at the mouth about things, Mr. Flaherty's little jewel of a film showing activities of that Twenty-four Dollar Island, New York. In stone and masonry and steel, and with engine and fire and water, man is pushing into the skies and burrowing into the earth, and into the "waters under the earth". This is but a symbol of the really significant thing that is man unforgetting his mind. Warriors are not even when they try to write, even Caesar. The only thing that justified the whole Trojan war was a blind fellow that came along and sang about it afterward. Artists are everything that warriors are not. They build what warriors strive always to tear down. They work in peace and for peace. And what has all this, you say, to do with the movies. Nothing—unless it should induce some over-zealous producer of war films to hesitate a little before glorifying what is unquestionably the worst enemy of all art.
Nineteen was away on location when I was holding up people hither and yon. When he came back he wrote me a letter, from which a check dropped when it reached me, stating that he wished to rate as a hold-up hold-over, and that I could say anything I darned well wanted to.

You remember Ben—the young fellow who began work some years ago on Hell's Angels. He was a nice boy then. They say that by the time the picture is released, Ben will give George Fawcett and Alec Francis some lively competition. —W. B.

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SHOW FOLKS
CRAIG'S WIFE
NED McCOBBS DAUGHTER

By the Junior Critic

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E.A. BOWEN
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Producers Presented with
An Opportunity to Reform

The heads of the big motion picture organizations, the men who control the producing end of the industry that sends screen entertainment to the four corners of the earth, have refused for a long time to face some facts that have been apparent to anyone who is familiar even slightly with the manner in which pictures are made. They have been engaged in a business that could cover up its artistic lapses by contortions performed in cutting-rooms, and absorb its wild extravagances by its manner of selling its products. The introduction of talking pictures definitely puts an end to the usefulness of the cutting-room as a remedy for the artistic ills, and should serve as an excuse for a reform in the financial management of the business. No one could make me believe that when a man of the keen business judgment of Winfield Sheehan, or Jesse Lasky, or Louis B. Mayer, visits one of his own stages and finds a director shooting a picture without a script, he does not know that it is a serious artistic blunder and an inexcusable financial extravagance. And yet they can not make a tour of their stages without making such a discovery. It is something that has been going on for years, and is one of the reasons why pictures were losing their grip on the favor of the public until sound came to put new life in the babbling art. But the noise of the coins dropping in greater quantities on box-office counters, must not confuse our producers into the belief that they are entitled to any credit for the improvement in conditions. Sound was forced upon them from without the industry, and so little did they appreciate its possibilities, so feebly did their minds function in grasping its importance, that for more than two years it knocked at the door of the industry before it was received inside. Now that it is inside, what are the captains of the industry going to do with it? Are they going to pursue the policy of blundering incapacity that brought the silent art to its knees, or are they going to display common sense, thank their lucky stars for the providential nature of the gift of sound, and so reform their production methods as to obviate the danger of a return to the conditions they brought about by their mismanagement of the making of silent films? Are they going to profit by what experience has taught them, that their business is one that can be run to the earth, even though it has demonstrated that it is one that can stand terrific punishment before it begins to totter? Are they going to face the cold, unforgiving fact that sound pictures are not immune to the disease that almost killed their silent predecessors? Production methods must be changed, and an opportune moment for the change has come with the advent of sound. The industry is fortunate in requiring only one remedy to cure both its artistic and economic ills. If pictures are made correctly, their cost becomes correct automatically. When we have no directors shooting without scripts, no money will be wasted in building sets that are not used; when we have the scripts prepared properly, no money will be wasted in shooting scores of scenes that remain in cutting-rooms; and when the scripts are prepared by skilled writers who are free of the deadening influence of supervisors and directors who are unacquainted with the first principles of story-telling, they will be prepared in a manner that will result in satisfactory screen entertainment being produced within the bounds of economic reason. Not until producers realize that screen art has become a matter that can be entrusted only to those who have an artistic sense, and act upon that realization, will they allow it to achieve the financial opulence that will be the reward of sensible management. They can not continue their present policy of substituting their own brains for the brains of those who know how pictures should be made.

Overlooking a Chance
to Dish a Lot of Dirt

A great compliment has come to me. An Eastern publication with a national circulation has singled me out to write for it three articles which it feels it can not entrust to any other writer, for my literary charm and intimate acquaintance with Hollywood life are established facts, and make me both the craftsman and the authority it is looking for. So highly does this journal, which has asked me to treat the matter confidentially, value my services that it will be glad to pay me two hundred and fifty dollars each for three articles of around thirty-five hundred words each. So far, so good. This generous publication has an idea. The reading public is fed up, it thinks, on Hollywood wild parties and the indiscretions of motion picture actresses and actors. The articles that I am requested to write hit a bit higher. All the deplorable happenings in Hollywood, the letter tells me, are not manifestations solely of the depravity of those whose faces appear on the screen; the higher-ups, the big executives and such like, really are the most culpable, for their manner of living is such as to set a bad example to those whom the public knows. The publication wants, through me, to strike at the root of the evil that is rampant in Hollywood. It wants the producers and their executives, who control pictures, even though their names are not known to the public, to be presented to reading America in their true colors, their immoralities laid bare and their debaucheries described in that graphic style, with that unrelenting adherence to truth, that are characteristic of my pen. That is the general tenor of the letter. I can not quote from it directly, for I wrote on it, “Will you kindly go to hell?”, and sent it back. I didn’t want the
unclean thing in my files. It isn't as if I didn't know a lot of dirt about the executives. The stories I could tell! For instance, take Jesse Lasky. I know he swears. One day last summer I encountered him at the beach. With an utter disregard for modesty, he was attired in a bathing suit, and he was saying the awfullest things about a man who, in chasing a ball, wrecked a sand castle that Jesse was constructing for his kids and their friends. Ben Schulberg, Jesse's chief lieutenant, is just as bad. At Malibu one Sunday afternoon he not only organized a lot of kids' races, but he ran in two of them himself. Possibly the most disgraceful scene I have witnessed in Hollywood—one to which I undoubtedly would have devoted an entire article—took place in the home of Bill Sistrom, general manager of Pathé. He was lying on his library floor and three girls were sitting on him! True, they were his daughters, but I wouldn't need to mention that in the article. And the fall I could take out of Carl Laemmle! One would think that a man in his position as the head of a great producing organization would lead a dignified and quiet life, yet at a fancy dress party given by Rosabelle, that sweet daughter of his, he actually so far forgot himself as to dress up as a circus ringmaster. There's dirt for you! Winfield Sheehan, the genius who is giving us such great Fox pictures, works all day in his office, but how do you suppose he spends his nights? Among his first editions, his books with exquisite bindings; under a carved wood ceiling which he found in Spain and brought to Beverly Hills, where he built a house around it—a house that is filled with museum pieces and in which cut-flowers are everywhere. Even on Wednesday nights, when he should be at prayer meeting, this particular bad example stays home and wastes his time on the things he has collected. Take Louis B. Mayer. I saw him one night, a girl dangling from each arm, making for a slide-for-life at Venice. They were his daughters, but, as in the case of Bill Sistrom, why bring that up? Irving Thalberg, Mayer's chief associate, plays baseball on Sunday! I saw him, yelling his head off, when the M.G.M. team was playing Paramount. And each team was made up of the kind of fellows that the generous Eastern publication wanted me to expose. And I've done it. I've set out above all the dirt I know about any of them. And I rub elbows with them every day—in their studios, in their offices and in their homes. Inquire into the private lives of the executive heads of the first twenty producing organizations you encounter, and go into the homes of the preachers of the first twenty churches you run across; weigh what you find out, and the scales will come a long way from balancing. On the lower side will be cleanliness, decency, and regard for the Golden Rule; on the high side cant, hypocrisy, narrow-mindedness. The little guys on the high side will be the preachers.

Partly About Bill Sistrom, But Picture Is Mentioned

PHOTOGRAPH IS turning out some good pictures, nice examples of screen art that should please audiences anywhere. I hope Joe Kennedy will take my word for it. Although he is advisor to Pathé, he acknowledges that he knows nothing about screen art, consequently someone must tell him when the organization turns out something that is a credit to that art. However, the Pathé pictures that I have seen recently did not have the benefit of Joe's advice. They were turned out by the organization that Cecil de Mille built up and left behind him when he embarked on the wild adventure of trying to make a good picture on the Metro lot. When the cycle of production comes within the influence of Joe's advice, we shall see what we shall see. Four Pathé productions that I viewed this week were produced under the general supervision of William Sistrom, who has the queerest mixture of qualifications for the job possessed by any production executive in pictures. He could be a success as a building contractor if he wished to follow that line, but he prefers to apply his specialized knowledge to the economical construction of sets. I don't charge him with setting fire to the Pathé stage that burned down some months ago, but I know he had a devil of a lot of fun rebuilding it promptly. He knows just who should play which part, and he has an unerring instinct for putting his finger on the weak spot of a story. But perhaps his greatest attribute is that of commanding the unflagging loyalty of those who work with him. When a production is under way he does not insist upon taking the helm himself, as so many of our supervisors do. He contents himself with nudging the elbow of the man at the wheel, then dropping over the side to board another craft that is flying the pilot's signal. There is a strong strain of fine, clean humanity in Pathé pictures, and I believe its source of origin is Bill Sistrom's home, where there are five kids who hold the opinion unanimously that the United States made an awful mistake in electing Herbert Hoover president when a man so very much better was available. None of the above, however, was what I expected to say when I started to write this paragraph. It was my intention to glance off Joe Kennedy into a review of Captain Swagger, a Pathé picture directed by E. H. Griffith, starring Rod La Rocque and featuring Sue Carol. I just happened to think of Bill Sistrom because he honked his horn at me on Sunset Boulevard this morning, an admission which I trust will not start an epidemic of horn-honking by picture people every time I put in an appearance. Captain Swagger is an interesting picture because it makes no effort to be anything else. Despite the fact that there are a couple of hold-ups in it, it is well dressed and delightful throughout. Rod La Rocque is an excellent actor, but I like him best in polite comedy roles, such as the one he has in this picture. When, immaculately dressed and graceful as a dancing master, he stalks across a cafe floor to a table at which Richard Tucker is sitting, and asks pleasantly, "How would you like a good sock in the jaw?", he strikes a comedy note that is delicious. His screen personality always is easy and charming without sacrificing any of his he-man quality. Especially in a picture of this sort, I know of no one more suitable to play opposite him than Sue Carol. She is about the most captivating little thing that cameras ever are aimed at. So far she has been playing just herself, a sweet, clean, refined youngster who charms everyone with whom she comes in contact, but with each part she gives more evidence of an increasing comprehension of what it is about and I believe she yet will rate as an actress of ability. But no amount of acting knowledge could make her any more charming than she is in Captain Swagger. Ullrich Haupt contributes an excellent characterization, and Dick Tucker and Victor Potel do their share. Paul Perez's titles are notable.
for their cleverness, and Griffith's direction is intelligent throughout. He avoids the abuse of close-ups, and handles his ensemble scenes with marked ability. The picture is a Hector Turnbull production, his last before he went back to Paramount. It is much to his credit.

* * *

Paul Stein Puts a Lot of Clever Touches in This One

PAUL Stein puts many clever directorial touches in Show Folks, a Pathé picture. Eddie Quillan, a cocksure young vaudeville performer, puts on a single act which proves to be a flop. In most pictures the fact that an act is a failure is registered by a shot showing looks of disgust on the faces of those composing the audience. In Show Folks we see the adult members of the audience without any expressions on their faces. They simply are waiting for the next act and do not applaud Quillan. But the children applaud him, which is exactly what would happen in real life. In the closing sequence, Quillan again goes on to do a single, earlier in the picture having discarded his partner, played by Lina Basquette, whose work in the act had made it a success. Lina rushes from her theatre to his and at the last moment goes on with him. The fact that her presence is a surprise is registered by a fleeting look of astonishment on the face of the orchestra leader, followed by a suggestion of a shrug of his shoulders before he proceeds stoically to wave his baton. In a scene showing the boy and girl at a table in a café where dancing is in progress, we see the faint shadows of the dancers flitting across the two as they converse, although the dancers are not in the scene. All through the picture Stein displays intelligence. In scenes building the romance, both the boy and girl are in every shot instead of being shown in individual close-ups, a treatment which I have contended persistently is the correct one. The director shows a fine sense of composition in all his scenes and his cameraman brings out all their values. The picture is going to be criticized on account of its length, for which the director cannot be held responsible. Much sharper cutting would have improved the film. The story is not big enough, or about people important enough, to warrant the footage that is used in telling it. It moves too slowly to its climax after the premise has been established. In the last sequence, when it should move swiftly to its fade-out, the individual scenes are held too long. It is cut apparently on the assumption that it is a great sentimental romance, whereas it is essentially a romance of action, as all romances must be when played by other than great romantic artists who can hold an audience by their mastery of their love scenes. Lina Basquette and Eddie Quillan are a pair of clever youngsters, but they are not romantic actors. But they put it over most of their fellow players in one respect: they put on dancing acts in course of the story, and they are real dancing acts that are worth watching on their own account. They don't need any doubles. Lina gives the best performance she yet has to her credit on the screen. She is easy and natural throughout. Quillan is a natural actor. His role is a departure for him in that it is not straight comedy. He is a rather pathetic figure as the young vaudevillian with more confidence in himself than his talents would justify. When Bill Haines plays a part like that, he irritates us with his conceit, but when young Quillan plays it we feel sorry for him and are pulling for him to make good. I think, however, that Pathé is making a mistake in casting him in anything except comedy roles, as we have plenty of young fellows who can make us feel sorry and too few who can make us laugh. There is a young woman in Show Folks whom I never saw before, and never even heard of. She is Carol Lombard and she is going to do very nicely on the screen. Bob Armstrong plays a kind of heavy that we should see more often. We think he is a heartless fellow until he comes up against a situation that puts him to a test, and we discover that he isn't such a bad sort after all. Armstrong plays the part well. Craufurd Kent, always a finished artist, makes a valuable contribution to the picture, as does also Bessie Barriscale. Ralph Block produced Show Folks, adding one more to the creditable list he has made for Pathé.

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Bill Cowen Makes One That Plays Havoc With My Morals

NED McCOBBS' DAUGHTER had the wrong moral effect on me. I didn't want the officers of the law to catch the bootlegger. There is nothing particularly remarkable about that, for I don't want the officers of the law to catch mine as he is a nice, fat little fellow who never could get along on jail cooking. But I went further in my regard for the picture bootlegger. I wanted him to get his brother's wife. As I will stand no trifling with the moral code, I wanted him to murder his brother in order that he could get the wife legitimately. Failing this direct action, I was pleased greatly when the brother was drowned and the way cleared for the marriage of the widow to the bootlegger. Ned McCobbs's Daughter interested me considerably on its own account as a picture, but held additional interest for me because it marked the debut of a new director, my friend Bill Cowen, otherwise W. J. There is nothing about the production to indicate that it is the first effort of a director. In fact, when I saw a few instances of characters walking into scenes and turning to face the camera, I felt that such scenes had been handled by any of our most experienced directors. But these lapses were the only ones that marked Cowen's direction. I hope he will not let them become a habit. In all other respects his direction was surprisingly good. He approaches his scenes with assurance, and composes them with full regard for their dramatic values and their pictorial possibilities. The story is laid on the fringe of the sea, in a bootleg atmosphere, but there is a romance running through it that is clean and tender. Cowen does not make his story obvious. As it neared its conclusion my curiosity as to how it was going to end was strong. It had reached that point that all good stories must reach— I could not see how it was going to turn out. The husband had the corpse of a murdered law enforcement officer under a pile of apples in the basement of his house, other officers were searching the place for contraband liquor, and the discovery of the body would get the unpleasant bootlegger and his brother's wife into a devil of a mess. It's no wonder that I became excited. And it was Cowen's intelligent direction that piled up the interest until it became exciting. There is a real thrill in the end, splendidly directed and effectively photographed. The picture abounds in excellent performances. Nothing in
any picture that I have seen in a long time pleased me more than seeing Theodore Roberts in this one. I am told that at each of the previews of the picture the audience burst into applause the moment Theodore appeared on the screen. This veteran artist still is one of the best box-office bets in the business, and now that he is able to work before the camera again, he will be kept busy if producers are wise. He is what the screen needs now, a thoroughly trained motion picture actor with a thoroughly trained voice. Add to this his unquestioned hold on the affections of picture patrons all over the world and you have something of value to any production. George Barraud, who gave such a striking performance in the stage version of Interference, appears in the picture as the brother I have mentioned. He is most effective. Irene Rich plays the name part and plays it excellently. In fact, I don't think she ever did better in anything. Robert Armstrong played the bootlegger who got all my sympathy. There are still some traces of his stage training in his screen work, little touches here and there that remind us that he is acting, but he nevertheless is coming along splendidly and is destined to become a great favorite. Carol Lombard repeats the good impression she made on me in Show Folks. The punctuation of the titles is such as should prompt Bill Cowen to refuse absolutely to direct another picture until Pathé promises to hire some ten-year-old grade school youngster to make the titles appear as if they were turned out by someone educated in the use of the English language.

*Bids Farewell to Silent Films With the Best He Ever Made*

For more than a dozen years William C. de Mille has been one of the most intelligent directors in the film business, although he not always has given the public the kind of pictures it wanted. He has gone over, body, soul and breeches, to talking pictures, and if I may judge from rushes of his first venture in the new art, he is going to provide us with some notable entertainment. But as befitting a long and intelligent career in silent pictures, he bid farewell to them in the best thing he ever did, Craig's Wife, the last picture he made for Pathé. It is a brilliant example of direction, a perfectly executed little picture that will delight those who can appreciate its fine points, although it probably will not appeal greatly to those who take their screen entertainment on the fly and do not stop to look beneath its surface. Irene Rich, playing the wife, is presented as an irritating nagger whom everyone in an audience would like to see choked before the first reel is half over. It is difficult to carry a central character of this sort through an entire picture and give it wide popular appeal. It can be done only when the characterization is handled deftly enough to make the audience see the point of view of the character. I believe it would have been possible to have made Miss Rich a sympathetic character. From her own standpoint, of course, she was justified in everything she did, and if that fact had been presented in a manner that would have enabled the audience to grasp it, it would have sympathized with her, thereby making the picture one with more popular appeal. For my part, however, I like it as it is. Miss Rich made her part so convincing that it kept me in a constant state of irritation. I wanted Warner Baxter, the husband, to give her a good poke in the jaw, and a picture has to be good to give me such feelings. Craig's Wife interested me considerably as a fine piece of screen writing by Clara Beranger. The play is followed closely although the physical continuity is changed considerably. The actual weaving together of the elements of the play is done on the screen in a way that differs from the treatment of the original, although it tells exactly the same story with the same psychological continuity as the play possesses. What measure of appeal the picture has will not be because the central character is Craig's wife, but because she is the wife of so many people. The difficulty that De Mille's fine direction bridges is the interval between the discovery by the audience that the wife should be taught a lesson, and the delivery of the lesson by the husband. As the wife makes herself unpopular in the first few hundred feet of the picture, the interval would have been a long one had there not been such intelligence displayed in its direction, and such good performances to carry the story along. Warner Baxter makes an ideal husband. He is particularly good in registering the thought process that leads to open rebellion, of which breaking furniture is the physical manifestation. Ethel Wales is admirable in a character part. How is it that we do not see this talented woman on the screen much oftener? The romance is carried by Virginia Bradford and Carroll Nye and both do splendidly. Lilian Tashman and George Irving have small parts that maintain the artistic quality of the acting. The picture has a production that keeps it in atmosphere. The living-room of the Craig residence has the virtue of looking like a room in which one could live without contracting heebie-jeebies, even if one surely would contract that distressing malady by living in it with such a wife as Mrs. Craig. The effect of the sets was heightened by the lighting of the rooms in the background. Through doors leading to them occasionally we see servants at their work, a touch that lends reality to the scenes. Craig's Wife, I am afraid, is better than the box-office will give it credit for being.

*Jack Ford Manages to Shoot a Sense of Humor*

John Ford, who gave us The Iron Horse, Mother Machree, Four Sons, Hangman's House, took unto himself a cameraman at the Fox studios a few weeks ago, and went out and shot a sense of humor. Riley, the Cop, they call it. It is composed of the darnedest lot of rot ever assembled in one picture, but so deftly is it handled, so intelligently directed, that it is the funniest thing that has been brought to the screen this year. It is the kind of picture that would be ruined if other than a keen sense of humor had controlled its making. First National made one along the same line, Do Your Duty, in which Charlie Murray was the cop, but it lacked everything that makes Riley such a joyous affair. When Jack Ford made his other pictures, he had stories, and all he had to do was to tell them. When he tackled Riley he had nothing except a cameraman. At least I imagine that there was no script. Every excruciatingly funny bit in the picture gives you the impression that it was shot the moment someone thought of it. There is not much excuse for a director making a poor picture when he
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has a story to go on. When a screen drama is a failure, though, it is difficult at times to place the blame. You may attribute it to the manner in which the court room sequence was presented, while I may contend that that sequence is the strongest in the picture. Each of us is right from his own point of view. But take a picture like Riley, the Cop. There can be no difference of opinion about the manner in which Jack Ford handles his railway station sequence. It was conceived to make people laugh. If they laugh, the direction is good; if they don't, it is poor. You and I may think that it is handled terribly, but if it makes an audience roar with laughter, it has achieved the purpose for which it was conceived, therefore the direction deserves credit. Is it because we have this absolute and reliable check on the work of a comedy director that we have so few directors brave enough to tackle comedy? It must be. Certainly Jack Ford was brave when he tackled Riley. In my mind's eye I can see him, his cameraman, and Farrell MacDonald tramping around one of the Fox lots until they found some set that suggested something. Then Jack would say, "Let's shoot something here," and all of them would giggle, and they'd shoot the giggle, and when you and I see it on the screen, we laughed our heads off at it. The beauty of the job from a craftsman's standpoint is that there is not a single broad stroke in the whole thing, not a caricature, nor an extravagant costume or make-up. It's just funny because it is downright brilliant. But I warn you of one thing: if you've had a difference with your wife before going to the picture house, or if your tailor has been obdurate or your dinner poor, you probably will think Riley, the Cop the most lamentable thing you ever saw; but if all's well with the world, if the goose hangs high and there's a balance in the bank, you're going to begin to grin when the first scene is shown, and your face won't be straight again until a long time after you get home. Farrell MacDonald gives the finest performance of his career as Riley. He is simply great. No one else has much to do. Nancy Drexel, an attractive and intelligent youngster, and David Rollins carry the love interest and keep the fun going. But it's a director's picture, and my hat is off to Jack Ford. I extend him a multitude of giggles.

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Draping a Few Thousand Extra Feet on Star's Name

MARY Philbin is a star; a star's picture should be over eight reels; ergo, Port of Dreams must be over eight reels, for Mary Philbin is starring in it. You might argue that the story is not strong enough to warrant such footage. Well, what of it? Are you so dull that you can not understand that a picture gets its strength, not from its story, but from the size of the type in which the star's name is spread on the billboards and the length of the film in which she is presented? So they proceeded to make Port of Dreams and because Mary is its star, they are releasing it in eighty-five hundred feet, just twenty-five hundred feet more than it has sufficient vitality to sustain. The only thing that almost excuses its length is the performance of Otis Harlan. This veteran trouper is an artist. He does not give us a caricature of a retired sea captain, nor a comedian's conception of such a character; he makes the old man loveable by keeping him strictly human and plausible, and at times he makes him funny by doing funny things in a reasonable manner. It is a clever, understanding performance that Harlan gives, one of the best that I have seen on the screen this year. It's a strange business, this one of presenting pictures to the public. If this one had gone out as "Otis Harlan in Port of Dreams," we would have had a new star, even though he is more than twenty years of age. We aim most of our pictures at youthful minds, and I know of no one who could be made more popular with them than this jolly old trouper with the youthful soul. Miss Philbin's part is just a girl part. She plays it excellently, but the role is a negative one. Opposite her is a youth new to the screen, Fred Mackaye, a sincere young fellow of considerable ability and depth. We meet him first in jail, and discover that he is serving time for a crime committed by his father, the son accepting the guilt to save his mother the pain of discovering that her husband is a forger. That she would suffer even more pain by discovering that her son is one, apparently occurred to no one. Paul Schofield wrote the screen story, and it is as full of holes as a net. All the faults of the picture, even its excessive length, are due to the story. Wesley Ruggles directed it capably, and the performances are good, but every few hundred feet we encounter some implausible situation that even an amateur screen writer would be expected to avoid. The dying father writes a letter clearing his son's name, and the son, to spare his mother's feelings, promptly tears it up and remains in jail, leaving the bereft mother entirely without consolation. The letter could have been made a confidential communication to the parole board, which would have gained freedom for the boy and continued public respect for the memory of the father, but it would have left us with no story on our hands. Having an evil-minded cell-mate find the letter and destroy it, would have been an easy way to retain all the story value. There are several other such weaknesses in the story, but the main fault of the picture is that there is no background for the romance. We know nothing about the girl and we meet the boy in jail. To carry a romance into nine reels there must be more than that. We must have glamorous characters, dominating lovers who give strength to the romance. In this picture all the strength comes from the romance, and none from the parties to it. That is the condition that prevails in nearly all our screen stories, but mighty few of them consume so much footage. Port of Dreams would have been an acceptable picture if it had been held down to six reels, providing the cutting had retained all of Otis Harlan's scene. Universal has given the picture an interesting production and Ruggles makes the most of it, but he could not overcome the handicap that Schofield placed on him. I do not wish to give the impression that it would be a waste of time to view Port of Dreams. Otis Harlan's performance alone makes it worth while.

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WHEN you see your next silent picture, note the amount of unnecessary talking there is in it, the number of times that lips move when there is no reason why the characters should say anything. When talking pictures get shaken down, we are going to eliminate all this unnecessary lip movement, and reduce the speeches to those that are essential to the telling of the story. In
a talking scene we can not have an actor moving his lips and waving his arms for five minutes and give utterance only to the half dozen words with which a silent picture would credit him in a title. I don't like to speak disrespectfully of the dead, but the more we see of talking pictures the more the fact is borne in on us that silent motion pictures have been rather absurd. And as we see still more of the talking kind, we are going to wake up to the fact that the stage hasn't been any too reasonable. When we contemplate the amazing—stupifying in fact—progress sound pictures have made in the few months of their existence, and project our imaginations five years ahead, we can begin to realize that when the screen and the stage pool the knowledge that experience has given each, and apply it to this new development, we are going to have some of the most glorious works of art that it ever will be man's privilege to contemplate. It is interesting to note how rapidly all Hollywood is coming around to this view. When over two years ago I set forth in The Spectator what sound devices would mean to screen art, the only people who paid any attention to me, laughed at me. But we don't have to go back that far. I know executives who last month said that we always would have silent pictures, and who this month deny that they said it. I have been told that when I predicted, a couple of Spectators ago, that sound pictures would supplant stage productions within five years, I had gone a little too far, but I was told the same thing two and a half years ago, when I urged motion picture producers to prepare for the era of sound in pictures.

Those who are worrying over problems presented by sound seem to overlook the fact that they will have the help of audiences in the solution of some that now seem perplexing. "How are we going to space our laughs?" the comedians are asking one another. No two audiences react alike; they do not always laugh at the same place, and no two audiences laugh for the same length of time at any given moment. The Spectator has been assured solemnly by half a dozen correspondents that talkie pictures never can succeed because when this one or that was being shown the audience laughed so long that it couldn't hear the lines that followed immediately on the heels of what made it laugh. The solution of that problem may with safety be left to the audience itself. It can learn how to laugh just as the comedian has learned how to make it laugh. We should not lose sight of the fact that audiences still are as new to talking pictures as the producers are. They have not learned yet just how to view them. But that will come. In the studios certain rules for allowing for laughs will be established, and audiences soon will learn just how long they can laugh without missing anything.

The standard apology for putting crime on the screen is the fact that punishment always is linked with it. The criminal never fails to get his. In Captain Swagger he doesn't. The gentlemen's code steps in, and it is more inexorable even than the law. Ulrich Haupt, a German flyer, had enabled Rod La Rocque, an American flyer, to escape during the war. Haupt later becomes a New York criminal, and La Rocque assists him in escaping from the police. I don't believe that the most rigid disciple of law enforcement would have approved any other twist of the story. There are some higher laws that are recognized generally, and one of them is the law of noblesse oblige.

Bill Hart's friend, Charles Siringo, has been roped by his maker. Bill was going to take me to Charlie's home, for I wanted to meet the old plainsman whose life was more vivid than the imaginations of those who wrote about the West. But it was one of those little journeys that one puts off to a later day because to-day there's an article to write, and to-morrow there's golf. But Siringo still lives in my library. His Riata and Spur is one of the books I do not lend. If you wish to meet a sterling character, if you wish to live some great days in the West when it was young, if you wish to be enthralled, amused and excited, get the book and all those pleasures will be yours.

The fiftieth anniversary number of The Spectator, to appear on the second Saturday in March, 1928, apparently is going to be successful from a commercial standpoint. In the last issue I announced that already I had received orders for advertising space aggregating sixty-seven thousand dollars. This now has grown to three hundred and eighty-four thousand dollars, and Louise Fazenda has written asking us what discount we will allow on an order for one million dollars worth. The number is getting along quite nicely, even though we have not heard from Sam Goldwyn.

Unless Universal displays a little speed in bringing Broadway to the screen, it won't have even the minor situations left to present as something new in screen entertainment. Up to date I have seen Broadway at least four times, done once by Warners, as Lights of Broadway, or something like that, and three times as quickie productions. It so happened that Helene Costello was in all four pictures. I ran across her on the Boulevard the other morning and asked her why she didn't go after Universal for the girl part in Broadway. "Oh, I'm sick of it," replied Helene.

W. Griffith maintains that there has been no such thing as screen art, although the introduction of sound may give birth to it. As nearly as I can understand W.'s views from the exceedingly condensed versions of them which appeared in the papers, he says we have had no screen art because motion pictures have been things of the camera and other purely mechanical appliances. There is nothing particularly artistic in an ungainly block of marble, or in the battered chisels that a
sculptor uses, but when the chisels are through with the block of marble the world often has reason to congratulate itself upon the possession of another artistic triumph. One can see neither art, poetry nor beauty in a hammer and an anvil, but when they are applied artistically to a formless bit of metal they can give us a sample of wrought-iron that possesses all the quality that the hammer and anvil lack. Griffith has been a long time in pictures. If they have achieved no artistic standards the fault is his, not the camera’s.

HOW soon is it going to occur to some producer that Bill Hart in a talking Western would be a great box-office bet?

GARNERED IN THE MAIL

No doubt in the foregoing there are plenty of mistakes in punctuation, but I think you will understand what I have written. Is not this understanding all that the written language is intended to convey? If so, don’t you think that in your constant criticism of the punctuation of titles you are disturbing yourself over something of little importance?


As I conceive it, being correct in anything is a matter of importance. Fashion has decreed that men should wear neckties, and I am sure that if R. S. B. found himself without one at a social gathering he would derive little satisfaction from the fact that, at all events, his nakedness was covered, which is his main reason for wearing clothes at all. Usage demands a certain standard in punctuation, as fashion demands a certain standard in dressing, and all firmly established standards are based on reason. The mission of punctuation is to make the written language easier to read. We use capital letters and periods to show us at a glance where a sentence begins and where it ends, and the other symbols have missions as definite, by ignoring them, title writers increase the difficulty of reading the titles to the extent that they depart from the established standards. They claim that they consider it a matter of little importance. If they were honest they would attribute it to their ignorance. There is not one title writer in Hollywood who would punctuate a title incorrectly if he knew how to do it correctly. When he claims otherwise, he lies. But it is a useless discussion now, as soon as we give no more titles. Such ignorance and lack of education as title writers have betrayed can not be carried into talking pictures if such pictures are to be successful. In spite of itself, the screen will have to scrape the go off its waistcoat.

Who, in your opinion, is the best screen actor, John Barrymore, Emil Jannings, or Jean Hersholt?

ARTHUR F. HEPBURN, Oakland, Calif.

John Barrymore was better in “Tempest” than either of the others would have been; Emil Jannings was better in “The Patriot” than either of the others would have been; Jean Hersholt was better in “Abie’s Irish Rose” than either of the others would have been. It’s a rather foolish question.

I notice that in your reviews of pictures, the most intelligent reviews that I read anywhere, you never mention the names of the authors of the original stories, the adaptations or the continuity. Don’t you think they are important, or do you fail to mention them for any reason that would not do credit to a man as broadminded as all your writings would indicate you to be?


I confess to no attributes, worthy or unworthy, except that of laziness, and to be true to that one I can not burden my mind with the task of remembering that I must do thus and so when I am writing a review of a picture. I have no inhibitions, and if I fail to mention a writer’s name it is because I have fallen into the habit of not mentioning it. At one time I thought that I should mention the names of only such writers as advertised in The Spectator, but I forgot to stick to it. Once in a while I mention the name of a writer and as often as not it is the name of someone who never spent a nickel in advertising with me. As a matter of fact, I never know who is advertising until I get the completed Spectator at the same time that you do. So much for the broadmindedness. The one branch of the entertainment business that I entirely least interests The Spectator has championed most consistently, and will continue to champion as long as I control the policy of the paper, is that of the writers. They are more important to the industry than all the rest of the personnel combined. At present they are held in the least esteem, but that will be changed when the industry becomes some one I am interested in the writers as a class, not the individuals, and individual interests in the industry because we will not have uniformly good pictures until they are allowed to express themselves. At present what they write is tortured by producer, director and cutter, and for me to judge the remains when I am reviewing a picture, would be unfair to them. When I know a story has been put on the screen just as the author wrote it, I will criticize it as an example of screen writing, but meanwhile I am giving him the benefit of the doubt and do not charge him with a picture’s frailties.

Your Hold-Up Number was the first and only screen publication in which my name appeared at the bottom of an advertisement. Now every advertiser is giving his special number with his Spectator advertisement and wants me to patronize his publication to the same extent. I no longer can say that I never advertise—so what can I say to these people who are bothering me? You got me into this, and you must get me out.

X can be nice to the advertising salesmen and tell them that she will be very glad indeed to buy space in their hold-up numbers. She can say that she adheres to her determination not to advertise in the regular issues, but when a hold-up number comes along she will be just as glad to patronize it as she was to patronize the looting number of The Spectator. There is just one little condition that she should make. To qualify to obtain her advertisement the special issue must be called a hold-up number, not a Christmas number, a writer’s number, a directors’ number or anything of the sort.

The Spectator happens to be the only Californian publication I read. I believe you are truthful and will give me reliable information on a point that has been puzzling me. I have relatives in South California, and they want me to go out there to live, but they say such extravagant things about the climate of the county that I can not believe them. I will believe you. Is the climate of Southern California really as good as everyone says it is?

EDITH M. THOMAS, Concord, N. H.

It’s better.

I think I enjoyed The Spectator of October 27 more than any other. The fact that you had no reviews in it, but confined yourself to general comments on matters of importance to screen people, are pre-eminent in musical comedy, vaudeville and on the talking screen. For twelve successive seasons I wrote all their special material, because they could always depend on me for long, loud, sure-fire laughs. Through years of successful experience in comedy construction and audience psychology, I can ‘clock’ in advance, seven times out of ten, what will arouse audience mirth.

JAMES MADISON
(The ‘Gold Medal’ Author:—Eventually, why not now?)
Original Stories, Adaptations, Gags, Titles, Screen Dialogue

323 North Citrus Ave., Los Angeles
ORegon 5627

Willie and Eugene Howard

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is what made it so interesting to me. I am not interested in reviews.

A. J. M.

To offset this are several complaints from people who tell me that the chief reason they read The Spectator is to follow my reviews of pictures. Even since I started the paper one thing about it has puzzled me. Which do readers prefer, comments on screen topics in general or reviews of pictures? I ask nearly everyone who mentions The Spectator to me, and find that they are divided about evenly. I really would like to hear from readers on the point. My personal opinion is that a Spectator carrying nothing but reviews is rather dull.

Now that The Spectator is a weekly, why do you charge so much for it? When it appeared twice a month, I could afford forty cents a month to read it, but I can not afford eighty cents, and I never could pay seven and a half dollars to have it mailed to me for a year. Why not be generous and charge ten cents for a single copy and five dollars a year?

AN EXTRA GIRL.

All right. Beginning with the next issue the Extra Girl's scale of prices will go into effect—ten cents the copy, five dollars the year. Those who have paid seven dollars and a half will have their subscriptions extended six months. I don't care much for money, anyway.

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By Donald Beaton — The Spectator's 18-Year-Old Critic

ONE of the most popular indoor sports this winter is attending the opera, which may be played by as many as care to buy tickets. I never had seen an opera, so I decided that I would go, just to see what it was like. I am now a sadder but wiser man. The opera was Madame Butterfly, and is supposed to be pretty good. At least everybody says so. Personally, I would hate to see anything worse. The management was unkind enough to start the thing on time, so we had the pleasure of standing up for about fifty minutes. We heard faint sounds from the stage, and had an illuminating view of the ceiling and part of the top of the curtain. Occasionally the noise from the stage would stop, and there would be applause, accompanied by low moans from us. After we had been there the better part of two years, the act ended; and we reached our seats, which were too close to the stage to permit me to sleep with any degree of peace. When the thing started again, the prima donna came out and went through a lot of setting up exercises, singing for all she was worth. Not being a student of Italian, I hadn't the faintest idea what it was all about. To make things worse, the prima donna, for some unknown reason, got all steam up and rushed about the stage like a panatone in love. There was a child, too, who bore all the mauling it got with becoming fortitude. They all seemed to sing the same song, and I finally gave up the struggle of trying to follow them. I was glad when it was over.

ALL the various brands of trick shots which are accepted more or less complacently now will be hailed as great when they are first done with sound. At the present time, sound limits actors to rather wooden movements. As they get more used to the new medium and discover how to put their voices over from anywhere, the art of using the camera will go on from where it is now. There is no doubt that for a while the art will be at a standstill, but such rapid strides are being made in the handling of sound that it won't do any great injury. Besides, directors are beginning to lose the many art of telling stories in a swirl of trick shots. It would be very good if sound should arouse a little more interest in the story end instead of the decorative.

SHOW Folks was too long and dragged out to be very good, although there were moments when Paul Stein's directorial touches made it clever. There didn't seem to be any very definite theme. The hero was shown as being very conceited, and I thought for awhile that his return to modesty was to be the plot. However, he was still the same at the end of the picture, which was bad business, because it is hard to make a hero out of a character as egotistical as he was supposed to be. Also, he was a flop one minute on the vaudeville stage and a success the next. All in all, there were moments when it was very incoherent. Apparently those who made Show Folks counted on Eddie Quillian's comedy to carry the frail story. He did have a touch for him. If the picture had been shorter and what story they had had worked out better, he might have had some chance. As it was, the story threw all the sympathy to the other man; and left the hero the same impossible egotist he was at the beginning. A picture can't be made out of a story which doesn't develop at all. They were just the same at the end as they were at the beginning.

Stein's direction redeemed Show Folks to some extent. He put in a lot of little bits which were so natural and human that they stood out. If a few more directors would inject a little naturalness into their work, pictures would be a lot better. Stein apparently realizes the value of studying the life around him, instead of wandering around in a fool's quest for pairs of them. He has a scenery that comes into Robert Armstrong's office while Lina Basquette is with him. The secretary nods and smiles, which is the natural way of planting that Lina is a frequent visitor to the office; but it is something which nine out of ten directors would not think of. Another clever thing is his characterization of the heavy, Bob Armstrong. Technically, Armstrong is the heavy, because he is the other man in the case. Actually, however, Stein, with the aid of Arm- strong's brilliant acting, has made him an intensely sympathetic character. He and Lina do a little scene toward the end of the picture which is really beautiful, and shows advanced thought on the part of Stein. According to the motion picture conventions, the heavy should have stamped out the door, sneering at the couple. Eddie Quillian, Lina Basquette, and Robert Armstrong are the featured players in Show Folks, as you may have gathered. Quillian is a brilliant comedian, and he possesses unusual ability for serious stuff. He ought to go on a long way. Lina seemed more at ease in this picture than anything she has done up to date, including The Godless Girl. Her work is gaining a subtler quality which is making
it very good. The more I see of Robert Armstrong's work, the more I am led to believe that he is one of the funniest character men we have. He can do any kind of characterization; it makes no difference what it is. Crauford Kent handled the other part with a cleverness which would seem why he isn't used steadily in bigger parts. Carol Lombard plays a real heavy in Show Folks. She was in Ned McCobb's Daughter, and I must apologize for not saying how good her work was in that as well as the former picture.

* * *

THE main fault in Show Girl is that it has no clearly defined crisis and marches along to its end without ever becoming anything more than a series of events in the life of a show girl. It is well done, with the exception of a scene where a climax is attempted. From what comes after, I gather that that scene is supposed to fill the audience with apprehension regarding the love story; but I never would have guessed it from the scene alone. As a matter of fact, I forgot all about it and wondered what she was worrying about. As there is no climax, Show Girl dragged, as might be expected. Al Santell directed the picture, and did a remarkably smooth and clever job of it. Had his direction been anything short of excellent, the whole thing would have been a terrible mess. However, it was a very fair attempt. I don't think for the picture for being far too long. The idea in making a motion picture is to assemble the scenes necessary to the development of the plot and shoot them without straying from the main idea. As the main idea in Show Girl was very vague and uncertain, there were many things in it which had little to do with the general proceedings. It is only contrary to my expectations, Show Girl was not a comedy. True, Santell put in a few scenes which were supposed to be funny; and George Marion contributed a set of wise-cracking titles which were very poor and helped slow up the action, as there were far too many of them used. However, my only reaction to the attempt at funny was impatience to get back to the picture. In spite of all the slowness, it is interesting nearly all the time.

Show Girl's most interesting feature is its vivacious star, Alice White. Before I saw the picture, I doubted that she was quite experienced enough for starring parts; but now I see the error of my ways. Whatever it takes to make a star, she has it. I haven't seen her in any large parts before, so I wasn't prepared for the personality she exhibited in Show Girl. When she was on the screen, the action became interesting, no matter what it was. In addition, she can act a great deal better than the average. During the shots of her in her various entertainment roles, she managed to be quite entertaining. Most picture people who are cast as stars in some other branch of the show world don't look their parts at all. Alice's personality again came to her aid and made her good in those shots. Charley Delaney played opposite her with great success. There ought to be more leading men like him, because he makes no effort to be a great lover. As a result, every part he plays is honest and sincere, with a slight touch of humor. George Moran plays the greeting card salesman with his usual ease and cleverness. Richard Tucker makes a very good man about town. He is exceptionally good at that type of character. He did the same sort of thing in Captain Swagger and did it well, but I think I forgot to mention him. Gwen Lee, Kate Price and Donald Reed are the only other members of the cast that I can remember.

* * *

THE Cardboard Lover is the queerest mixture of things, most of them bad, I have ever seen mixed together in a motion picture. There are moments when it is nothing but a glorified slapstick comedy; and in them I can see the genuine humor of the incomparable F. Hugh Herbert, who wrote the final script. He is of the type which nearly dies of laughter when someone falls into a pool of water or has a vase broken over his head. Both of those gems of humor were included in The Cardboard Lover; and to say the least they looked peculiar in what was supposed to be a sophisticated comedy. There wasn't an old Mack Sennett gag overlooked; and as a result, whatever merit there may have been in the play is lost completely. No doubt Herbert will write a lengthy letter of abuse when he reads this, because the funniest thing about his hatred of The Spectator is that he apparently goes through the paper thoroughly in order to battle with it. All the most obvious mistakes made the play, and I was relieved on the luck which made The Patsy a good picture, or at least a fairly entertaining one; and they weren't fortunate. That's a great way to make pictures. All the fun of gambling, and only the stockholders' money to lose. There never was anything so mixed up as this managed to be before it ended. I imagine that they nearly finished the picture, and then discovered that there were no moments in it, and that it resembled a lengthy slap-stick comedy. They injected a few heavier scenes, which were funnier than the pathetic attempts at humor.

For a time I thought it wasn't going to end, but was going to keep going until the audience woke up or starved to death. Eventually it did stop. Beyond the beautiful production values, I don't see much to commend it. The luxurious surroundings reflected taste and refinement, but the people who were supposed to belong to them were the exact opposite of those things. Marion Davies was supposed to be a girl of some breeding, but she acted like an escaped inmate of the reform school. In addition to that, she was more or less unsympathetic all through the picture.

Miss Davies is an unusually clever comedienne, but even she couldn't do much with The Cardboard Lover. She gave one of her impersonations, which was another inexplicable piece of business; because there was no earthly reason for it. It was good, however, Nils Asther did as well as he could with a part which evidently outstripped his professional dignity. If it didn't, it should have. The honors for serious acting went to Jetta Goudal, who accomplished the amazing feat of making her scenes impressive in spite of the story. Tenen Holtz played a character role with skill and finesse.

* * *

THE way people shake hands on the screen gives me the creeps. As soon as they get before the camera they seem to relax beyond the point of being able to really grasp. In Show Folks, Lina Basquette merely lays her hand in that of someone else when she meets him, a thing which doesn't fit her at all. She is the type which has a real hand-clasp, and she shouldn't lose such a good trait just because she happens to be before the camera. The reason I mentioned her was because I thought of her first. Practically all of them do the same thing.

* * *

THE lack of naturalness in little things on the screen is appalling. Whenever a director chances to insert a bit of action which is real or human, it is regarded as a mistake. In fact, some directors are true enough to life in the bigger things, but they don't seem capable of putting on the screen the little things they see around them every day. Paul Stein, who directed Show Folks, has the ability for these clever little shots to an amazing degree. Never on the screen do we see people speak to servants other than in the most of authority. A man will be showing a steady visitor to a certain house, yet he never gives the butler a glance of recognition. In real life he would. The men making pictures have managed to attain a mastery of the big things; now they should start working on the little things, and put a real polish on their pictures.

No one will ever convince me that Port of Dreams wasn't thirty-two reels long and didn't take three days to run. I always will believe that, in spite of evidence to the contrary. It certainly was the most uninteresting picture which I have had the misfortune to run across in the last year or so. The story, also, is the silliest I have seen since The Passion Song. The boy is paroled from prison, and one of the conditions is that he can not
merry. That seems a weird sort of condition, and it weakens the whole picture; because the story hinges upon it. Of course, the boy, in a weak moment, marries; and then the fun begins. As a matter of fact, he wasn’t really married, because the wedding was committed by a captain on the high-seas without a witness in sight. I didn’t know that they could go away with that. They were both too young, and the girl happen to meet when he pulls her out of the drink, in which she submerges herself to escape from Francis McDonald, who is pursuing her for no good purpose. Apparently it never occurred to her to have McDonald removed from her path by the police. McDonald is seen as a criminal, but he goes to the authorities when the boy breaks his parole. No crook bellowingly goes to the police, no matter what the reason. He has them thrust on him enough without seeking them. Edmund Breese is the parole officer, and every time we see him he is chewing gum. Wesley Ruggles directed, so I presume that that is his idea of building up a characterization; but it completely ruined Breese’s otherwise splendid performance. Otis Harlan gives a brilliant performance, and McDonald was quite satisfactory. Mary Philbin did her best with a silly part, and Fred Mackaye revealed a pleasant screen personality.

**THE FILM SPECTATOR**

The outstanding thing about *The Man in Hobbies* was the magnificent performance of Lila Lee. She has one of the most powerful and individual personalities I have seen, and her work was nothing short of brilliant. The people at the top of the heap as picture stars can get ready to welcome Miss Lee in a very short time, because a few more performances like this one will establish her permanently. John Harron, who deserves bigger and better parts, plays opposite Lila Lee. I always have liked him, and this performance only increased my good opinion of him. Vivian Oakland is another person I like, and I haven’t seen her in a long time. The members of the family whom I remember were Lucien Littlefield, Sunshine Hart, Eddie Nugent, and Betty Egan. All of them were good.

**GIFTS AND GREETINGS FOR ALL OCCASIONS**

A Thousand Gifts of Distinction

Oscar Balzer
Hollywood Gift Shop

Shop at Balzer’s—"Two Shops"—Just West of Vine

Hotel Mark Hopkins
San Francisco

A place to rest near the shops and theatres. New, comfortable, quiet, airy.

{ Anson Weeks’ Orchestra playing
{ nightly in Peacock Court

GEORGE D. SMITH President and Manager
Our Thanks to Dr. Lambert

WISH the doctors would get together and agree among themselves as to the effect of alcoholic entertainment.

One of them comes along and tells us something that scares us onto the water wagon and we have just begun to accustom ourselves to the arid corners in which we find ourselves at parties, regretting a little, perhaps, that we are not in the pantry or wherever it is whence comes the sounds of laughter and of gaiety, when another doctor arises and says it is a lot of hoohy.

Take, for example, no less a personage than Dr. Samuel Waldron Lambert, president of the New York Academy of Medicine, sixty-nine years old, and for forty-two years a practicing physician. But before I take him and tell you of his views, I should advise you that the occasion of his remarks was a conference on the medical problems of old age. These paragraphs, therefore, will be accepted as being intended for those of us who have eased our way into middle age and are now looking down the road to whitened hair and reminiscent wanderings.

And what does the eminent doctor say? He says that whatever “bad” habits we have had into middle age should continue into old age. If we have taken wine “for the stomach’s sake” we should continue to do so. Further, he says, that alcohol acts as an antidote to the chronic poisoning of the heart from over-indulgence in coffee and tobacco, and that those who have obeyed the Eighteenth Amendment and have taken to sweets are getting diabetes, and that alcohol, far from being a cause of diabetes, actually holds a prominent place in the treatment of the disease.

And there you are and what’s a fellow going to do? If he gives up his bad habits old age comes on with a rush because if it comes on peacefully and gracefully as we would have it come. That the doctor may be excusing himself and his conduct in his old age is a possibility. I’ve looked him up in “Who’s Who” and I find he belongs to the University, Grolier, Yale, Racquet, Tennis and Union clubs of New York City. I don’t belong to any of these clubs, but from what I know of some of them I am inclined to the belief that they don’t take specially any of the provisions of the Constitution of the United States that are restrictive of the personal liberties of its members.

Nevertheless, at this time, I desire to present to the consideration of the Middle-Age Club a motion, which if accepted, will convey to the doctor our thanks for his efforts on our behalf. * * *

In Which the Lumbago Disappears

I WASN’T glad when I found I had lumbago, but I did say to myself that if I must have it, I certainly was going to make the most of it. It was the first time in my life I had ever had anything with a name and if there was even a modicum of enjoyment to be derived from it I did not intend to overlook it.

The lumbago hit me as I arose from my chair after laying my shoes. I recognized it right away because I had seen my little brother, Weefer, with it and he had to struggle to get out of his chair just as I was struggling. Downstairs, the cook confirmed my diagnosis and though I pretended to be disturbed by what she said I was secretly glad, not, as I have said before, because I had lumbago but because now I could have an excuse to be a little absent.

It sounds silly, but what I mean is that so many times I have had things the matter with me and I’ve gone to the doctor or have had him come to me just to have him say there was nothing the matter with me, it was just a stomach ache, or whatever it was—but never had it been of sufficient moment to have even the simplest kind of a name.

Now, however, I had something, and right away I craved attention. Pillows were brought and aid was extended in getting in and out of my chair. Pipe and tobacco, papers and books were laid beside me. Willing hearts and hands complied with every wish and I was all set for a good time. Then someone suggested we call the doctor and learn if there were any special foods that I should have.

“No,” I said, “we won’t do that, but if you’ll help me up I’ll struggle over to Bill at the drug store and ask him what he knows about it.” And

Bad News From the Druggist

And so I dragged myself over to Bill and he just laughed and said there was a cold in the back and if I’d keep warm it would probably go away in a little while.

“But, Bill,” I pleaded, “I know it’s got. It’s in the family. My brother had it.”

“Maybe he did have it,” said Bill, “but you haven’t. Why, say, if you had lumbago you’d yell every little while just standing here and arguing with. And, anyway, why couldn’t you have gambled.”

“I didn’t say I wanted to have it,” I told him, “it’s just that I have something and I thought if it was lumbago there might be something you could tell me about it, but, of course, if it isn’t lumbago there’s nothing we can do. It’s going to be a disappointment, though, because we have everything over at the house fixed for lumbago.”

When I reached home I told them what Bill had said and we put the pillows back on the couch and I took my tobacco and pipe upstairs to my desk again and although it hurt me a little getting into my swivel chair I managed to do it and went to work.

I want to repeat that I’m really not sorry I didn’t have lumbago, or that Bill wouldn’t let me call it lumbago. I probably would have suffered a lot more with it than with just the cold in my back, but, even at that, I can’t see yet why Bill wouldn’t let me call it lumbago. It wouldn’t have hurt him any.

Looking For the Little Guy

OF a group of Liliputians working in a picture on a Hollywood lot, three of the smallest were seated on an elephant. One of the others money. I assumed that he was inventing a little larger than an ordinary brick. Impervious to the passing glances of the few visitors who were about, they sat and chatted, the while applying themselves to three ice cream cones, enormous things they seemed in such little hands.

Standing not far from them I wondered what these little people talked about. Their world, I thought, must be a thing apart from ours. Did we look large to them, I mused, or was it that they accepted us as different beings just as a cat might look upon a lion, or a Shetland pony upon a Shire stallion? Did they complain, I wondered, about the size of the ice cream cones or wish that someone might have proportioned them so that they could have handled them with greater ease? And then I heard the voice of one of them, a shrill voice that came clear to me.

“I wonder,” it said, “where that little guy that was here yesterday is.” * * *

An Impolite Door Man

ONCE upon a time I saw William Jennings Bryan remove his hat in a rain storm and having always understood that he was a little tight in the matter of money, I assumed that he was inventing a little larger than an order to save his hat. And if I hadn’t talked with him a short time later I always would have believed that. And I was wrong. Someone had told him that rain was good for his scalp and he was trying to save his hair. And that’s how stories start. All the time we are jumping at conclusions.

Just the other night I was all dressed up to go with some friends to a popular restaurant. I wore a hat for the second or third time in a year. I wore it because when
I drive my car the wind musses my hair and I didn't want my hair to be mussed at that party. When I reached the restaurant I parked my car in front and started for the entrance. Then I stopped and threw my hat back into the car. I did that because when I should leave the restaurant not being a chauffeur, I thought to go right out to my car and drive home with never a thought of a hat. If I had taken the hat with me I would have left it in the check room. With it in the car I wouldn't have to think about it. I'd just sit on it when I got in and find it there.

But the door man at the restaurant didn't know about this. I had ruffled his camera and chauffeur, as I passed through the doors, something about persons who leave their hats in their cars so that they won't have to check them and then pay to get them out again. Can you imagine that?

There was I, for the first time in months, entering a restaurant with my hair properly brushed, and to have a crack like that follow me into the place! But I got even worse. I gave him, I let go, it was for guarding my hat and that he must be careful thereafter in judging of the motives of customers who did strange things. I don't know how long he stayed up after that, but, anyway, I spoiled the rest of his evening.

Suggesting a One-Track Mind

Two bright young men, they are, employed as writers in a motion picture studio. A prize was offered for the one submitting the most acceptable title for a picture in the making. Collaborating, they selected one that were sure would win the prize. Then, for measure, they entered a list of eight or ten. But it was the first one, the sure prize-winning one, that they kept their minds upon. A few days passed and they had lunch with the official to whom the titles had been submitted. They spoke of them and the official mentioned a title that appealed to him the most. It wasn't their good one.

"That's a rotten title!" exclaimed one of the young men, and the other kicked him beneath the table. Luncheon ended and the official left.

"What's the big idea, breaking my ankle?" asked the young man who had been kicked.

"Big idea! Listen!" answered the other young man, "that title he liked is the second one on the list we gave him."

My Friend the Stunt Man

Tunt men, men who do daredevil things for pay, always have interested me. But, until a day last summer, I had never met one for more than a passing word or two. Then, there came to Lake Arrowhead, where I was spending the summer, a Warner Brothers company to do a Rin-Tin-Tin picture. With them there came Bill Hauber. And I didn't even know that Bill was a stunt man until one morning I saw him get in an automobile and drive it over the bank of the lake into thirty feet of water. Then, after a wait that left me cold, I saw him come to the surface, shake his head and call "okeh!" and swim ashore.

I cottoned up to Bill after that and we became good friends. He wrecked a car during the second week, drove it for a road force or fifty miles an hour and capitated it at a turn. I'm just a timid creature and I stayed at home that afternoon, but my boy told me that it turned over five or six times with Bill down under the dash.

But, anyway, what interested me most in Bill was that he was a sort of Peter Pan person with a belief in good and bad fairies. I found that always when he was due to do a road force for five or six hours and everybody waits until they see him coming and hear him call: "All right, boys, let's go!" And then they go down into a lake or skidding and crashing in an automobile.

I hope Bill's good fairy comes and tells him when it's time to stop these frightening things he does. I wouldn't want anything to change his smile or his gentle manner toward everyone.

Stage Mothers and Stage Mothers

Recently that most interesting journal, The New Yorker, carried a story that made a big hit with me. Some stage mothers were conversing together and one of them recalled the Earl Carroll tub incident and related how the young lady had not only entered the tub nude but that she had never been paid for it. "Not paid," exclaimed one of the party, "why, where was her mother?" There are whole pages of that story, whole pages of tales of days and months of dragging feet, some times just to go back again whence they came, and other times to sudden riches, and nearly always in each story their lies a touch of greed and a willingness to sacrifice for cash. Not always, because there are stage mothers who hold, above the figures on a salary check, the hope that their girls may shun the pitfalls that lie along their way.

Some such mothers I have known, and know, and perhaps it isn't strange that the daughters they have given to the screen or stage are less in need of a mother's constant care than is the ordinary girl in any walk of life. But those other mothers! I have known them, too. They haven't a thought in the world except to cash in on the daughters' ability to get out of stage doors.

They see other daughters living in fine homes and running around in high-priced automobiles and their hearts are filled with envy and their heads with thoughts of ways and means whereby they may arrive at a point of similar affluence. And it matters not to them to what extent their daughters may be compelled to violate the conventions of polite society, or to what extent they may be betrayed in the matter of shame or the lack of apparel upon the screen or stage. They don't care what happens so long as the pay check comes in each week.

No matter that the world is full of mother songs, and that the florists and the telegraph companies preach to us each year of Mothers' Day, it remains a fact that mothers are but human beings, after all, and while the vast majority of them seek to keep their offspring sweet and clean there are among us those who barter for gold, or attempt to barter for gold, the very things a mother should cherish most. And from their standpoint the woman who was surprised that the nude bathing lady had never been paid for her bath had the right idea.

Sothern and Marlowe

The death of an actor had led us into reminiscences of other actor folk and I was reminded of an incident of fifteen years ago that in its beginning was to me an unpleasant task but that in its ending left me with pleasant memories of a courteous gentleman. It happened on the day that E. H. Sothern was to open in our town and the morning papers had carried a story suggesting a rift in the marital relations of Sothern and Marlowe. That meant, of course, an interview with Mr. Sothern and although my grown-up life had been and has been spent in newspaper work I always have felt that if Mr. and Mrs. Sothern were to talk to me I could write their business and that there was no place therein for an inquiring reporter. Therefore, it was to me a most disagreeable duty upon which I embarked in seeking Mr. Sothern. I found him in the office of the manager of the theater. Having disposed of the weather and where he went from there, I was about to say to him: And so you are, Mr. Sothern, and will you comment upon the story in the morning paper? when Mr. Sothern arose picked up his hat, and said to me: Let's take a walk, and we'll talk as we go. And so we did, and Mr. Sothern was so charming a companion that, try as I might, I just couldn't ask him about his wife. And I then believed, and have always believed, that Sothern sensed my embarrassment and felt sorry for me, for in a little while he spoke of Miss Marlowe and of how much she regretted she could...
not have been with him on his tour. And then he reached into a pocket and drew forth a telegram. And the telegram was the answer to what he knew I wanted to ask, it was from Miss Marlowe—just an affectionate message from a wife to a husband, a word or two about her health and an added expression of her joy that his business had been so successful. And then we finished our walk and I went back to the office and wrote an interview with Mr. Sothern about the theatre and down at the bottom I tacked on a paragraph about Miss Marlowe and of how she was anxiously awaiting back East for Mr. Sothern's return so that they could both go back again to the Tiny Little Isle across the seas. And that was the answer to the morning paper story.

* * *

**Frankie Gets a Good Send-Off**

ANy weeks ago I clipped from a New York paper the story of the shooting of Frankie Yale, and I've just found it and I want to write something about it. Frankie was a gangster and a racketeer, as you may know, and one Sunday afternoon, while he was driving in the quiet of Brooklyn streets, somebody pumped a lot of machine gun bullets into him and they found his body buried up inside his car. The police said it was a Western job, which meant that someone associated with "Scarface" Capone had come from Chicago to "get" Frankie.

But that's no matter. What I was interested in was that they buried Frankie in a $15,000 casket, paid for in cash by his friends, and that in the funeral procession that followed him to the cemetery there were 250 automobiles. It was the largest funeral procession that the city of Brooklyn had ever seen. The shops in the vicinity of Frankie's home were closed during the funeral. Flags hung at half mast, and on a nearby Italian-American parochial school there was a banner proclaiming to all that Frankie was one of the founders of the school and one of its most liberal supporters. Sobbing women and grave men filled the church in which the services were held and the streets in its vicinity, and everywhere there was evidence of the sincerest grief.

And still, Frankie was a lawbreaker and a bad man. But it couldn't have been that all this grief and all these people who mourned his going suggested a condonation of whatever his criminal acts had been. It must have been a tribute to the good there was in him; a tribute to the fact that he was a good neighbor and that he gave willingly when necessity asked. Anyway, I just don't seem able to get it out of my head that perhaps Frankie was really and truly a whole lot better than the law said he was, and that maybe there's something round about us that we don't know anything about, for every day they bury in Brooklyn men who never in their lives broke a law, and there'll just be a hearse and, maybe, a couple of autos filled with persons who are thinking about wills and things like that.

Reviewed in this Number

**CAPTAIN SWAGGER**


The cast: Rod La Rocque, Sue Carol, Richard Tucker, Victor Potel, Ulrich Haupt.

**CRAIG'S WIFE**

A Pathe picture. Directed by William C. De Mille; from the stage play by George Kelly; adaptation by
eraman, John Stumar; titles by Walter Anthony; supervised by Harry L. Decker.

The cast: Mary Philbin, Fred Mackaye, Otis Harlan, Francis McDonald, Edmund Breese, Wilfred North.

RILEY, THE COP—
A William Fox picture. Directed by John Ford; story and scenario by Fred Stanley and James Gruen; assistant director, Phil Ford; cameraman, Charles Clarke.


SHOW FOLKS—
A Pathe picture. Directed by Paul L. Stein; author, Philip Dunning; scenarists, Jack Jungmeyer and George Dromgold; assistant director, R. M. Fellows; production manager, Harry H. Poppe; photographers, Peverell Marley and Dave Abel; art director, Mitchell Leisen.

The cast: Eddie Quillian, Lina Basquette, Carol Lombard, Robert Armstrong, Bessie Barriscale, Crawford Kent.

SHOW GIRL—
A First National picture. Directed by Alfred Santell; from the story by J. P. McEvoy; continuity by J. T. O'Donohue; photographed by Sol Polito; produced by Henry Hobart.

The cast: Alice White, Donald Reed, Lee Moran, Charles Delaney, Richard Tucker, Gwen Lee, Jimmie Finlayson, Kate Price, Hugh Roman, Bernard Randall.

THE MAN IN HOBBLÉS—
A Tiffany-Stahl picture. Directed by George Archainbaud; suggested by Peter B. Kyne's story; adapted by John Francis Natteford; photographed by Harry Jackson; titles by Frederic and Fanny Hatton.


STANDS BY HIS GUNS

My dear Editor:
The sole cause of this letter is to point out to you an error on your part in attempting to refute my argument that silent drama is not doomed to extinction.

You say the weakness of my argument is that screen art is not complete, in that actors can not reach the heights they can reach vocally. As well say a statue is not art because it cannot speak, and must have a phonograph put in its tummy before it is complete.

Cannot you distinguish between art and realism, and how much one is dependent on the other? Painting was a complete art when the first painter placed colors on his vehicle. The technique of painting has changed radically, and is still changing, but it is now, and always has been, a complete art.

The trouble with you is that you approach the movies from the cold, dispassionate view of the intellectual, which is not the attitude of the vast majority of the movie-goers. I would like you to ask a few of your friends who you know belong to this class to give you their opinion on Glorious Betsy. I did just this. One of them told me that he did not see any difference, save that the dialogue slowed up the picture to a point of dragginess. The other, a lady, who is a musician, thought the Marseillaise fine, but that the voices were tin-panny, and that Dolores Costello's voice does not match her face. Well, you cannot always hire opera singers to sing in a movie, neither is a beautiful voice a natural complement to a lovely face.

Believe me, it is not the Torrences, Stones, Francisces that lure the hicks into the theatres, but the sheiks, collar ad boys and moon-faced cuties. The moment the movies begin to try to cater to you and me it is then that they will be doomed to extinction; no one will make talking, silent or any other kind of pictures.

So far from replacing the movies, the talkies will just form an opposition, and I do not think that the talkies will lure away a sufficient number of patrons of the movies to make them profitable.

You must often have read that the movies depend for their existence on the country villages and small towns. Few of the big, pretentious pictures are a success, no

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THE SOUNDS
of voice?

GEORGE
Why training
advise
and color,
people who have the critical faculty as highly developed as you and I.

Perhaps what the talk-a-morl stands out the quietus
on the spoken drama, which is dying hard. Personally, I
believe that the movies will continue to exist and have
their being without the aid of either sound or color, though
I am quite willing to admit that both might be an
aid to pictures, if used within certain limitations. One
thing I am certain of, and that is that anything that interferes
with the swift tempo of the pictures, will ruin them.

F. ELY PAGET:

THE SCREEN AND THE TRUTH

My dear Mr. Editor:
Just recently a writer presented a scenario to one of
our principal readers in a local studio. All averred
that it was good, technically correct, and fulfilled all
requirements.

The final decision, however, was handed down from
above”, that it could not be used for the simple reason
it might not pass the board of censors. The story hap-
pened to contain a mention of dope, and the needle, there-
fore a taboo. From a moral standpoint, it was up-
lifting and encouraging. The mention of narcotics was
solely an accidental cause, from which much good
might subsequently follow. It emphasized the danger of hyper-
ergies and landed a personal reformation.

This example among many others, was simply a repe-
tition of “gnat mincing, and camel gulping.”

The original idea of pictures making, as I remember,
was to be strictly educational and uplifting.

It is a common opinion among those who deal more
intimately with life, that apart from crime creation by
suggestive pictures, there has been a tremendous amount
of nonsense disseminated, most of which has been deter-
nient to adolescent innocence, and normal home-life.
In a rather difficult matter to portray, with natural
reality, sex pictures, underworld scenes, and love romances,
without resultant harm. A discrimination capable of sepa-
rating the wheat from the chaff is rare. Things are
never what they are made to seem. Few will read and
interpret them aright. They are invariably suggestive
and the powerful inherent propensity in all of us, to evil,
will seldom make “royal retribution from rages,” or admir-
able virtues out of hidden vice.

Many stories accepted, have undergone so much dress-
ing and undressing, that the poor author, often, has been
unable to recognize the child of his own brain. Had it
been produced as written, the audience might have been
served a delectable soul-feast and much food-thought.

The adaptation departments are more favorable to pur-
chasing ancient stories and novels long since forgotten,
than to recognizing modern authors and their productions.

If plagiarism were absolutely eliminated, there would be
no need of the producers' fear of litigation.

If due consideration were given to the present day
originals there would be less galloping from one to the
other to imitate.

No, I am not a Puritan, the very name savors of a
despicable intolerance. It is the personification of blatant
vincible ignorance. Stupendous hypocrisy like a whited
sepulchre, full of dead men's bones. To that particular
short I claim no adherence. They would, were it possible,
recode all the laws of God and nature combined.

Whatever stirs emotions disturbs judgment. Those
engaged in adaptation seem to make greater efforts in
addressing the baser emotions in so-called close-ups, than
a fading-in of some appeal to reason, for the higher and
better things of life. An appropriate title appended to
these melodramatic flourishes, might be tersely
expressed, in the plain plebian, “Some more bunk; aw,
that's all well.” They are as quickly forgotten as the

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WHAT SARA RUSEVELT SAYS:

A number of artists in pictures are facing a problem which they do not realize is a problem. Ninety per cent of the people
that talk over the radio do not realize how dreadful noises they make or they would undoubtedly keep quiet. Q. How long does
it take to place a voice? A. From one to three years. It all depends on the student. Q. Why is it that most of the men’s voices
sound better than the women’s in talking pictures? A. The average man’s voice is low and heavy. The voice is muffled and
does not sound as good as a high voice which the average woman has. Q. Why is it when the women scream it sounds more natural?
A. Men are not very sensitive. Q. In one’s lifetime to what extent does one should use the high key. Others will use affectation or an unnatural voice.
There is a great difference in affectation and cultivation. Q. What is the difference in training the voice for vocal and for speech?
A. All the difference in the world. Come to the studio and I will demonstrate what I mean. Phone me at GRanite 8809.

Note—Miss Rusevelt will be glad to advise any prospective artists who contemplate working in talking pictures or radio work.
passage of an organ grinder and his monkey.

The pall of discouragement that producers have unwittingly thrown around the works of modern writers, is assuredly no impetus to their writing for the talking pictures. A new and expensive department of reading and adaptation will be required.

If just a small portion of extravagance paid out to mechanical actors were utilized in the purchase of good and sound material, the business itself would have struck a happy, beneficial and encouraging medium.

In this modern "Vanity Fair" of ours, there are as many peoples and opinions as the myriad satellites along the Milky Way. There are, however, constant and unchangeable planets whose light and guidance are infallible.

The truth of genuine friendship is seldom found in the smiles of flattery. The one who dares the truth although hard to hear, is a friend indeed. It is wisdom to profit by mistakes.

There are many pearls of great price at the doors and on the lots. It will never become necessary to sail the seas or tour the continent in search of material. To-day there is a coterie of young and brilliant writers. They need encouragement. The dead do not want our flowers.

Your classic defense of J. Gilbert was admirable. Criticisms by writers who through the plain goodness of friends have been recognized, is to my mind, a sad omen to success. It were better they give this time to the study of the great word, Gratitude.

PIERRE.

SAYS SHE'S ALL WET

Dear Mr. Beaton:

Will you allow me to intrude once again on your correspondence page in regard to Madeleine Matzen's remarks about writing for fan magazines?

I have been engrossed in this quaint pursuit for some months, and if my experience is any criterion Miss Matzen's ideas of promiscuous bribery are all wet. It was largely my long-felt desire to be in a position to reject a bribe that launched me on my present activities; for I, too, had heard tales of the Satanic efforts made by Hollywood publicity men to corrupt magazine and newspaper writers. I have always felt that to be offered a bribe would be enormously flattering, and that to reject it would restore all one's fleeting faith in one's virtue.

What did I find? Not only was I not offered so much as a postage-stamp to forget the voice of conscience, but at some studios the publicity men were human enough to confess that I bored them or indeed that I was definitely distasteful to them. Instead of getting out the awning when I arrived and asking me to name my own figure to be nice, one press agent declared I was the sort of person he felt urged to sock in the jaw, while another said my accent was offensive and I was impossible.

Let us give the devil his due and admit that nowadays the bribe is quite vieux jeu in the best publicity departments. It is very unfortunate. It leaves us poor fan magazine writers without a leg to stand on, for our writing has always been agreed to be nonsense, and now we cannot even prove we are honest. Personally, I feel that the least they could do would be to leave the temptation there for us to resist.

CEDRIC BELFRAGE.

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UNITED ARTISTS
Hollywood is now completely sound-minded

Are sins of silent pictures to afflict talkies?

Spectator's medal for final fade-out seems to be won

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Reviews by the Editor

THE VIKING
NOAH'S ARK
HIS PRIVATE LIFE
RED WINE
AVALKANCHE
NAUGHTY BABY

---

By the Junior Critic

NOAH'S ARK
HIS PRIVATE LIFE
WOMAN OF AFFAIRS
THE VIKING
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Hollywood Is Undergoing Quite a Mental Revolution

Hollywood is becoming sound-minded. The manner in which opinion is swinging to the complete acceptance of the all-talking picture as the sole product of the industry in the very near future, is amazing when regarded solely as a mental revolution. As I stated in The Spectator two and a half years ago that talking pictures had arrived, and at that time advised the industry to prepare for them, I am surprised at the slowness of the industry to recognize the inevitable, even though I am amazed at the rapidity with which it is being embraced now that it is recognized. When I stated a few weeks ago that I thought that within five years we would have no more stage plays, and by that time sound pictures would be our sole medium of dramatic entertainment, I was prepared to be called visionary, but I find that scores of leading screen people share the opinion. The head of one of the greatest producing organizations told me the other day that he had a great theme for a million dollar silent picture and sufficient money to make it, but he knew that by the time it would be released it would not compete successfully with a talking picture costing one-eighth as much. The million dollar silent picture will not be made, nor will any other expensive silent picture, not already launched, be made. Such pictures are old-fashioned, which presents a peculiar problem to me. The reviews of pictures presented in The Spectator are not written to influence attendance at the houses showing them, but are based on the theory that they may be of benefit to those engaged in making other pictures. I point out what I think is a fault in a picture already made, in the hope that a similar fault will be avoided in a picture yet to be made. Such being the case, what good can I accomplish by continuing to review silent pictures? A new art has been born, and, as an art, the old one is dead as the dodo. I even don't care any longer how badly titles are punctuated, and no doubt Spectator readers will hail that declaration as not the least of the boons conferred upon them by the advent of sound. When I am by myself I think in terms of sound; when at a studio I talk sound, and in projection-rooms I seek sound pictures. When I encounter a silent one, I find it dull and uninter-
esting, which is not fair to it. It may be a worthy example of the silent art, but that is something that I am interested in no longer. When I see a pair of lips wagging on the screen, I want to hear words issuing from them. Wagging without words is absurd. As a matter of fact, sound has taught us what an absurd art the silent drama has been. It may be cruel to jump on the poor old thing while there still is breath in its body, for it has been good to us and served its purpose of benefiting mankind, but we cannot escape the fact that it has been singularly incomplete. Before the introduction of gas and electricity, oil lamps were the last word in illumination, and our grandfathers were content with them, and thanked their lucky stars that they no longer had to rely upon candles. Similarly, were we content with silent pictures before we knew that they could be improved, but we will go back to them when we go back to oil lamps, and no sooner. No doubt the first oil lamps were not wholly satisfactory, just as our first talking pictures were rather sorry successors of the best silent ones, but the faults were purely mechanical and soon were overcome, just as the faults in sound devices will be overcome. The new art that has come to us is bewildering in its possibilities. It can go as far as man's imagination can lead it, and when imagination lags it will not be because the art has reached its ultimate.

Sound Pictures Likely Not to Get a Chance to Be Good

The chief difficulty—and it is a real one—that sound pictures will have to overcome is the refusal of the producers to allow picture brains to function. I don't suppose there is any power on earth that could make either Louis B. Mayer or Jack Warner relinquish the idea that he knows exactly what constitutes a good picture. Neither possesses the knowledge, but he dominates the activities of scores of people who do possess it. This condition in a varying degree in all the studios, has been responsible for the development of production methods that can not be carried into the sound era. For every dollar spent wisely on production during the past ten years another dollar has been wasted. It would not be so bad if silent pictures cost twice what they should, if they had succeeded in being even half as good as they might have been. But they have been so poor that the public's lack of interest in them was becoming alarming when sound came to the rescue. The menace in the present situation is the fact that the same men who all but ruined the silent drama have the fate of sound films in their control. With unlimited money at their command, and the brains of the world to choose from, a handful of men in Hollywood made a mess of the business because they thought that they possessed talents that fitted them to control the making of their product. If they carry that idea into sound pictures—and they will—it likely will lead to what pictures have needed for the past decade—a thorough revolution in the personnel. Big Business has entered pictures. It has become big because it has been efficient. If the heads of our present producing organizations think that they can continue to make pictures in the wildly extravagant manner in which they have made them in the past, they are taking a more sanguine view of the tolerance of Wall Street than the history of that thoroughfare would
justified. How long do you suppose the bankers who control M.-G.-M. will permit that organization to start pictures it never finishes, to finish pictures too poor to show, to show pictures too poor to earn half their potential profits? The amazingly inefficient Metro organization, of which Mayer and Irving Thalberg are the amazingly inefficient heads, will not be permitted to continue functioning when Big Business gets around to it. But it is a tremendous load that sound pictures will inherit from their silent predecessors. The Metro quality has been deteriorating rapidly of late because no one in authority on the lot, from Mayer himself down to the most recent supervisor, knows anything about the practical side of making pictures and is not endowed with a soul that can contribute anything to them. I would exclude Irving Thalberg from this indictment if the pictures for which he has been responsible did not show that he belongs in it. This organization, then, which has demonstrated, beyond any question, that it is incapable of making silent pictures that the public will like, takes unto itself the making of sound pictures which require the application of even more brains than the others. The same condition exists to some extent in the other studios. What is going to happen? The present executives will hold stubbornly to their claim that they should dictate to writers and directors, and writers and directors who are dictated to never will make sound pictures that will continue to hold the interest of the public. There would be some hope for sound pictures if producers would recognize the fact that screen art has grown away from them; but they never will do that.

**Are Sins of Silent Pictures to Be Inherited by the Talkies?**

When one contemplates the inefficiency of production methods that resulted in silent pictures losing their popularity with the public, he has reason to fear for the welfare of those to which sound will be applied. That the entire output of the industry soon will be of the all-talking variety may be accepted as a fact. This means that there must be a revolution in production methods, and what grounds have we for believing that the same people can make the new method more efficient than the old? Ever since I started The Spectator I have pleaded the cause of the perfect script. Gradually the intelligent people in studios came around to the opinion that it was inevitable if the standard of screen entertainment was to be raised to a point that would enable it to hold the interest of the public, and if the cost of pictures was to be kept within a sound, commercial limit, although it was regarded as something impossible to achieve under the supervisor system. Supervisors, on the whole, have nullified the efforts of those with creative brains, and the good pictures that have come through in spite of this handicap were those with an inherent strength sufficient to withstand it, or those to which, for any of a variety of reasons, supervisors paid little attention. Talking pictures can not stand up under the manhandling to which the silent ones have been subjected. They demand the unhampered application of creative brains, and I must confess that I do not see how they are going to get it. Under the old system the program picture was composed of pieces of film picked up by brainless people as they crawled around the floor of the cutting-room. They can't make a talking picture that way. They must know what they have before they start. When a director is handed a story that is told concisely from beginning to end in dialogue that constantly gets its meaning from what went before it and what follows it, he will have to shoot it as written, and it is going to be difficult for the cutter to mutilate it without entirely murdering it. It will not be possible to eliminate sequences and to rearrange scenes. That it has been mechanically possible in silent pictures is what led to their undoing. If the industry had started a quarter of a century ago to develop people who could write perfect scripts, and executives who would permit them to do so, such a thing as the elimination of a scene or a retake would be unknown now. The folly of the industry has cost it hundreds of millions of dollars in excessive production costs and unearned potential revenue. And the alarming thing about it is that experience has taught the industry nothing. When a sequence is cut out of a picture it indicates the inexcusable inefficiency of the organization that made it—and I doubt if we ever see a picture from which at least one sequence was not eliminated. The excessive use of close-ups always has been a mark of the incompetence of directors. The fact that writers of titles have made fortunes by acting as life savers of pictures, indicates the incompetence of producing units. If we had had perfect scripts we never would have had title writers. All the causes that contributed to the decline of the silent drama are being carried into the new field. It is unfortunate. It also is unfortunate that producers can not realize that at last they must seek the perfect script. It always has been possible, and now is both possible and imperative. There are plenty of people in Hollywood who can write it. They must be allowed to do so. Screen art has become a writer's art. Producers will not acknowledge it now. They will have lost a great many millions of dollars before they will acknowledge it.

**Dealing with Importance of People Who Play Bits**

A CROP of new directors will have to be raised if talking pictures are going to begin to realize their potentialities both as examples of art and articles of commerce. Analyze pictures as I have to, and you will find that not more than ten per cent. of the directors whose names are known are endowed with talents that entitle them to the jobs they hold. If you will look for it you will be amazed by the amount of downright brainlessness that is displayed in the direction of pictures. One of the things I have written about often, and which I have advanced in discussions with producers and directors, is the great importance of the little things in pictures. Very few directors have brains enough to realize that when they are presenting a scene, they are presenting all of it, and not only that section in which the main action is taking place. More stupid stupidity has been displayed in handling backgrounds than in perhaps all other departments of directions. Take cafe scenes. All of them look alike; all of them have the same stupid diners and mechanical waiters. One day recently, in conversation with Joseph Schenck, Roland West and one or two others on
Seeing “Noah’s Ark” in Two Different Settings

NOAH’S Ark has taught me something. It has taught me that one can be fooled badly by seeing a picture in a projection-room. I first saw the Warner Brothers’ big feature spectacle in a small room, with Donald composing the other half of the total audience. Under such circumstances the appeal of the picture was intimate; it apparently was made only for me and it was trying to please me. My attitude towards it was friendly, and with the indulgence that we extend to our friends, I overlooked the little things that otherwise I might have commented on. I admired greatly the carefully selected types in the railway sequence, and when the train was wrecked I was almost terrified because the disaster seemed to take place in my lap, so close was I to the screen in the little projection-room. I did not lose my friendship for the picture even when I began to wonder what the story was about, and when the great water scenes towards the end were reached I sat enthralled. When I left the projection-room I thought I had seen the greatest motion picture ever made. I knew there were some things in it that might be criticised, but viewing it as a whole, I found that its effect on me had been tremendous, and I was sure that its effect on the public would be the same. I went home and wrote a glowing review of the picture. A few nights later I sat in Grauman’s Chinese Theatre when Noah’s Ark opened its run there. It is a large theatre and the audience which filled it was a brilliant one. I sat well back from the screen. And the screen was not my friend as it had been in the projection-room. My friends were those whom I had greeted on the way in or who now sat within bowing distance or hollering distance from my seat. The screen was an alien thing, and subconsciously I defied it to entertain me. Under such circumstances I found a vastly different Noah’s Ark. I found a story that bewildered me by its lack of coherency. I could see no connection between Noah’s flood and the Great War, which I presume the story was about. I saw sequences that should have had no place in the picture and others that asked me to believe that absurd things were not absurd. I saw again the most wonderful technical effects ever put on the screen, but that did not compensate me for another two hours and a half spent in viewing the picture. In the projection-room I even overlooked such a wildly impossible thing as a Russian intelligence officer ordering American doughboys to execute some spies. In the theatre the sequence stuck out as quite enough in itself to ruin a picture. For the first time in my life I realized how a picture must compete with the house in which it is presented. In the intimacy of the little projection-room Noah’s Ark impressed me tremendously; in the glamorous setting in Grauman’s Chinese Theatre it bored me exceedingly. The foregoing may be accepted as my review of the picture after seeing it the second time. In order to be fair to the picture itself and to its producers I am presenting also my review written after my visit to the projection-room.

NOAH’S Ark is staggering. It is the greatest thing the screen has done. It raises Michael Curtiz, whose dream the story has been for years, to new dignity as a director, for with one stroke he has dimmed our memories of Birth of a Nation, Ten Commandments, King of Kings, and any other pictures that we placed on a pedestal beside them. I am fresh from a projection-room in which I saw Noah’s Ark, and at the moment of writing I have not seen it at Grauman’s Chinese Theatre, whose duration record it is going to capture. The thrill of it, its tremendous vitality, the audacity of its conception and the brilliance of its execution still hold me in their spell. I did not need any first-night applauding audience to heighten the impression that what I was seeing was extraordinary screen entertainment; with only two other people in the room, I sat for two hours and a half enthralled by what I saw on the screen, plus what I heard by Vitaphone. Curtiz may have done some of the things for which I criticize directors; the story may be disjointed at some spot; this or that thing may be the matter with the picture, but if any one of these faults exists I am unaware of it. A picture that keeps me sitting up straight for two hours and a half, with my eyes glued on the screen, is a good picture, even if it isn’t. And as my reviews attain their average bulk from the number of words necessary to point out ills and suggest remedies, I find that I haven’t a great deal to say about Noah’s Ark. A feeling of awe comes over me when I contemplate the things that Fred Jackman has done in it. Someone in the Warner organization started to tell me how some of the shots were made, but I stopped him. To me all of them are real, tremendous and appalling, and if any of them were done on someone’s dining-room table, I don’t want to know it. The great advantage this picture possesses over others notable for their magnitude as spectacles, is the consistency of its story and the director’s faithfulness in adhering to it. I do not agree with the premise established by a title, that “Throughout the ages the worship of the Golden Calf has become Man’s religion,” for the charge is too sweeping, but I can not quarrel with anything that serves as an excuse for such an example of screen art. I am not going to turn to adjectives to assist me in recording the contributions of those responsible for Noah’s Ark. The director and the technical man—Curtiz and Jackman—have become heroes to me. As I think of Darryl Zanuck I almost am reconciled to supervisors. He rates as author of the story by virtue of having woven Curtiz’s ideas together, and he followed the production through from its inception, so to him goes full credit for the executive management of the undertaking. With such a picture, one must give first credit to those responsible for its magnitude, for it is much bigger than any performance in it possibly could be. As a starring vehicle for Dolores Costello it is so gigantic that we forget it has a star. Her performance is splendid throughout, but will not earn her as much acclaim as would a similar performance in a smaller picture. The same can be said of the other performances. George O’Brien again shows that he is a magnificent actor, and does the best work he ever has done on the screen; and with less competition from the technical department, Noah Beery’s performance would stand out as one of the most notable of his illustrious career. What a superb actor that man is! The picture gives us a new artist capable of shining in any company—“Big Boy” Williams, who, I presume,
has some other name to go by, now that he has emerged from wherever he was before. Noah's Ark will make him. And it will do Malcolm Waite a lot of good, for he helps to maintain the acting excellence. Paul McAllister's Noah is a thoughtful and convincing portrayal.

(Continued from page four)

the United Artists lot, I propounded my theory that every diner, every waiter, every doorman, was as important to the scene in which he appeared as the star, the heavy or any other principal character. I contended that each of the atmosphere men could do something to show that he was human, and that he could do it in a manner that would not add to the footage of the production. From the United Artists lot I went to the Fox lot, and in a projection room saw the proof of my argument established. Raymond Cannon, in a little picture that is damned with the title Red Wine, makes everyone in his backgrounds a definite personality, and he does it without detracting from the action in the foreground and without increasing footage. As a matter of fact, his backgrounds, being absolutely natural, will be less liable to attract attention than the stereotyped backgrounds that make so many scenes unnatural. Cannon's cafe is a cafe, not a motion picture set; his diners are people who know that they are in an exclusive place where by no possibility will they be photographed. Nobody gets out of the way of Conrad Nagel and June Collyer because they are playing the leading parts, although Nagel's importance to the story is over-emphasized in numerous places by totally unnecessary close-ups. It is obvious that the guests at a supper party were not ordered en bloc from the casting bureau. They look like forty or fifty-dollar-a-day people, a good investment because they make the whole cafe sequence the most convincing and entertaining I ever have seen on the screen. Cannon displays real ability in his direction. He presents his head waiter as we see them on cafe floors, but never on the screen. When all the guests run up stairs or along corridors, or perform any other mass movement, each member of the group maintains his or her individuality. These scenes are directed so well that they bear no trace of having been directed at all. People bump into one another, trip on steps, go in the wrong direction, but they do these things smoothly and without any fuss. I am willing to agree with any producer or director who will argue that these fine points of direction will be lost on the public, that Cannon will not get any credit for them. It is quite true, but the public will like the picture. That is the important point. The box-office will credit Cannon with good direction, even though those whose money in the box-office tells the story will have no idea what is meant by good direction. Cannon's formula is a simple one. He realizes that his bit people and extras are human beings, and as his story is about human beings, it is advisable to make them act like human beings.

* * *

Here Goes The Spectator Medal for Final Fade-Out

ED Wine is the result of an experiment made by Sol Wurtzel, a most commendable experiment which I mentioned a few Spectators ago. Raymond Cannon directed Life's Like That, a picture that indicated that he had something new to offer. The Fox people viewed it and sent for Cannon. He told Wurtzel an idea he had for another story. He was commissioned to go ahead with it. He had no definite budget, no shooting schedule, and—greatest boon of all—no supervisor. With only one little picture to his credit, Cannon was turned loose on the Fox lot and given carte blanche. If he made a picture that would yield a profit, Fox was the winner by the picture and a new director. There is hope for screen art when one of the biggest producing organizations will take such a chance. Wurtzel felt that Cannon had something to express, and realized that the only way to determine its value was to give him absolute freedom in expressing it. The slightest dictation by the organization would relieve Cannon from responsibility if the picture proved to be a failure. The experiment was a success. Red Wine will make money. From a technical standpoint there is a great deal in it that should intrigue Hollywood. One sequence is a positively brilliant piece of screen work. Conrad Nagel, a placid, unemotional and inordinately moral business machine, decides to step out. He buys an entirely new outfit and has a barber shave his moustache. We see Nagel accumulate his new wardrobe, article by article, and we go to the barber shop with him, but during the entire shopping tour we do not see him, and there is neither a cut, a dissolve, nor a fade-out. By some extraordinary method that is bewildering, the camera moves from shop to shop, the idea being that it shows us everything as Nagel sees it, consequently we do not see him. Apparently the camera enters his office building, goes up in the elevator and into his office before we see him in his new outfit. The sequence held me spellbound, and when it ended I wanted to give three cheers. A good little touch shows Nagel entering an automobile, and before he gets all the way in there is a dissolve to the car drawing up at the curb at his destination. This treatment tells everything we need to know, and saves footage. The final fade-out is the only contestant for the gold medal. The Spectator offered for the most appropriate and original final fade-out shown on the screen this year. June Collyer and Nagel are the principal characters. At the end of the picture they are among many dancers on a cafe floor. They speak a couple of titles that clear up the story, and immediately are swallowed up by the other dancers. There is thought in that shot. The story being ended, the two leading characters in it are of no more importance than any of the other dancers. The dance continues as the picture ends, but we see only strangers. Red Wine has some delicious comedy in it and should prove to be a popular picture. Nagel gives a splendid performance. June Collyer does better than I ever have seen her do previously. Her sweet and charming personality registers strongly, her air of refinement and her beauty adding a pleasing quality to her understanding interpretation of her part. Arthur Stone is in evidence and Sharon Lynne, an attractive girl with considerable ability, makes a big contribution to the excellence of the picture. I'm
not worrying about Cannon's future. He shows an ability that should lend itself readily to talking pictures. Anything he does can not help being interesting.

* * *

Technicolor Makes One in Which Only the Color Is Good

A screen entertainment of great beauty, The Viking, done in colors by Technicolor, will be one of the outstanding pictures of the year, but as an example of screen story-telling it falls far short of the average picture that we are getting to-day. It is a great opportunity overlooked. It tries to tell four stories—the discovery of America by Lief the Lucky centuries before Columbus came over, the spread of Christianity to Northern Europe two thousand years ago, its conquest of superstition, and a romance. No one picture can get away with a job like that. The opportunity that was overlooked was to make a stirring picture out of the discovery of America, and twine a romance into it. Simplifying the narrative would have permitted the development of characterizations that would have commanded the interest of the public. As we have it, I do not believe that there is a character on the screen that any audience will care tuppence about. The story is too involved to permit us to become really interested in any one thing. The romance has the least appeal. Pauline Stark is sought by three men, Donald Crisp and LeRoy Mason, both of whom play sympathetic roles; and Harry Woods, who as a heavy contributes the best performance in the production. As the costumes of the period remove any consideration of difference in age, it can not make the slightest difference to anyone in the audience whether Miss Stark marries Crisp or Mason, as both are noble fellows, so noble, in fact, that they are not the least bit interesting. If the girl had been given a definite, virile personality that would be consistent with a period that goes back almost to cave-man days, she would have married the heavy and lived scarpilly and happily ever after. When, however, Mason wins her, first demonstrating that our forty-foot kisses go back two thousand years, the picture does not content itself with showing us the happy lovers, but persists in devoting a lot of footage to Crisp, who uses it in an unsuccessful effort to elicit our sympathy. I do not understand the reason for long cuts to him after he had ceased to be a factor in the romance. The Viking is Technicolor's first venture in producing features. We might expect it to profit by the mistakes other producers continually commit and rigidly exclude them from its product; but instead of excluding them, it embraces them. As Technicolor's main business is selling color, we may presume that part of its reason for producing its feature was to demonstrate to the industry the possibilities of its process. R. William Neill, who directed The Viking, had the interesting opportunity to achieve its commercial objective by making it an artistic triumph. However, with painstaking persistency he overlooks the opportunity. The young lovers have a love scene on the deck of a ship at night. I presume there was a moon. Instead of giving us a surpassingly beautiful scene in a long shot that would have made it more sentimental by incorporating all the value of color, he picks out only the heads of the lovers in close-ups entirely devoid of background, a treatment that even in black and white is the last word in poor direction. All the way through the production both the story and color are sacrificed to a procession of meaningless close-ups. In all the eight reels there is not one strikingly beautiful shot that I can recall, and there should have been at least one in each reel. Characters continually walk into scenes and turn to face the camera, which serves to keep constantly before our minds the fact that it is a movie. Only the color in The Viking is good, and it is good enough to make the picture a success. If, I repeat, the story had featured one thing and had been directed intelligently we would have had an extraordinary example of screen entertainment, for there can be no question about the great box-office value of color.

* * *

ERVYN LeRoy has made a creditable picture out of Naught Baby, which is the silly title of what was shot as Ritzy Rosie. It is Alice White's second starring adventure. I did not see the first, but I think so well of Alice's work in the second that I am sure she is going to keep on starring and really amount to something. Her appearance and her personality make it inevitable that she will be compared with Clara Bow. I believe that Clara will command the admiration of the public to a greater degree than Alice will, but that Alice will come nearer to reaching the heart of the public. She has an ingratiating quality, a suggestion of innocence and sweetness that the Paramount star lacks. I was surprised to see that on the screen the name of Alice White came before that of Jack Mulhall, one of my favorite trouperers. There is no other man on the screen whose personality charms me as Jack's does. If he were given the proper stories he could star in his own right, for the screen needs just what he could give it. The direction of LeRoy shows further improvement. He makes a stride forward with every picture, a healthy sign for one so young, as it shows that he is learning. He still has one or two failings that he has borrowed from older directors who fastened them on pictures, but I expect his next picture will show that he has shed them. In Naught Baby he displays a healthy regard for the proper use of close-ups. I wish Al Rolett would give him a decent story. I refuse to believe that a man who is being turned out of an hotel because he tried to pay his bill with worthless checks, would be allowed to give an elaborate and expensive dinner on the night he was being thrown out. However, there is quite a lot of meat in Naught Baby. George Stone, Bennie Rubin and Andy Devine add a good touch by forming a triumvirate that fathers Alice in a nice, clean way. There is a young miss in this picture whom I have seen somewhere before—Doris Dawson. If you feel quarrelsome about it, I am willing to bet you something that you will see this girl's name in electric lights before so very long. She not only is a beautiful thing to look at, but she seems to be intelligent.

* * *

H IS Private Life is not going to be of any great help to Adolphe Menjou. It is too trivial, a French farce which does not reflect the sparkling humor that Frank Tuttle, who directed, can display on the screen when he has something substantial to provoke it. The picture is mechanical. It has none of the delightful abandon that a French farce must have to give it the brilliancy that it must have to be entertaining. As I found it uninteresting, I could see nothing outstanding in the performances,
nor have I any reason for finding fault with them. The story did not give Adolphe an opportunity to distinguish himself. Kathryn Carver, whose screen personality I like, is the chief ornament of several beautifully composed scenes, and plays a rather colorless part with charm. Margaret Livingstone and Eugene Pallette take advantage of all the opportunities their roles give them. There is much to commend in the lighting of many of the scenes. As the characters move about the lobby of a hotel the shadows of potted plants and pillars fall upon them, the soft shadows that we would find in such a place, not the harsh kind that we generally see when directors resort to when they endeavor to show that light has a source of origin. In a title spoken by an American girl there is a play on the name of the French city, Toulouse, as applied to morals. As all the other characters are French and Paris is the locale of the story, the presumption is that all the titles were spoken in French and that what appeared on the screen were translations in English. Does the title writer believe that "too loose" in French sounds the same as it does in English, and that people in France apply the name of the capital city of the Haute-Garonne department to morals when they are trying to be gay?

WHEN I first saw The River Pirate in San Francisco it ended in a wedding. I saw it again the other night and discovered that it had a different ending, one that intrigued me mightily. I found also that it had a synchronized score and sound effects which added nothing to it. When it reached the point where I expected the wedding scene to appear, there was a cut to a benevolent gentleman on a couch. He finished reading the book from which the picture was made, closed it, smiled at me, and told me how the thing ended. I make it personal because he looked directly at me, as he did at everyone else in the audience. The idea is a good one. It is an action picture, and when the action concluded there was nothing left to do but wind up the story. As there is nothing particularly exciting in a screen wedding, we gained as much by being told that it occurred as we would have gained by seeing it performed. Perhaps this method of ending pictures will solve the footage problem presented by the fact that talking pictures are at least twenty per cent. longer than silent ones when the same stories are told in both kinds. When a talking film consumes all the footage that is thought advisable, one of the characters can step to the front and give us the rest of the story in a few words. The recital could be shot after the picture had been cut and could be given the footage required to make the picture precisely the length required. Anyway it gives us another hint of what is made possible by the advent of the extraordinary new art that has come to Hollywood.

THREE years ago I thought I was seeing a great Western. I was influenced, I think, by All Quiet on the Western Front, or by some sort of a novel in that style. This was the picture, and it is a Western, but not in that sense. It is a social problem that wears spurs and carries a gun. The name of the author is not given, although the story is credited to Zane Grey. The people in the studio who are writing the stories by him are ignoring the old formula and are turning out material that would fit any locale and if Grey continues to devote all his time to fishing, he is liable to get a reputation for turning out some pretty good stuff. Otto Brower directed Avalanche, and did it well. Good performances by Jack Holt, Baclanova, Dori Hill and John Darrow are responsible for an entertaining picture. I liked Holt in it more than I have in anything else that he has done. Oscar, who is under my management, gets away from shining shoes in this picture, and appears as a waiter in a rowdy drinking place. I believe he is capable of something more aesthetic. Avalanche is not as good a picture as Water Hole, but it is satisfactory entertainment. It shows that any story can be made into a Western by giving it a Western setting. My personal inclination is towards the shooting kind. I want cowboys and sheriffs chasing outlaws.

ONE of the interesting little difficulties that sound films will have to overcome is the disposition of the slam of a door to sound like something else when it is reproduced from the screen. Sounds made by hard objects affect the microphone in a manner that so distorts them that they will bring down upon the picture producer a charge of faking his sound effects. At the Pathé studio Alan Hale folded a letter which he had read as part of a scene in a sound picture. When the shot was reproduced noise made by folding the letter sounded like a machine gun in action. A difficulty of this sort can be overcome by dampening the paper, but dampening a concrete mixture would not help to make it sound more natural from the screen. Whether some method can be devised to make the sound-effects seem real or whether the public will grow accustomed to hearing the distortions and accepting them, is a problem for the future to solve. It probably will be fifty-fifty.

SAM Jacobsen, head of Universal publicity, is making a series of one-reel subjects that are going to make a hit in the houses in which they are shown, if I can judge all of them by the two that I have seen. The latest, Fantasie, is merely a child's dream. Bettye Jane Graham, who proves herself to be a clever youngster, sits on the curb and watches a toy ship sail on a gutter puddle. As she gazes at it the ship becomes a fairy-like submarine, and Bettye makes a marvelous cruise on it during which she has some terrific experiences. It is a subject that will please young and old, and reflects the greatest credit.
My personal appearance, I know, is a matter of no importance whatever to the readers of The Spectator, but when three of them in one week, in meeting me for the first time, tell me that they had visualized me as a tall man with a grey beard, it is high time something was done about it. That beard stuff is going just a little too far. I am not tall, but even if I were, I positively would not wear a beard.

FROM The Spectator of August eighteen: "Not as an indication that The Spectator is going into politics, but to get it in before it becomes so obvious to the whole country that it would do the prophet no honor, I would like to predict that Herbert Hoover is going to be elected by an enormous majority." * * *

OVER here we're calling them the "squeakers." In England they are called "audible cinemas." And as long as we know what is meant, one is as good as the other. * * *

WELL, anyway, I got a par five hole in three the other day. The third, a one-hundred-and-thirty-five-yard mashie shot, just managed to drop in. Some putt.

GARNERED IN THE MAIL

The Hold-Up Number of The Spectator was the most delicious bit of satire ever turned out by a publisher in this or any other country. It recalls to me what I regard as one of the most finished pieces of satire written in recent years by an American—your criticism of The Legs of Carmen. As you have proven to be such a master of satire, both written and implied, may I demand, as a regular reader since the inception of The Spectator, that you give us some of it regularly? By what right do you deny us the enjoyment of a talent that must give you continual mental enjoyment?


If I remember correctly, the couplet can be found in Pope's "Imitations of Horace":

"Satire's my weapon, but I'm too discreet To run amuck and tilt at all I meet."

Quite often I see pictures that suggest satirical reviews, but I remember that each of them is the producer's honest attempt to put his best work on the screen. Which, of course, settles it.

I have known Mr. Schacht for the past twenty-five years, and he is known as a pioneer of the Yiddish Art Theatre. He is, in our own Yiddish press throughout the country, very often compared to the artists of the Moscow Art Theatre, and also with the artists known as the Vilma Troupe. I also saw his work in Loves of an Actress with Pola Negri, and your statement only confirmed my own astonishment, why men like Gustave Schacht are so often overlooked by all the casting directors.

JOSEPH L. MALAMUT, Editor "Jewish Voice."

Please don't be "offen" Irvin and me because of the dog-kicking sequence. By way of explanation, I wish to state that the dog you championed was my dog and has been a respected member of my family for about six years, and when I kicked him, or rather shoved him with my foot, although I wore a scowl on my face I spoke to him in the kindest of kind dog words—therefore the wagging tail. And furthermore, after the scene was taken I gave him a chocolate bar and let him ride home with me in the front seat of the car. That was his only experience as an actor. He has since become a family man and has given up his career for the sake of a rather wayward five-months-old son.

LLOYD WHITLOCK.

Readers may remember that in my review of "The Michigan Kid" I criticized the director, Irvin Willat, for having his heavy, played by Lloyd Whitlock, kick a fine, old dog, one of those canine gentlemen who were put on earth to give human beings lessons in loyalty, unselfishness, and devotion. Whitlock's defense is satisfactory. What I would like to know, though, is where his dog rides regularly. When I go motoring with my two dogs, I'm lucky if I'm not pushed off the front seat by them in their efforts to look for trouble out of both sides of the car at the same time. Virgil, my old terrier stand-by, isn't so bad, but Kiki, my sandhill crane, building into womanhood, regards the wheel as an impediment to free movement and my arms as hurdles stretched out to be jumped. Have you ever become acquainted with a chow? It is a delightful experience. Keen of intellect, tremendously loyal, seemingly possessed of a sense of humor, aristocratic in every instinct and movement, the chow, I have been discovering during the past two weeks, is one of the rarest of human companions and friends. So it seems to be conscious of her beauty and style, and her every pose is a picture. Before she leaves me at night to go to sleep under Mrs. Spectator's bed, she lays her chin on my knee and from her eyes to mine passes a message so full of love, and tenderness, and trust that I wonder if I have done anything during the day to deserve such a thing. And when she disappears through my library door, Virgil yawns mightily and stretches before the fire, I fill my pipe again, and we spend the rest of the evening together. Sometimes I think that the highest point of attainment that a man can reach is to be worthy of his dog.

You say in The Spectator that the dialogue is the least important feature of a stage play. I am willing to agree with you that it is not of great importance to a comedy or drama of action, but how about a polite comedy or a society drama that depends so largely on brilliant lines to put it over? Surely you will not contend that anyone can write dialogue suitable for such plays.

R. T. M.

The article to which R. T. M. makes reference argued that the person who creates the character, plot and situations should write the dialogue. To such a person, the dialogue is not important. If he be capable of drawing a brilliant character, he can not help putting brilliant speeches into the mouth of such character. I can see no difference in that respect between a comedy of action and a comedy of manners. The personalities of the characters, and the situations suggest the speeches. The author, being the only person who thoroughly knows the characters and understands the significance of the situations, is the logical person to write the dialogue. It is the simplest part of his task. Similarly, the author who writes a screen play is the logical person to write the lines. The practice in most studios of hiring someone to write the dialogue of a screen play is illogical, whether it be a comedy, drama or tragedy, which is the premise upon which my argument was based. It is a practice that can result only in poor pictures.

NAT M. WILLS

was one of America's highest-salaried comedians. For four years I wrote all his monologues and comedy telegrams. Many other eminent fun-makers have permitted me to "author" for them.

AMES MADISON

Originals — Adaptations — Titles — Dialogue

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W\nO\nR\nD\nS\nseem rather feeble when it comes to speaking of Noah's Ark, because the greatness of it is such that there is nothing which can describe it. Those are strong words to use when speaking of a motion picture, but when one has seen Noah, they seem quite fitting and proper. Never before has a motion-picture camera recorded such great thrills or such a stupendous spectacle. One must imagine oneself in just such a scene as Noah was when he was on the screen; the sound attachments put him right on the field of action. I am speaking chiefly of the flood sequences, although there were great scenes all the way through the picture. After the film was over, I was completely worn out; and I defy anyone to see it and not feel the same way. While the flood stuff, a bomb could have exploded beside me and not noticed it. It is absolutely impossible for anyone to sit back and say, "Oh, this is just a picture." From the moment it starts, the persons viewing it are completely lost to anything but what is transpiring on the screen.

The hero of Noah's Ark is Fred Jactman, who, I understand, did the technical work on it. There were shots within which I knew were miniatures, because they couldn't have been shot any other way; but they looked too real for the moment to be told by anything else but that. The assembling of the animals was very impressive, but the greatest thrill of all was the coming of the flood. It started gradually, but grew in power until it completely swallowed up everything and everybody. The terrific volume of the water was registered by the ease with which it knocked down what were supposed to be mountains, and the sound was what was wanted from the beginning; it gave the picture the last touch necessary to make it the greatest spectacle ever presented to a motion picture audience. The roar of the water and the crashing pillars all were recorded. As a rule, these big scenes just make me wonder how they are shot; but the flood scene in Noah didn't give me time to think about anything but it. Jackman has put a new mark to his name.

Michael Curtiz is the man who directed this mighty drama; and if there are any medals going around, he deserves his share. I never gave him credit for the artistry he revealed in Noah. There are some scenes which are like beautiful portraits. The ones I remember best are the shots of Noah's home, the ones of him on the mountain top, and the one of his house and ship. However, through the entire picture there were bits of artistry for which Curtiz deserves the highest praise. He handles his camera and lights with a cleverness which amounts to genius. Another example of brilliant direction was the sequences where the hero joined the army during a parade through the streets. It was one of the most stirring bits of action I have seen, and it is saying something, considering the number of war pictures which have been infesting the market of late. There was only one thing about the war stuff which I don't like. Judging from the motion pictures, the men who were in the war went at it two by two, on the order of the animals in the Ark. There must have been several thousand pairs of lending a hand around. Anyway, the one who wasn't a tobacco gets shot, which is a just fate for anyone who will indulge in a habit like that; but it gets to be poor motion picture hokum after it has been done a few dozen times. The only weak point in Noah's Ark was that it joined the senseless slaughter. There was no story reason for the killing; it was put in apparently because it is the usual thing to do.

While I am thinking about it, the train wreck which was staged at the beginning of the film also was a credit to the technical staff. Dolores Costello is starred in Noah's Ark, but her part isn't the big one. George O'Brien has one fully as big as hers, and both of them are put in the shade by the work of Guinn Williams, who plays George's unfortunate pal. Up until he gets shot, his work is the feature of the picture. He is a splendid natural actor, and he has a voice which suits him exactly. Miss Costello did as well as she could with what she had, and she can't be blamed because she had nothing to do but cry. I would like to see her sometime in a picture where she could be happy for more than a few feet. Every picture she is in, she is persecuted until she is tears. I don't think the lighter moments she always looks as if she sensed the impending tragedy, and her usefulness as an all-around actress is going to be impaired if she isn't given something different. George O'Brien plays opposite her, and does brilliant work. He has a likeable personality, and his performance was splendid, particularly in the scene where his pal does. Paul McAllister plays Noah, and gives a powerful characterization. Noah Beery is the heavy, and augments his fine performance by using his voice cleverly. Malcolm Waite handled a small part very well.

NAUGHTY Baby (silly title) is Mervyn LeRoy's first assignment with Alice White, and with a decent story, I think they might have been going in the right direction. The theme of Naught Baby provides LeRoy with little more than an opportunity to demonstrate that he would make a good picture if he had anything to work with, and Alice White hasn't much of a chance to do more than indicate what she could do with a sympathetic part. During the greater part of this picture, she is a rather heartless little man-hunter; and only reforms at the last minute. Nevertheless, I still think she's good starring stuff if she isn't ruined by a few more like this Baby epic. Not that it was a total loss. I saw it at a preview, so naturally it will be cut down and speeded up; which improvements ought to make it a rather amusing comedy for those who don't demand much meat to their entertainment. There was a funny gag with an ambulance, and LeRoy put on a clever little trick ending which wasn't bad. He has an unusual aptitude for working with young people, and should be given stories having to do with that line.

Just why First National cast Jack Mulhall in the role opposite Alice is something I can't understand. He has taken a lot of time to work himself up to star material, and should be allowed the dignity of his new position instead of being dropped out of the running as a straight leading man opposite a new star. Benny Rubin is funny in a dead pan comedy characterization, and George Stone, Fred Kelsey, Rose Dionne, Andy Devine and Jay Eaton complete the cast.

CLARENCE Brown has done a heroine job on A Woman of Affairs, although the picture is not outstanding in any way. The story which had to be told on the screen relied nearly entirely upon titles to put over what it all was about. There was very little which could be put over in action, and a written title is so clumsy and cumbersome, often at all the sound I have heard lately. That may have something to do with my not liking A Woman of Affairs. With sound, that might have been different. The most interesting and engaging pictures ever turned out at M.-G.-M., but the long, complicated speeches and explanations were terribly boring. The fact that I didn't go to sleep is creditable to Brown's excellent direction, nothing else. He handled his camera expertly and intelligently. Judging from his work alone, I am led to believe that Brown is one of the few directors in Hollywood who is a real student of the art of making motion pictures. Fortunately he had the wisdom to tell his story without any digressions which might have dragged it out longer. Most directors would have yielded to the temptation to display their cleverness in little "touch", but Brown went on without trying to be clever, thereby doing a far better job than if he had. One shot which I
liked particularly was the one where Greta Garbo came and looked out of the window through which her husband had jumped to commit suicide. His death, and her attempt to shield him from any dishonor had ruined her life, and she knew it when she came to the window. All her thoughts were plain to see, and she made a very impressive scene. What could she do? She used, he made intelligently. A Woman of Affairs was full of fine performances. Greta Garbo had the largest, and there was a power and human quality I have never seen in her work before. John Gilbert also gave a sincere and sympathetic portrayal. The ease and brilliancy which Lewis Stone displayed in The Patriot again marks his acting in this, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., contributed a remarkably good characterization, and Dorothy Sebastian again demonstrated that she belongs up among the big stars of the motion pictures. Hobart Bosworth handled his part very capably. This is the first time I have seen John Mack Brown in a part where there is something to do. Keep your eye on him. He ought to go out quickly.

SOMEONE ought to do a real high school story. Harold Teen paved the way, and there is a big market for one right now. There is plenty of material on any campus which would make a crackerjack story. The draw would have among the huge high school patronage would guarantee it to the financially. Incidentally, Mervyn LeRoy could do it very well.

THE Viking, Technicolor's first venture into the feature length field, is a work of art and a very noteworthy step forward; although it isn't exactly a great picture. The story is too unsatisfactory, for one thing. However, the color is beautiful; and Natalie Kalmus, who had charge of that branch of the work, deserves great credit. There is no doubt that color is inevitable. It makes the most commonplace scene far richer and more beautiful than the most artistic shots we have now, and really completes the art. R. William Neill, who directed, had the scene which looked like beautiful pictures; and the whole thing was a treat to the eye. A stronger story should have been selected for the first long picture in color, though. The Viking never got anywhere. The hero was a slave when it began and one when it ended, and a good story should make some advance during its length. The ending left everything in an undecided state of loneliness too. In giving things this kind of an ending, something should be as perfect as possible; because people are inclined to blame everything they don't like upon the innovation, no matter what it is. However, The Viking accomplished its purpose; because it was interesting, which is all that is necessary the first time. So long as it doesn't bore its audience, they don't care what the ending is. The acting in The Viking, with the help of that of Donald Crisp, was quite theatrical. The actors seemed to think that because they were portraying Vikings they could act in as robust a manner as they wished; and perhaps they were right. As a matter of fact, I rather enjoyed it. I guess it's due to the fact that I always have had a suppressed desire to act as Vikings, and I think Stickney's men with a knife. The Vikings were full of little tricks like that, and I got a great kick out of it. However, Crisp, with his quieter method of doing things, seemed more like my idea of a Viking than any of them. He had a dignity while lolling at the long golden hair that completely won my heart. Seriously, though, he made Lief the Lucky the outstanding character of the story.

Neill's direction was very good, but there were a few lapses. One in particular was noticeable. Lief was getting himself married to the girl, and was on his horse drinking out of a bowl, which happened to be the moment that his lieutenant had chosen to slay him. The boy, who was Lief's devoted slave, calmly washed the man with a backwash, and showed no interest in the proceedings until the blade was about to fall. Then he sprang forward and took the blow. It was a senseless procedure, because he couldn't have helped but notice that something was wrong; and a word from him would have haled everything before it could get fairly under way. Lief, to show his gratitude, wanted to kill the boy because the girl loved him. The story never did show whether or not Lief forgave them; that was just another of the things which were left unsolved.

Although Donald Crisp's was the outstanding performance, Pauline Stark also predominated. Her performance was quite sympathetic. The thing I remember are LeRoy Mason, Anders Randolph, Harry Woods, and Richard or Robert Alexander. There were a lot more, but I can't remember all of their names.

HIS Private Life proves that Frank Tuttle is the type of director who should have a story to develop, instead of a few incidents. Some directors, like Harry D'Arrast, can make a picture out of practically nothing in the way of a plot. Others, just as good, must have a real story or they are lost. Tuttle is used to themes with more body to them, and that is the type he should have. His direction is smooth all the way through His Private Life; but the story being what it is, the whole thing is rather dull and uninteresting. It also makes the mistake of taking itself too seriously; and if there is one thing an Adolphe Menjou vehicle, which this is, cannot stand, it is too much seriousness. D'Arrast and Menjou have been so successful, because D'Arrast doesn't descend to gravity for a minute. His characters are popular because they amusingly dismiss troubles which cause their audiences unhappiness, thereby giving them a chance to laugh at their own worries. As it happens, Private Life is impossible of any kind of entertainment. Another thing which didn't endear me to the picture to any great extent was that the old gag of mixed husbands and wives was used. A jealous husband chasing around after his flighty wife leaves me cold and bored.

Menjou, as always, is very clever. In addition to being a good actor, he has the kind of head that makes him the male style arbiter of the films. There are thousands of men, undoubtedly, who care nothing for pictures, but who go to Menjou's to find out what it is proper to wear. Kathryn Carver plays opposite him, and lends a charming personality to the picture. Margaret Livingston and Eugene Pallette, two splendid trouper, almost make the jealous husband to this one interesting to me, which is some achievement, I must say.

VALANCHE is the answer to the query "When is a Western not a Western?" Theoretically, it is a Zane Grey western starring Jack Holt, but there is very little of the great outdoors in it. The story might just as well have been laid in a city, except for the avalanche at the end which gives it that label. But Otto Brower, who directed it, did some very good work and managed to make it quite interesting. What outside shots were used were very good, and beautifully done. Avalanche possessed an unusual quality for a Western; it was quite same. Nothing was overdrawn, and after seeing a few of the great outdoors which are being produced, I have come to the conclusion that that is a rare thing. There isn't much to be said about Avalanche, one way or the other. It was pretty good entertainment and quite well done. The cast contained Jack Holt, John Darrow, Balianova and Doris Hill. It was rather a surprise to see Balianova in what turned out eventually to be a sympathetic role.

THERE isn't much to be said for Me, Gangster. The story is far too frail for screen entertainment, a circumstance which made the direction stand out very prominently. Raoul Walsh was responsible for it, and I would have enjoyed it except for the usual disgusting things which he seems to think necessary to motion picture art. Every scene he shoots if it is comic is so offensive to the sensibilities that anyone who doesn't have the advantage of being born in the gutter scarcely can stand it. One little bit which Walsh probably regards as a masterpiece is the shot where Anders Randolph spits into the hand of some poor unfortunate. However, my disgust at these things is probably just personal; and really it is great art. The whole thing was nothing but a series of incidents, more
ABOUT OTHER THINGS, By K. C. B.

PERHAPS, my conscience said to me, that you boast of your tolerance of the foibles of others and have chattered around among your friends that you have trained yourself so that you may look at things from the viewpoint of the other fellow—perhaps you're all wrong and are catty at heart; maybe you've just been kidding yourself.

But I'm not wrong, I said to my conscience. I know I'm a lot more tolerant than most persons for when I hear of people in trouble I wonder what the circumstances that led them into troubles might have been, or what the incentive or what the temptation. And nearly always I am sorry for them and if I discuss them with some intolerant person who says they should be straightway hanged or imprisoned for life I find resentment against this uncharitable view rising within me and come at once to their defense.

Explain then, said my conscience, how you can reconcile this attitude of tolerance and benevolence with the deep sense of dissatisfaction that comes to you because they ran Aimee McPherson out of London and Texas Guinan out of Hollywood. Why were you glad that the female red-marked out from New Jersey and in her box at Aimee's first London meeting and asked Aimee to tell her audience something about her kidnapping trip? And why were you glad that Texas had a rotten time in Hollywood and that no one worth while would have anything to do with her?

Wherein I Think Fast

And there I was, in an argument, with no one to help me and I had to think fast. Why was I glad? About Aimee's flop, I quickly concluded I was glad of it because she isn't on the screen because she can stand up in a pulpit of a church dedicated to the promotion of the gospel of Jesus Christ and tell untruths; because always it has been the lure of gold that has lead her to wherever she has gone; because of her greed for power and property she throws her mother out and then prays that God will forgive her mother for saying unkind things of her daughter; because such a person is to me most deplorable; and finally, because I don't know there is a hereafter in which she will be punished and because I think she should be punished, I'm glad she is getting it here on earth by being heckled out of London; and further, that wherever she goes, she cannot escape the odium of her hypocrisy.

And so I answered, said my conscience, and now what about Texas?

Well, I said, I don't feel so deeply about Texas as I do about Aimee. There's more to commend and less to condemn in Texas than there is in Aimee. She doesn't pretend to be anything other than she is, and if I had to have one or the other for a friend I would choose Texas.

I'd know where I stood with Texas and maybe I'd be able to tame her a little, but with Aimee I'd just be kept guessing all the time as to whether or not she was telling the truth. And, too, I don't think Texas is the sort of girl who would quarrel with her mother. Also, I imagine her bankroll, when she has had one, has been subject to a lot of touches. From all of which you will gather that I have no feeling of animosity toward Texas.

But why, I said, is Texas glad that Texas was virtually run out of Hollywood?

Just Lead for Hollywood

It must be, I answered, that it is a gladness, that has to do only with Hollywood. I think that Texas, to me, was merely a symbol of the alcoholic night life of New York city, of the clubs that have taken the place of saloons and that run by virtue of graft paid to servants of our government. These are the things that Texas stood for, and of which I was uncharitable, and for participation in which she had been arrested and was waiting trial when she came to Hollywood. And so I was glad that Texas found in Hollywood a different atmosphere than she had been accustomed to and that Hollywood refused to be enamored of the charms that have gained for her so high a place in the world in which she lives, and that Texas didn't keep up the charade and said what she thought of us. We are advancing here in Hollywood, advancing to a point where cultural attainment and accomplishment are fast becoming requisites in those we would acclaim our civic guests. And Texas found this out.

Maybe you're right, said my conscience when I had finished, but, even so, you ought to feel sorry for Aimee and not Texas, because you know of the influence that put them both on the paths they're on today.

Nothing at all, I replied, but I'm not going to feel sorry for Aimee. She has her's and can quit. But I will feel sorry for Texas. She's has some tough breaks lately and I'd like to see her get another roll and go home and live on it if she doesn't go to jail. And so saying, I dismissed my conscience for the day and directed a nasty.

The Passing of Robert Lansing

HERE passed away in Washington during the closing hours of October a man who will be remembered long and surely. He was one of the best-known journalists, Robert Lansing, since the morning I first saw him in the press conference room of the state department at Washington, has always been to me the embodiment of those

or less related, which probably made great reading; but are as dull as dishwater on the screen.

Don Terry and June Collyer had the leads in Me, Gangster. Terry was unimpressive, but this is the second time I have seen and enjoyed Miss Collyer's work lately. Andrisa Randolph gave a powerful portrayal of the gangster's father. Those are the only members of the cast whom I remember.

RAYMOND Cannon's directorial skill keeps Red Wine from being bad, in spite of a frail story, which he wrote himself. He avoids slowness in his pictures by clever use of his camera, and this is no exception. All in all, the picture is very creditable. He uses the same type of story he did in Life's Like That, and tells it quite well; but he ought to branch out a little and find something else. It is true that the idea, which is that of a person who suddenly finds himself in a rut and starts out to see a little life, is pleasing to the great majority of people; but there are other ideas which are just as pleasing, and Cannon has demonstrated that he is capable of making them. He has an unusual knowledge of a certain type of human nature.

Red Wine is full of little comedy touches which keep it amusing all the way through, and Conrad Nagel acts them for all they are worth. Sound pictures seem to have given him the confidence which he needed to make him a truly fine actor. There is a dream sequence which he acts very well, and which is very brilliantly directed by Cannon. Cannon uses original ideas in putting over his story. There is one long traveling shot which shows how the hero changes from an old-fashioned dandill into an up-to-date young man. It is a very clever little bit of work.

As I have said, Nagel was very good in this picture, and he revealed an unusual talent for comedy. June Collyer played opposite him, a circumstance which was very good for the picture. She had too small a part, though. Underneath the womanly chivalry and said which, all of her roles, she has a depth which reveals that some day she is going to rank high up among our dramatic actresses. Arthur Stone supplied some of the comedy to Red Wine, but his part was rather straight.

THE FILM SPECTATOR

November 17, 1928
physical virtues necessary to the making of a perfect diplomat.

But it wasn't the possession of these qualities that will help to keep his memory green so much as it was that no matter of what great moment might be the problems upon which he was questioned by the correspondents he seemed always to realize that his questioners were men of high intelligence and that their mission was a rightful one and that, as a servant of all the people, it was his duty to enlighten them insofar as the interests of the country and the nature of the situation permitted. Of necessity, many of his answers to questions would be evasive and oftentimes these answers would lead to an exchange of wit between some correspondent and Secretary Lansing and for the Secretary, it may be said, be never the less that

Newspaper men, generally, recognized that Lansing was better equipped for the office of secretary of state than the vast majority of men who had preceded him. But it was his misfortune that he came into the office under the leadership of Woodrow Wilson who took onto himself the determination of the problems that confronted us before and after our entrance into the war. Also, there was Col. House, to whom President Wilson delegated duties that should properly have come to Lansing.

Ignored at home and abroad, where he went as a member of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, Lansing returned to later face an even sorrier situation. My own misfortune of Pres. Wilson and by authority of a resolution passed by the senate a committee was delegated to learn and report as to the ability of the president to conduct the affairs of the office. From sources close to the White House the charge was made that Lansing was responsible for the action of the senate. Lansing denied the charges and resigned.

This is a story of some newspaper men in Washington who will mourn the going of Lansing. They will think of him as a courteous gentleman, richly endowed intellectually, who was made a sacrifice to the one weakness of a man who was otherwise able and strong.

*A Question of Cleanliness*

Undoubtedly some of the readers of these lines have children attending school. And having them I am sure they will sympathize with me in my failure to grasp the full meaning of all of the markings on the monthly report card our boy brings home. The one that troubles me the most is that which has to do with that "cleanliness" term. It used to be that our boy would come home with face and hands soiled, his shirt bearing marks of the wrestling matches he had indulged in during recess and his trousers looking as though they had been removed and jumped on by all of the students.

I assumed that most of the damage was done on his way home after school hours because it didn't seem reasonable to suppose that his teacher would let him come into the room looking as he did. But one day I called for him and saw him come running out with the rest of the boys. That there were others who looked just as disreputable as he was some slight consolation and made it easier for me to acknowledge my relationship to him by admitting him to the door in the presence of other parents who were waiting for nice, clean little boys. This happened during the closing days of the last term and I did manage, by diligent watching and various forms of punishment, to clean him up a little so that his fellow students and teacher saw him on the last day of school much as he looks at home after his daily bath.

While I am in no way akin to him that on every day that he came home looking as he had during the previous term he would not be permitted to leave the house during the rest of the day. Whether he stopped at a hydrant and borrowed a brush on his way home, or what he did, I don't know, but right away there was a change. On nearly every day he came home clean and when he didn't he was forlorn always with a good and reasonable excuse.

And what it is that bothers me is that when he was dirty all the time he got the mark of one, the highest, for cleanliness, and now, when I keep him clean all the time he comes home with a mark of four, which means failing, in cleanliness. I wonder should I let him go dirty again.

Now They Would Fix My Face

In my morning's mail there comes a highly embossed card from one Robert B. Griffith, M.D., and with the card is a circular bearing my name written by pen and ink telling me that I can be made to look all right if I will permit him or his assistants to fix my face. That I am disturbed is not surprising. Neither is it strange that I should resent this impertinence on the part of the doctor. I know, of course, that one becomes accustomed to one's own face and that no pair of changes may bring to it any new aspect to the person behind it as to someone who sees it only occasionally. That mine needed fixing had never occurred to me, and more than likely never would have occurred to me had this busy-body doctor left me alone. I am consoled, however, by the thought that perhaps the doctor just heard of me and took a chance. Then it occurs to me that he has seen me somewhere or someone has told him of me.

Anyway, I have just had a long look at myself in the mirror. To me I look all right. My nose seems to be the only feature that isn't entirely regular. The circular says they can correct humped noses and hooked noses and saddle-back noses and dished noses and the terrible thought comes that I may belong my nose to one of them. But then, it occurs to me, it's the same nose I always have had. Time has done nothing to it and why should I spend money on it at this late date?

As for the rest of my face there seems nothing the matter with it excepting that I have some wrinkles about the eyes and two bulgey things underneath them. And these bulgey things go away if I stay home from parties. As a matter of fact, after a critical and protracted gaze right into my own face I can truthfully say that I find nothing there that disturbs me in the slightest. It is not, of course, such a face as one might find on a boy of twenty; but I wouldn't want it to be that. A middle aged face for a middle aged man, say I, and no monocling with it.

But I would feel better if I were sure that the doctor hadn't seen me before he sent the circular. As I have heretofore suggested, it is possible I have grown used to my face and that it really isn't anything like I think it is. That's what disturbs me and I'm going now to look at it again.

* * *

It Altogether Depends

The district attorney of Los Angeles county has been indicted by a county grand jury and stands accused of having accepted graft money from persons charged with crime and on trial with the district attorney as their prosecutor. An indictment doesn't mean that a man is guilty of the charges prompting it. It means that there is evidence tending to point to the guilt of the man in question. His actual guilt or innocence must later be determined by a trial in court. Until such trial, therefore, no matter what our beliefs may be, we must remain neutral.

This neutrality, however, need not prevent us from saying that we were impressed with the statement of A. Keyes in which he complained that he had not been called before the grand jury during their consideration of the evidence upon which the indictment was found. "I was not notified," he said, "nor was there any apparent effort made to get anything but the statements of outside parties," says Mr. Keyes. A foolish statement coming from one versed in the trade of prosecuting criminals. How many of the men, guilty or not guilty, who have been indicted through the instrumentality of Mr. Keyes were given a hearing by the grand jury before being indicted? Not very many.

And what does Mr. Keyes mean when he talks of "outside parties"? Does he mean that he and the man who were indicted with him should have been the only witnesses called by the grand jury? Surely he doesn't expect
us to believe that he and they would have been competent witnesses. And what does he mean by "outside" parties? As nearly as I can figure it, he means those whose cases are the men who secured the evidence upon which the indictments were voted. Mr. Keyes is said to have made quite a record as a prosecutor. I wonder what he would have done without the aid of "outside parties".

A lot of fellows in our state penitentiaries, and others who just missed going there, will smile when they read this complaint of Keyes. It will remind them, too, of the old saw to the effect that it all depends upon whose ox is goared.

Something About Divorces

NOT that I can conceive of a situation that may ever arise that would move me to be personally interested in the divorce laws of any state, but because of the conflict in the laws of the various states and, oftentimes, of the attitude of judges sitting in the same state, I am moved to suggest that now the election is over it might be well if someone somewhere would prepare a constitutional amendment making uniform the divorce laws of all states. Then, if we could get it through congress, we might carry it to the various state legislatures to the end that our children or grand children might benefit thereby.

Of course, such an amendment wouldn't cure all of the evils of our divorce courts. It would be entirely out of place to attempt to make the amendment provide that any judge making a wise crack during a divorce hearing should be taken to the nearest window and thrown out into the concrete court below or onto the sidewalk or the lawn or whatever happened to be under the window. That would never do. We might, however, make it impossible for a judge with a grouch to deny a couple a divorce upon grounds, which, if he didn't have a grouch, would move him to grant a divorce.

I just read of a divorce hearing in which it was testified that the couple interested had lost whatever regard they might ever have had for each other, that their marital life was one long series of quarrels and that they had no desire to and could not further live together in conjugal peace. But the learned judge couldn't see it their way and denied the decree. And every day, in the same state, other judges are granting divorces on grounds similar to those advanced in this case. It's an absurd situation and one that should be remedied.

Reviewed in this Number

AVALANCHE—A Paramount picture. Directed by Otto Brower; story by Zane Grey; adaptation and screen play by J. Walter Ruben and Sam Mintz; photographed by Roy Clark.

The cast: Jack Holt, Doris Hill, Baclanova, John Darrow, Guy Oliver.

HIS PRIVATE LIFE—A Paramount picture. Directed by Frank Tuttle; from the story by Ernest Vajda and Keene Thompson; screen play by Ethel Doherty; photographed by Henry Cassavant; assistant director, Victor D. Voyda.

The cast: Adolphe Menjou, Kathryn Carver, Margaret Livingston, Eugene Pallette, Andre Cheron, Sybil Grove, Paul Guertzen, Alex Melesh, Alex Roloskin.

ME, GANGSTER—A William Fox picture. Directed by Raoul Walsh; from the story by Charles Francis Coo; screen play by Charles Francis Coo and Raoul Walsh; photographed by Arthur Edeson.

The cast: Don Terry, June Collyer, Anders Randolph, Stella Adams, Al Hill, Walter James, Gustav von Seyffertitz.

NAUGHTY BABY—A First National picture. Directed by Mervyn LeRoy; scenario by Tom J. Geraghty; titles by Geraghty; photographed by Ernest Haller; produced by E. M. Asher.


NOAH'S ARK—A Warner Brothers picture. Directed by Michael Curtiz; story by Darryl F. Zanuck; scenario by Anthony Goldewey; assistant directors, Henry Blanke and John Daumery; photographed by Hal Mohr.


RED WINE—A William Fox picture. Directed by Raymond Cannon; story by Raymond Cannon; scenario by Andrew W. Bennison; adaptation by Charles R. Condon; photographed by Dan Clark.


WOMAN OF AFFAIRS, A—A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by Clarence Brown; from the story by Michael Arlen; continuity by Besd Meredith; titles by Malin Ainslee and Ruth Cummings; art director, Cedric Gibbons; gowns by Adrian; assistant director, Charles Dorian; photographed by William Daniels; film editor, Hugh Wynn.

But when I think of losing that same Joe Farnum, after the job he did with the titles of Slide, Kelly, Slide and a round-up that it was begin to complain, I begin to think little of Spence titles — and I wasn't alone. Even supposing my sense of humor to be low, say about audience high — haven't I heard certain prominent directors functioning for some of those same titles when, after shooting some "real" author's script they found it full of drag, dragging moments that had to be either cut out or wise-cracked? Spence, I suppose, can be called the daddy of the wise-crack title; but I, for one, am downright grateful to him for it.

There are others. George Marion, Jr., drives a Pierce-Arrow and looks for all the world like a sort of young professor on a vacation. But does anyone remember the titles he turned out for the Telephone Girl series over at FBO a few years back? I claim for them genuine humor and a penetrating wit. George has done some excellent work for Paramount of late years, too — and I see Julian Johnson parting with him about as much as I see him parting with his alarming habit of shaving his beard.

Over on the "U" lot is a little man who sits at his desk and brushes his mustache up military fashion and works nine hours a day. Walter Anthony used to be the music critic on the San Francisco Chronicle, and still keeps a big picture of Richard Wagner on his office wall to remind him of the days when he had the inside track on the best titles in the business. The titles are there. There is H. M. Walker over at Roach, and Malcolm Stuart Boylan at Fox; and there are the two young title writers whose names I have forgotten, who burlesqued Helen of Troy quite wonderfully; and a number of others. These men have all done much for the silent drama, and I don't see why we don't do as much for the talkie.

If Mr. Cohn wants the heads of some really bad motion picture writers and title writers, let him leave the wise-crackers alone, and send me a stamped, self-addressed envelope, and I'll post him a list of names that will read like Who's Who in the movies.

* * *

So Doug is going to bring back the soliloquy. Modern playwrights generally have shied from this instrument of the immortals as if it were poorly suited to their little society comedies and dramas and their little sex plays. And no wonder. For what have wild ecstasies, Hamlet's imprecations, bedevilments and philosophies, and the subtle under-currents of intrigue and make-believe to do with modern plays? Some might just as reasonably ask what they have to do with Doug's pictures. Yet I think the answer to that in his choice of subject.

Few, it is true, would care to hear the Black Pirate or the Gaucho speak in long asides — but who wouldn't want to hear D'Artagnan? Surely, enough, could be told from Dumas' books themselves to make these soliloquies fascinating. If Doug's voice holds up to his enormous energy, we're apt to hear something quite worth while. But if we don't — all credit to Doug for trying. He has always tried, at any cost, even if only with an old back drop of a million painted cows, or a dazzling hula hoop, kept unaccountably going round and round on Mary's bald, bald head. I shall certainly miss my guess if, when the history of pictures is written, and the hard work of pioneering reckoned up, the name of Douglas Fairbanks is not found closely following on the heels of that of Abou Ben Adam himself.

Three things repaids my visits to various theatres in a vain effort to get aboard the Movietone and Vitaphone bandwagon. These were (1) the charming voice of Mr. Bernard Shaw (sans all trace of the Oxford accent so prevalent in Hollywood) as he lifted Mr. Muscolini's brow from his (Mr. Shaw's eyes); (2) the thrill of pleasant surprise that came when, after a long sequence of printed titles, Al Jolson turned from the piano in The Jazz Singer and said, "Like that, Mama?"; and (3) the wonderful basso of the dear old Movietone cow in the Fox Newsreel that mooed before my startled eyes and into my startled ears with such eloquence that I nearly went back to the farm.

* * *

I came down one of the narrow streets that curve and caper and end in a squirrel track somewhere between the western slope of Boyle Heights and the Santa Fe tracks — a Russian funeral in solid phalanx, filling the whole street. A mob of barefooted children; now, quite suddenly, it was deserted. The casket, hidden from view by the marching press, was borne by ten or twelve bareheaded men, their shaved domes shining like billiard balls in the morning sun; a number of women marched in the outer layers of the phalanx. As they drew nearer, the slow, solemn chanting of the druidic chant began — that chant that had its origin somewhere in the century-dimmed past when man first began to mourn for his dead. Civilization has drawn us away from this show of grief somewhat, for now we mourn singly instead of in groups, and often times as silently as we are able. Thus has the communal spirit of the old tribe and village given place to more individual expression. But anyone who has heard a wild, wild song of the Irish whoko or the shrill, singing of the desert Navajos will know the thrill of sheer primitiveness that came to me as I stood there. The misery of that chant would have permeated stone.

On they came down the deserted street, and now I could see tears in the eyes of some, who might have been relatives. Others wore the scorn, the Joe Farnum's perpetual, cold shoulder, which I have on my own side of the city, no less miserable in its stoicism.

The round of daily tasks had stopped to let a spirit pass from among them.

Before they had rounded the corner of the next block, the soft, musical "Que es! Que es!" of the Mexican residents of the district could be heard coming from open windows and doors. Before the chanting voices died in my ears, the street was filling again with a laughing, happy throng of Felipes and Juanitas, playing blithely and oblivious in the sunshine — for so does the health and vigor and gladness of life overrun and blot out the place where the feet of our old and last enemy, death, has passed.

* * *

I had never had trouble with either word before. Both did my bidding meekly and uncomplainingly. When I wanted to say that, I said that, and when I wanted to say which, I said which. Whereupon one day, my novelist friend, who is very learned in these matters, confided in me that he had never been able to figure out the difference between them. Hard as he could he have never been able to get that which which went where and when. Since which (that) time, though I have searched a dozen books on the subject, I am in the same predicament.

SOME BELATED ADVICE

Dear Mr. Beaton:

I have been out of town and only recently got your calls for help. Afraid my valuable advice will come too late for your use.

First of all, eliminate all constructive criticism from your pages. Your present articles mean too much, they encourage thought and wound the feelings of persons to whom thinking is a task.

Second, use superlatives in favorable reviews. For example: "the money», wow, sure-fire, box-office knockout, money-getter etc. See any trade journal or newspaper review.

Third, don't get gay with responsible people. You say things that tend to disturb that superior, self-satisfied calm which is so impressive in your type of expository. Take an old round slap at a writer or actor — who cares, you might get a laugh, but quit kickin' the front office around.

Put these simple suggestions in practice, and I feel confident that after a month or two, "The Spectator" will give you no more trouble, and you'll be able to fish and look at brooks from then on.

Punctuation be dammed!

Yours for bigger fish and more brooks,

* * *

WADE BOTELER.
Far Across the Desert Sands

By James Brant

Below the Level of the Sea — El Centro, California

It is a very strange and most peculiar trait of men and women that they choose to live and seek a livelihood in spots that offer little more than shelter, food, apparel and a little money. Perhaps a desert satisfies a certain hunger or else they come and live in hopes of golden shovels and a better life. Perhaps it is a cultivated habit or an inborn choice.

Here is a little town below the level of the sea, encompassed by a wonderfully fertile and productive land, its products measuring much material wealth. A hostelry of quality and taste and comforting refinement, the namesake of a lady well renowned, the noted Barbara Worth. All this in seething desert country down below the level of the sea with many million acres lying idle in the upland. A region that by nature's law of gravity should be an inland lake, teeming with water life, and a sanctuary for bird life. A year, an age or eon and one of nature's cataclysms may change it all but in the interim humanity keeps toiling on and building.

The physical needs of men and women are not their only needs. The mind needs thoughts and ideas, the heart affection and the soul an inspiration; they must be nourished to insure humanity's progress to a higher state.

The motion picture is the happiest and most forceful medium now at hand to reach the hearts, the minds, the souls of men and women with strengthening and elevating thoughts and inspirations. It reaches all, the young and old, the learned and illiterate and is a greater and a finer medium than print or oratory or radio. Within its proper sphere it is a force of education and enlightenment and of uplifting entertainment and amusement, and in its scope and future possibilities it is not limited.

It would be strange indeed if all the physical needs of men and women came from ground below the level of the sea. It would be equally strange if all the nourishment for the minds, the hearts, the souls of men and women came from mentalities below the level of upright decency and highest honor. It would not only be most strange but would indeed be quite inimical and even most disastrous to the future welfare of the nation if the motion picture, holding such tremendous force and power for good or evil, were to always be the product of the drifting sands of a lifeless, barren, desert greed and lust and ignorance, below the level of the virtues of a noble womanhood and manhood.

There was a time when low, degenerate greed, with grasping, heartless avarice, sold to the public doctored and poisoned food, which practice law and prosecution now has bettered. There is a time when low, degenerate greed, wallowing in sensual slime, sells to the public motion pictures that are poison to the public's mental health and an inciting, stimulating narcotic that corrupts and vitiates the public's moral character, which practice law and prosecution may, in time, control.

Humanity is full of many strange, peculiar habits and pursuits, phenomena defying understanding, so foolish and so useless, worthless and destructive, ignorant and senseless that it is a wonder that they ever should have been, or having been, that progress has not banished them.

It is a wonder that there should be such public appetite to the vital quality of the motion picture, a dormant medium and force of education and enlightenment for the upbuilding of character and the security of the nation, coupled with wholesome entertainment. It is a wonder that a supposedly civilized and enlightened public should be satisfied to pay the price to witness exhibitions of a gross and vulgar type devoid of fineness, beauty and nobility, to spend its time and money for an exhibition that is valueless, particularly so, when that same public might with just a little thinking, that need not be a weakening exertion, glimpse the beauty and the inspiration, the education and the wholesome entertainment in the sacrifice and sentiment in the million dramas marking human progress and demand their presentation.

There is an untold wealth of truth and beauty hidden in the thought that reaches out beyond into the infinite universe, awaiting the genius who can mine it and refine it into spectacle and drama.

The denizens of a desert mind, living below the level of a common decency and honor, will never see that truth and beauty nor will they ever show it, nor will they ever want to see it and to show it, because it has to them no meaning or appeal. Because of that must then a certain public be deprived of what would be of benefit and what it would enjoy? Forsooth, it would so seem.

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Interviews and Advice Gratis
Eisenstein’s Ideas

By ROBERT ROSE

THE creator of the two greatest Russian films, October and Potemkin, which latter picture was shown not long ago in this country and in which Eisenstein illustrated with such brutal realism the revolt of the crew of this Russian cruiser in the World War, is again contemplating to surprise the world with an original idea.

In his next picture he intends to show the life and struggles of the Russian “mushiks”, who till the soil and their field is more than 50 per cent of the Russian nation.

In this film, which is called The Common Line, he leaves the modern historical background of the Russian revolution and starts to depict the everyday life of the small tiller of the soil, the chief part of which is going to be played by a bull.

With his October, Eisenstein glorifies the Soviet revolution; while with his Common Line he intends to glorify the “mushiki” and show their importance in the Soviet republic.

In choosing a bull for the chief performer in his new film, he follows just the same directorial eccentricity which he showed in both of his former films, that is, he is not going to use any actors in producing them, but just types.

Searching for, and picking out, such certain types for his pictures is Eisenstein’s hobby. He says that he looks for such types walking on the streets, visiting the poor shops where the underworld congregates, finding them in the houses of ill fame, and also in better restaurants where the remainder of the Russian intelligentsia meet. And how he is going to travel in the country and search for the right types for Common Line. In his pictures he never uses the same type twice. He says that his greatest problem is to find the right people for the parts in his pictures.

“If I need a mother”, he exclaims, “I look for her until I find her; if I need a soldier, I find a man who answers my conception of a soldier, and when I finally get all the types I have in mind, together, then begins the hardest part for me. I must designate what they are going to do and make them fit into my story so that their individual characteristics stand out. This is the main reason why I cannot use any type more than once in my pictures, as those types are good only for a certain scene, their usefulness ceasing when those scenes are finished.”

This system of finding and using only the types in a picture, is not followed by any other Russian director. It is of course slow and impractical for use in any other country where film production must be based on solid and regulated business foundations. The Soviet government is paying for these propaganda pictures, and Eisenstein may take all the time he desires in which to make them. As he pays his types from 12½ cents to $5.00 a day his production expenses are very trifling in comparison to those of the American film companies.

Eisenstein boasts of the fact that he is a propagandist, but he excuses himself by saying that American pictures are also filled with propaganda. Referring to The Big Parade, he says that this picture propagates patriotism; that the last Fairbanks’ picture propagates religion; and that the greater majority of pictures produced in America propagate the false ideal of a happy ending. He defends his ideas by emphasizing the fact that propaganda is the only sound idea for the future film in Russia and that art is a useless thing in a communist state, as all films should have a practical background and should enlighten and educate the people. And he concludes with the basic idea: That what is merely beautiful, but ungraced by a useful idea, is worthless.

After Eisenstein finishes his Common Line he intends to start work on a film depicting the life and the socialistic philosophy of Karl Marx, the founder of the socialist doctrine which gave birth to the present Russian republic.

There is no question that Eisenstein is a great director, but his ideas having their source in the socialistic Soviet republic with its brutal materialistic foundation, are in time going to be changed just like the leaders of the Soviet are slowly changing their Marxist doctrines to conform to the needs of their country and its peoples. The wit and the beauty of it in spite of Eisenstein’s film theory is eternal and cannot and will not be destroyed by the Soviet leaders and their followers.

It is art which is the spice of our drab lives; it is art which makes us forget our hard struggles and dis-

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appointments in our present existence; and it is art which elevates us to the stars. For a time that art may be surpressed in Russia, but it will rise again like Phoenix and on the firmament of artistic endeavor Russia will take her place once more in the group of the civilized nations of the world. The types which Eisenstein is using in his pictures may suffice for that special kind which he is creating, but their natural crudeness will never be a fitting substitution for the God given talent of great actors and actresses.

It might be interesting for the great family of Spectator readers to know that Eisenstein considers Eric von Stroheim to be the greatest American director and his Greed, with its gloomy realism, he selects as one of the best pictures in the film productions of the whole world. D. W. Griffith is in his eyes the classical director, Charlie Chaplin the greatest film artist, and his Gold Rush the most interesting picture he ever produced. In The Circus he finds, to his sorrow, that Charlie is deteriorating, but he also hopes that his next picture will again put Charlie on the pedestal of the greatest artistic achievement.

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Proof, Mr. Producer

Last week I said I knew a man who could do certain things. Figures do not lie:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Cost</th>
<th>Grossed</th>
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<td>$47,500</td>
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<td>49,750</td>
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Average Cost $53,108 Average Gross $359,040

HIS name next week.

Neil Hamilton
"Close-Up"
is by far the finest, most artistic publication that I have had the pleasure of reading."
—William A. Wellman.

—which opinion is now concurred in by Paul Leni, Lubitsch, Murnau, Henry King, George W. Hill, A. Korda, Paul Fejos, and many others who are subscribers to this

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From
The Film Spectator
of Nov. 10, 1928

Now that The Spectator is a weekly, why do you charge so much for it? When it appeared twice a month, I could afford forty cents a month to read it, but I can not afford eighty cents, and I never could pay seven and a half dollars to have it mailed to me for a year. Why not be generous and charge ten cents for a single copy and five dollars a year?

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Comments on Harry Carr's reference to Mary Pickford

Advising Metro what to do about Ramon Novarro

Reviews of "On Trial", "Power of Press", "Woman of Affairs"

By the Junior Critic

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We that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill.—Burke.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIF., NOVEMBER 24, 1928

We Accept a Challenge

A

LMOSEST midnight. The head of one of the largest producing organizations has spent the evening in a chair opposite mine in front of my fire. We've scussed everything, but agreed upon one thing—the excellence of J. B. M., the pipe tobacco that I've smoked ever since John B. Miller, after whom it was named, gave me a pound of it some years ago. My producer friend ad a speech while he was refilling his pipe to smoke in the way home. "You criticize us in The Spectator all the time," he said, "and for three hours you've been roasting me in your home. I think you're nutty. I'm going home. I suggest that you brush that cat off your lap, pull our pad from under the cup, and spend the rest of the night writing an article setting forth just how you would inaugurate all the production reforms you contend are necessary. Just imagine that I step out and give you my job. What would you do? I'll look for the article in the next Spectator." Then he added a little more ginger ale, refreshed himself, and went home. After I had gone upstairs and closed my bedroom door noisily from the outside to give Mrs. Spectator the idea that I had gone to bed, I sneaked back to the library, riffled the disposition of Ko Ko by pulling the pad from under her, and here I m. If I can keep the cat off my lap, I'll write the article, even if it takes all night. The trouble with producers is not so much what they are doing now as it is that they will be doing precisely the same thing next year. If I took my friend's job, I would do nothing about the program for the next twelve months. I would allow the present sloppy methods to continue for that time and center my attention on preparing for reforms that would be inaugurated one year from now. I have no specific information on his point, but I would hazard a guess that there is no star in the business who has two prepared stories ahead of him or her. Most stories go into production before even the script is completed. We could excuse this if a combination of circumstances led to a sudden decision to star Sophie Glutz in a picture that must be released in a very short time, but not once in a score of times is this condition encountered. The producer has Sophie under contract and has known for a year or two the release dates of the pictures that have been sold on the strength of her name. In many cases he even has her stories selected, but he does not put them in shape for shooting until the last moment. He has to supply his customers with four Glutz pictures during a year, and he does it, accepting the fact of delivery as proof that his system is all right. He explains the inferior quality of his product by his claim that he can not get good stories, which is no reason at all, for even a poor story can become good screen entertainment when given the proper treatment. He goes at his job in such a shortsighted way that it is impossible to give the story the attention it needs. Instead of allowing one expert writer to prepare it in working script form, he assigns to it a director who knows nothing about writing a story, and a supervisor who knows less. They paw it over and it gets steadily worse; but shooting must begin and what is left when the time limit is reached goes into production. Everything is hurried, set building, shooting and editing, and if the completed product has any merit, it is there by the grace of God and is not attributable to the perspicacity of the producing organization. By this method the expense of production is at least twice as much as it should be. Thus we have the industry suffering from both economic and artistic ills, but in reforming itself it need concern itself with but one of them. Cure either, and the other disappears. That is a fundamental fact that must be taken into account when the question of reform is approached, and the approach may be from either the economic or the artistic side.

Tackling the Job From the Standpoint of Business Man

ET us assume that I am purely a business man, and that when I take my friend's job I approach it from the business side, as I know nothing about screen entertainment or story values. I start to find out what is happening to the money of the stockholders in the company whose production activity has come under my control. I find that sets which cost considerable money were not used in shooting the picture for which they were erected. I find that an actor received salary for four weeks and does not appear in the picture when it is released. These two discoveries are enough to start on. I find, of course, that when the picture was going into production it was thought that both the sets and the actor were necessary to it; that, as a matter of fact, both were shot in several scenes, but when the work of cutting the picture to the desired footage was begun it was found that these scenes could be eliminated, which was done. This explanation, however, does not satisfy my business sense, for it does not alter the fact that the company's money was spent without producing any results. As I begin to inquire the reason I make a multitude of discoveries that would astonish any business man. I find that my first two discoveries are but minor extravagances that are the product of the amazingly inefficient business methods that prevail on the lot. I discover that the reason the sets and the actor were thought at first to be necessary to the particular picture upon which I started, was due to the fact that no one had any idea at the outset how much footage would be consumed in shooting the script as written. There was a wedding provided for, and a church interior built for it, and when cutting was under way it
was found that the wedding sequence could be eliminated and a title written to fill the gap in the story. I would be told that it was Joe Doakes who performed this clever stunt in cutting, and that the organization was mighty fortunate in having him on its pay-roll. Joe himself would tell me the first part of this and his tone would imply the second part. Again I would not be satisfied. If the wedding sequence could be eliminated, apparently without harming the story, why did that fact not occur to someone before thousands of dollars were spent in erecting the church set and shooting the scenes? I would not find anyone who could answer that question in a manner that satisfied my conception of business efficiency. No satisfactory answer is possible. I would learn that every time a sequence was cut out of a film it was a fresh reflection on the rotten production methods under which the picture was made, whether on my lot or on any other. I would not go very far in my investigation until I discovered that all the extravagances that I uncovered had their source of origin in the scripts. I would find that only in rare instances were scripts prepared properly. In seeking to remedy the ills caused by this lack of preparation, I would discover that that end of the business was one entrusted to writers, and that the reason for their failure to take care of it properly was the fact that they were not allowed to. I would find that although every activity of the enormous industry originated in the brain of a writer, the writer himself had little standing in the organization, and that production executives, supervisors and directors manhandled his work as they saw fit. I would make the interesting discovery that none of the man-handlers ever wrote a story in his life, or contributed a constructive idea to a story. My business intellect would dictate to me that I could effect great economy by entrusting writing jobs to writers. If I could not find them on my lot, I would find them on others, or on Hollywood Boulevard, and I would put them to work. I would find that there would be little chance to reform the methods by which the current year's products would be turned out, as any effort towards reform no doubt would bring confusion to the lot. But I would resolve that next year things would be different, that I would devote this year to eliminating church scenes from scripts, and next year to shooting only those scenes that would get on the screen.

* * *

Approaching It From the Standpoint of Screen Art

But suppose that I am not a business man—that I know nothing about business efficiency, but that I have a good picture mind, that I know a good story when I read one, have a sense of comedy and of drama, but never have had any experience in producing a picture, just as the business man in the previous paragraph never had any experience in running a production organization. When I first enter upon my friend's job I do not make the discovery that the quality of the company's output has reached a low level, for that knowledge is the one thing I bring to the job from the outside. It is something I've known for years. As I am not interested even slightly in the cost of pictures, my first attention is devoted to an effort to find out why they are so poor. As I have to keep the current program moving I approve the script for Love Beyond Sin, and notice in passing that Bill Blodgett is cast for the best man in the wedding sequence. Later I approve the rushes of this sequence and admire Bill's work, but I discover when the picture is shown in its completed form that both the wedding and Bill have disappeared from it. I notice also that the story is not told as well on the screen as it was in the script. Not knowing how pictures are made, I try to find out the reason for the loss of quality. I discover that when shooting was completed there were four more reels of action than could be included in the finished work and that in cutting it down it was inevitable that some of the quality should be sacrificed. Or I find that the supervisor thought the wedding sequence was unnecessary—or I find a score of other insane things that were done to the story. But whatever artistic weakness I discover, I find that it has its source of origin in the script. I find that if the wedding sequence was unnecessary to the picture after it was shot, it must have been just as unnecessary before it was shot. I find that if the elimination of a scene after it has been shot harms a picture, the only sensible thing to do is to make the elimination from the script, for then the scar of its removal can be made not to show. As I am endowed with ordinary common sense, I recognize the fact that the man from whom I can get a story that can be shot as written and will produce just the desired footage, is any man who can write that sort of story. I find that there are a few dozen of them in Hollywood. Every supervisor and every director on the lot will come to me, put their several heads on my bosom, and weep bitterly. They will plead with me not to entrust the writing of a story to a story writer. They agree with me that a supervisor should supervise it, and a director direct it—but a writer write it? God forbid! But I am an ass, and I give the writing job to a writer, and I instruct him to take his time, to give me a script that sets forth every scene exactly as it is to be shot, and to see that there are just enough scenes in it to produce a picture of the length required. I get a permit for him to carry a gun and instruct him to shoot any supervisor or director who even as much as bows to him while he is working on the story. Word spreads throughout Hollywood that I have gone mad, and the Writers' Club changes its mind about giving me a banquet through fear that it will annoy Louis B. Mayer. As, in the case of the business man, I do not wish to disorganize the current year's program, I put my writers to work only on stories to be produced next year. I know we have Sophie Glutz under contract and that there will be four Glutz pictures next year, consequently I regard her as a unit and have her four stories prepared as a unit. As the writers have plenty of time, they are

LLOYD NOSLER
Film Editor
Inspiration Pictures
Henry King Production
November 24, 1928

THE FILM SPECTATOR

Page Five

able to develop the characterization of everyone who appears on the screen in each of the pictures. The butler is given as definite a personality as is given the star. The fact that the wedding scene could be eliminated would become apparent during the progress of work on the script. When the first of the next year came around, I would have on hand perfect scripts for the entire year's program. I am conscious that I would have done the impossible, but screen art will get nowhere until it does a lot of things that to-day are deemed to be impossibilities.

* * *

No Matter How Approached, We Get Better and Cheaper Pictures

No matter from which direction I approached the job, whether as a business man who knew nothing about screen art, or a screen art expert who knew nothing about business, I would be in a satisfactory situation to inaugurate my reforms. I would have two objectives: (1) to reduce the cost of pictures to increase their profits, and (2) make them in a manner that would improve their quality. As a business man I would find that I could reduce expenses by saving the money that in previous years was spent on building sets that did not appear on the screen, or spent on salaries of players who did not get beyond the sitting room floor. Every department that has to do with production would know a long time in advance just what had to do as each picture was being made. If an office were used in a Glutz picture, the construction department would know that the same set, with a slight change, would serve for a Doakes picture. When shooting was completed there would be little delay in the cutting room, and no hurry to meet release dates. Every department would function perfectly, which means efficiency, and efficiency means economy. When the picture reached the public the box-offices would tell me an interesting story that I had not taken into account. It would be a story of how public's approval of the quality of the entertainment, or pictures made under the conditions that I have outlined must of necessity reflect a higher degree of screen art than those that are made under the present crazy conditions. Thus the business man would have solved the problem of saving money, and he would have the improved quality as a most satisfactory by-product. Let us see how he artistic ass would be faring. As he would start his second year with perfectly prepared stories, he would know that neither the wedding sequence nor Bill Blodgett was necessary to the Glutz picture, and he would not spend time on either. In fact, he would have nothing to do but make perfect pictures, some of which might not appeal greatly to the public when released, but none of which would be unworthy examples of screen art. But as a whole, his product would average much higher than the product of any previous year. This means that there would be greater grosses than ever before. And because the wedding scene was cut out of the script, the cost of it would be saved. There would be a great saving in every department of production. All this saving would be something the artistic ass never took into account. His only concern was to make pictures that would raise the quality of his company's output, and he would have all the saving as a most satisfactory by-product. Making pictures is both an industry and an art, and the two are entwined so closely that any improvement in one spreads to the other.

No product of either an industry or an art ever maintained a uniform quality of excellence when the conditions under which it was produced maintained a uniform quality of chaos. Under such conditions no industry can survive, not even one equipped as the film industry is to swallow its own indiscretions. It has survived thus far by selling its product on the basis of its cost and not on the basis of its quality, the only healthy method of marketing and the one to which the industry must come if it is to survive. It will survive, for it has the inherent strength to stand up under its abuses, but its abuses will not continue, for nothing inherently unsound can continue indefinitely in anything of itself inherently sound. It merely is a question whether those in charge of production now will institute the reforms that are inevitable or whether the bankers who stand back of the industry will insist upon the job being turned over to others who will perform it. I hope our present producers will institute these reforms, for I find as I get better acquainted with them that they are a rather pleasant lot. I'm going to tiptoe up to bed.

* * *

Joining Harry Carr in Picking on Mary Pickford

HARRY Carr thinks that Mary Pickford's popularity with the public is being threatened by the fact that "all visiting kings, emperors, grand dukes and princess go to her house to stay." He calls it "dangerous stuff." Charlie Chaplin, avers Harry, has more sense. He, too, entertains dukes, "but he has a regular hang-out in a Hollywood cafe where he forages with circus clowns and tramp authors." Although Harry says Mary is "on the ragged edge of danger," he throws out no life-line to her. As it is unseemly to leave a lady, particularly such an altogether charming one as Mrs. Douglas Fairbanks, on the ragged edge of danger, may I go to her rescue with a suggestion? The danger that Harry points out is real. She must discontinue entertaining the constant stream of crowned heads who are wearing out the Pickfair door-knockers; she must follow the wise lead of her friend Charlie, reserve a table at Henry's and dine there constantly with Jim Tully and a clown. She might save a little by getting Jim to double as the clown. I don't see how she can expect her pictures to retain their popularity throughout the world if she studiously avoids Henry's and dines every night with a king and an emperor instead of with a clown and an author. One night I stopped at a little town in the Alpes-Maritimes above Nice, and viewed a Chaplin film which was received enthusiastically by a French and Italian audience. The owner of the place, a fat little woman, told me that a "Charlot" picture always filled every seat. That shows what constantly dining at Henry's with a circus clown and a tramp author will do for one in a business way. It is apparent that Our Mary's reputation for possessing keen business judgment is not justified. She has been worrying herself sick about the selection of a story that the world will like, and then working night and day to make the story into the best possible picture, only to nullify all the honest effort and patient toil by being gracious to some distinguished foreigner who pauses at Pickfair as a mark of the respect in which the world holds the two who live there. And no doubt she has committed the further unpardonable indiscretion of failing to invite Harry Carr to climb her
hill and sit between a grand duke and a prince. In view of what Carr says I find that I have a grievance against her. One Sunday afternoon I sat on the lawn at Pickfair with Mary, Doug and Mrs. Spectator and had tea with a group of animated delights who told me they were shopgirls, girls who stand all day behind counters and grow tired waiting on people, and who had been asked to Pickfair because Mary thought they would enjoy its swimming pool and other attractions. What makes me sore is that Mary did not let me in on her secret, for what I read in the Times convinces me either that the girls were princesses masquerading as workers, or that Mary had her kings and emperors hidden in the basement that day so they wouldn’t have to meet me. But even if I had a real grievance against her; even if I thought she stood on the “ragged edge of danger,” whatever that means; even if I agreed with Carr that she should slam the door in the faces of the pilgrims to Pickfair; even if I felt that she was losing her skill, her enthusiasm, her charm, none of which I do believe for a moment; even if I were peeved because she did not invite me to meet one of her kings, would I be ungracious enough to set it forth in print. And I will go farther: I am willing to enter the lists with any carping, nasty-minded, envious man or woman who can find nothing better to do than to try to dim this end of a record that reaches back in a brilliant streak to the days when pictures started. The finest thing that pictures have done has been to give the world Our Mary, who still is too young to have become as great an actress as she some day will be, but who is now, always has been, and always will be, the screen’s most gracious lady.

* * *

Tendering Metro Advice on Novarro’s Debut as a Singer

RAMON Novarro will be a very foolish young man if he allows Metro to present him as a great opera singer in his first sound picture. I do not know that Metro is contemplating doing such a thing, but it is just the sort of thing I can see it doing. You know the story: the son of poor but honest parents vainly trying to make his way upward; beautiful girl hears him singing at his work; interests rich man; lessons in Paris; gala opening; fearful triumph; fade-out of a huge kiss. Metro is almost certain to bungle an extraordinary opportunity to exploit Novarro’s voice in a manner that would make his first singing picture a sensational success and pave the way for its successful successors. As one considers the matter he sees that there is a thought in it for all producers of talking films, which makes it worth discussing. If I were running the job, I would not allow Pete Smith to send out one line of publicity about Novarro’s fine singing voice, and I would not cast the young man as a singer in his first sound picture. I would allow the public to think that it made its own discovery that he can sing, and his future singing pictures could be made in response to the public’s demand for them. Ramon Novarro has box-office value as a motion picture actor, not as a vocalist. In his first sound picture he should be cast in a purely motion picture part, preferably as a young Italian peasant, for we associate song with that country. He should be a joyous youngster who bursts into song at the slightest provocation, but he should sing only snatches of popular operatic airs, and the story should interrupt his singing every time he got well under way. In this way it would be made to appear as if the producers attached no importance to Novarro’s superb voice, and were presenting him as usual, merely as a screen actor. Word of mouth advertising would make the box-office derive the full benefit of the singing, and so wonderfully can Novarro sing that the public would demand more of his voice, and Metro could yield gracefully to the demand; but even then it should not present him in any picture that showed him as a great singer. A room which I occupied at Monte Carlo one season commanded a view of a large flower garden. Every morning I was awakened by the most glorious singing I ever heard. A young Italian gardener tended the flowers and as he worked he sang songs of his country in a tenor voice that sounded divine to me. I dare say it was quite an ordinary voice, and probably he did not know how to use it, but the fact that he was a gardener, from whom one does not expect a voice of any quality, and that his singing was incidental to his work introduced the element of surprise and made him sound delightful. I dare say if Caruso, with appropriate publicity, had awakened me each morning with operatic selections, I would have stood it for perhaps a week, at the end of which time I would have asked him to go away. Please. To make the most of Novarro’s voice, he should be presented as the gardener, not as Caruso. The public does not expect a motion picture actor to sing, as I do not expect the gardener to sing, and the fact that he has a magnificent voice is something that can be discovered by the public in a manner that will make the discovery dramatic. If Metro commits the folly of showing Novarro making his debut as an operatic star, as it undoubtedly will, the young man will have to sing better than any human being yet has sung to make his voice match the glamour of its setting and all the hokum that will lead up to the moment of his appearance before the footlights. The same thing applies to all the specialty artists who are being rounded up for pictures. Their acts should not be featured by the manner of their presentation in the production. They should be parts of the picture that just happen to be there, and their excellence is something that should be left to the public to discover.

* * *

Warners Turn Out Another Engrossing All-Talking Picture

WARNER Brothers almost made an excellent talking picture out of On Trial. It is the best thing they have done yet in sound; it is engrossing and dramatic, and contains a collection of fine performances, but Archie Mayo did not direct it in a manner that brings out all its values. He applied to it the old method of direction that relies solely on close-ups to register points, a method that makes no demand on the intelligence of a director, as anyone can make a picture on that formula. Mayo betrays the same weakness that is characteristic of so many directors—he poses his players intelligently when he composes his long shots, but he lacks the nerve to let them act their scenes out that way. As soon as anything dramatic happens, he moves his camera up and blots out all the background and atmosphere that give punch to the scene. One of the high spots of On Trial is a sequence in which Vondell Darr, an extraordinarily clever eight-year-old child, testifies at the trial of her father for murder.
she is a pathetic little figure, a tiny mite among so many grown-up people, a very small person to be in such a very large room. Those are the considerations that make her appearance on the stand dramatic. But Mayo apparently did not grasp them at all. He does not give us one shot that develops the idea of the smallness of the child and the bigness of her surroundings. He keeps her dangling from the camera lens, showing her in huge close-ups that make her heroic instead of tiny. In the closing sequence, one of the big moments of the picture comes when Pauline Frederick refuses to allow Richard Tucker to cross-examine Lois Wilson, who, incidentally, gives a superb performance. "Leave her alone!" admonishes Miss Frederick, and the scene is a strong one. But it ends just there—Johnnie Wilson, simply leaving the witness alone. It is one of those missed opportunities that make me dubious about the ability of the Warners to turn out pictures that will maintain for them their present proud position in the industry. The district attorney should have risen from his seat as if to question the witness, thus prolonging the suspense; then he should have said quietly to the judge, "No questions, your honor," and sat down. This has the double virtue of being exactly what he would have done in a real trial, and of being something that would have made the scene more dramatic. Just before the final fade-out, after Bert Lytell has been acquitted of the charge of murdering Miss Frederick's husband, the widow is sitting down in the court room, and Lytell, Lois Wilson and the child form a happy family group. To this group the widow returns, and the scene is a tender and sympathetic one. It would have been ten times more so if the widow had retained the suggestion of her loneliness by remaining seated while the happy family moved to her and offered its sympathy. Even as it is presented in the picture, the cumulative effect of the sequence caused a lump in my throat, but if the treatment had been as I suggest, I am afraid that I would have been sobbing when I left the projection-room. I point out the faults in On Trial in the hope that they will be avoided in future pictures, but I don't want to give the impression that it is not an engrossing picture. It is a piece of screen entertainment that you must not miss. Really fine performances are given by the entire cast, which consists of Pauline Frederick, Lois Wilson, Bert Lytell, Jason Robards, Holmes Herbert, Richard Tucker, Johnnie Arthur, Franklin Pangborn, Edward Martindel, Edmund Breese, Fred Kelsey, and the clever little Vondell Darr. Lois Wilson and Johnnie Arthur carry off the acting honors. Miss Wilson's voice is going to prove a valuable adjunct to her fine dramatic sense. Arthur surprised me with the force of his performance. I thought he was a quite ordinary comedian, but I found him to be a dramatic actor of ability. I believe I forgot to mention that On Trial is an all-talking picture.

We've Discovered What It Is That Makes Metro Lion Roar

One might be reconciled to silent pictures remaining a little longer if all of them were as good as A Woman of Affairs, which Clarence Brown has made for Metro, the clause in his contract that provides that no one is to interfere with him while he is making a picture, being responsible for the fact that it is good even though it is a Metro production. Although they call the woman of affairs Diana Merrick she is none other than our old friend Iris March to whom Mike Arlen introduced us. You remember her, the captivating woman wearing the green hat. What an exceedingly silly industry is this one of making pictures. The Green Hat is a story either fit or unfit for screen presentation. If fit, then it should be presented under its own name; if unfit, it should not be presented at all. Will Hays, that sanctimonious monk in tarnished cassock, did not pass upon the moral merit of the story. He received his orders from Louis B. Mayer, and then consented to the filming of the story provided the public was defrauded into thinking that it was some other story. It's an old custom that Hays brought with him from politics. You'll remember that he accepted tainted money as campaign contributions and tried to defraud the public into the belief that it was derived from other sources. Well, anyway, Clarence Brown made The Green Hat into a picture that rates highly as an example of screen art and which will hold the close attention of any intelligent person who views it. In making this statement I am assuming that the public will see it as I saw it and that Metro is not going to tie pans and other things on it to make a noise. The picture is engrossing for the same reason that the book is engrossing, not for its story value, but for its delightful treatment. Brown had a superb cast—Greta Garbo, Jack Gilbert, Dorothy Sebastian, Lewis Stone, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Hobart Bosworth and John Mack Brown. While it is a joint Gilbert-Garbo production, Jack sat back and allowed Greta to earn all the bows. Whether she will prove to be your conception of Iris March depends upon what that conception is, but she is my Iris March down to the flicker of her

PAUL PEREZ

... having completed his assignment at Paramount - Famous - Lasky, has been engaged by First National. He is now titling Donn Byrne's classic, "Changeling," co-starring Milton Sills and Dorothy Mackaill, and directed by

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eye-lashes. In my opinion she never gave a more intelligent or a more entertaining performance on the screen. All the performances are what we might expect from such a brilliant cast. Young Doug Fairbanks without question is destined to be a great actor. At the present moment the thing that he is in the greatest need of is a haircut. Clarence Brown's direction displays the same mastery that made Flesh and the Devil an outstanding picture, although Woman of Affairs will not attract the attention the other did, as Arlen's contribution in the way of a story is not as great as Sudermann's. But there still is a touch of timidity in Brown's direction and not until he gets over it will he show us what a really capable director he can be. In one sequence he swings his camera from a group to a door through which a character exits, then swings it back to the group of which the departing player was a member before he left. It is a smooth manner of avoiding a cut, but Brown uses the idea only once in that sequence and not once again in the picture. His grouping in medium and long shots always is intelligent and effective, but he is too timid to go a little farther and tell his story with such shots. He falls back on close-ups after he has demonstrated that he could do without them. He is one of the most painstaking directors in pictures, one of the most thorough workmen, and when he gets a little more confidence in himself he is going to give us some extraordinary pictures. The titles in Woman of Affairs are punctuated with that display of gross ignorance that has become the Metro trade-mark. It is why the lion in the main title roars.

Columbia Borrows a Situation and Makes a Picture Around It

NOT being interested in the details of the film industry, I don't know who has bought The Front Page for screen presentation, or, if it hasn't gone that far, who intends to buy it, but whoever gets it had better lose no time in shooting it. What I understand is the big situation in the New York stage success has been plucked out of it neatly by Columbia, changed slightly as to details, and presented as the big kick in The Power of the Press, which Columbia shortly will offer for public approval. As I do not own The Front Page and have no intention of buying it, I am indifferent to the pilfering and can regard the Columbia production only as a thoroughly entertaining picture, directed by Frank Capra with marked intelligence, except in a few spots where he reverts to established movie conventions. His most flagrant lapse is staging a love scene between Jobyna Ralston and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. on a street corner, an utterly absurd place for a love scene even though Frank has the delicacy to clear the intersecting streets of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. His treatment robs the scene of the sentiment that should surround it, and which he could have retained by the simple expedient of showing the lovers retreating to any one of the many doorways available. I can not understand such stupidity. And to dispose of the director's faults before enumerating his virtues, he should have carried his display of originality to the end of the picture and given us a fade-out on something other than the boy and girl in a close-up kiss. If I were a director, I would be ashamed to resort to that moss-covered ending. The picture opens with a sequence in the newsroom of a morning daily. Capra makes it a little more feverish than it is true to life, but it may be excused on the ground that it is nearer the public's conception of what a nerve-racking undertaking it is to get out a paper. What I like about the sequence is that Capra puts it over almost entirely in long and medium shots. In fact, the whole picture is an answer to those who contend that close-ups are essential to the telling of a screen story. It derives its chief strength from the fact that Capra does not sacrifice the newspaper atmosphere to huge portraits that mean nothing. This method of treatment makes the story much more true to itself and decidedly more entertaining than it would have been if it had been given the usual unimaginative close-up treatment that is the main characteristic of the work of most directors. What surprises me is that there are not some directors with brains enough to grasp the fact that even if there were no objection to close-ups, as such, a picture shot without them would attract attention as a novelty. In most of his scenes Capra shows that they are not necessary to the telling of his story. This is something that I always have contended by implication when I criticized the over-indulgence in close-ups, for I would not advocate a reform that would make a pictureless entertaining. There is a shot in Power of the Press that interested me. Wheeler Oakman opens a door and enters a room. The camera follows him through the doorway and swings around to show him closing the door. Things like this in a picture show that someone has been using his head. And something else interested me mightily. It becomes evident that Oakman and Fairbanks are going to have a fight. I yawned and resigned myself to viewing a lot of furniture being destroyed and someone falling on a table and overturning it, while Mildred Harris stood by and kissed the hangings. But it didn't prove to be that kind of a fight. Young Doug gets in only one punch before Mildred grabs the gun and threatens to open passageways to Oakman's interior if he did not desist. He desisted. Excellent performances abound in the picture. Fairbanks again demonstrates what a fine actor he is becoming, and Jobyna Ralston, a clever trouper with a sweet and appealing personality, handles her part splendidly. Del Henderson is capital as the star reporter, and Bob Edison does well as city editor. Philo McColough gives another of his fine characterizations as a heavy.

When I saw Fazil on the screen last June I liked it and said so in The Spectator. I praised warmly the performance given by Charlie Farrell. It seems to me that since I saw the picture I have heard almost every film person in Hollywood rate it as one of the worst of the year and Charlie's performance as a poor one. The peak of this criticism was reached when some screen people, whose opinions I respect, were dining with us last week. We dug up my review of Fazil, and they tried to convince me that I was wrong in everything I said. I acknowledged that I must have been wrong, but to satisfy myself I hunted up Fazil at a neighborhood house and viewed it again. I found it to be better even than I had thought it to be the first time I saw it. Howard Hawkes made a splendid job of its direction. Someone has told me that all the costumes were wrong, but that did not disturb me any as I had no idea wherein they
were wrong. The feature of the film that interested me most—the feature that took me back to it—was Charlie Farrell's performance. As I had based my confidence in his future on his work in this picture, I wanted to satisfy myself that I had not made a mistake. At the end of the year when I set down the great performances of the year, Charlie's performance in Fazil will be among them. His absolute repose, the delicacy of his hand movement to denote the Oriental aristocrat, the lack of over-gesticulation, and the absence of the slightest trace of a mannerism noticeable in any other screen performance that he has given, mark him as a superb actor. When he comes to his big scenes, apparently he is as composed as before, but he gives a suggestion of a latent power that registers his purpose without a resort to obvious histrionics. In all his scenes his walk is graceful and his poise is as perfect when he is in motion as when he is still. Every stride he takes is a definite part of his characterization. He is the only young actor I can recall who knows how to walk when before the camera. I stand by my praise of both Fazil and Farrell.

DONALD and I, as I have stated in The Spectator several times, run our departments independently. I never know what he is going to say about a picture and he never knows what I am going to say. Each of us thinks that the other has weird views. I have been unsuccessful thus far in trying to persuade him to join me in a campaign against this or that grievance. I am about to enter upon another campaign, a determined one that may be long drawn out, and I implored the young man to take a hand in it, but I failed again, consequently I must go it alone. I think Douglas Fairbanks Jr. should have his hair cut, and I am going to keep on nagging him about it until he has it cut. Raising one's own wig has advantages from a strictly economic standpoint, and those who regard saving as a virtue might approve infrequent visits to a barber, but when these financial considerations are responsible for the way young Doug wears his hair I think it is time someone should remind him of his art. When he has to stop in the middle of a strongly dramatic scene in which he is doing really splendid work, and brush back a long, scraggly and unkempt lock, the tip of which describes an arc reaching from his chin to the back of his neck, then, say I, something should be done about it, and I intend to see that something is done. I am sorry Donald can't see his way clear to join me, but I have hopes of enlisting the aid of Joan Crawford. That would settle it.

POSSIBLY the most disgusting kisses of this fall and winter season are those exchanged by Greta Garbo and Jack Gilbert in Woman of Affairs. You can see Greta's upper lip curl backward and her jaw recede until it bends her ears. It's enough to turn one's stomach. They could not call it The Green Hat, for it is supposed to be an immoral book, but they put things in the picture more filthy and disgusting than Arlen ever dreamed of.

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

INTERFERENCE is a good motion picture in spite of the fact that Roy Pomeroy directed it as if it were just a stage play. The big future of sound pictures lies in their ability to give us spoken dramas which also embody all the advantages of the motion picture. Pomeroy used nothing but stage stuff, and neglected all the shortcuts which the film could have made. It is evident that sound pictures are going to develop an absolutely new type of director which will be a cross between the stage and screen; and, God willing, will not wear riding breeches and boots while shooting a drawing room scene. The significance of Interference in the advancement of sound must not be overlooked, since the Movietone stuff easily outdistances anything done yet. Voices are registered with greater clarity and freedom from rasping and mechanical sounds. The thing that this particular method of sound reproduction needs to work upon is reducing the incidental noises to their proper volume. This is the first sound stuff I have seen where there were any to speak of; and they were good except that they were too loud. When Doris Kenyon tears a check, there is a noise which sounds like a healthy saw-mill doing its best. However, it's better to be faced with the problem of eliminating some of the volume rather than that of building it up. One little bit of sound which interested me particularly was the scene where the camera rests on Bill Powell while Evelyn Brent, who is out of camera range, is crying. The sound of her sobs is distinct, and adds a great touch of reality. Henceforth, a telephone conversation on the screen will mean something, if everybody follows the lead of the technicians who made Interference. Never before, on the stage or screen, have we been able to hear both sides of the conversation from one telephone; but in this picture it is done very adroitly and helps greatly in reducing the number of cutbacks. It is rather doubtful if Interference, good as it is, will run for any length of time. It isn't exactly the type of picture which is liable to go over very well with the majority, but it is the sort of thing which audiences are going to be educated up to in a very short while. The more I think about it, the more I am impressed with the great opportunity which some of the English has to reform the English spoken in this country; because the number of people who speak incorrectly is tremendous. However, if it has to be left in the hands of the geniuses who have punctuated the titles in the past, there isn't much hope of any great improvement. While I am thinking about it, Interference, contrary to nearly every play put on the screen, didn't have any young love interest; and there was one in the play. That's a record of some kind.

There were only four important members in the cast of Interference, so it was vitally necessary that they all be good, or the whole thing would have been a dismal mess. The two male members of the quartet had the parts which offered the greatest acting opportunity, and they made the most of them. Clive Brook always has given performances which were outstanding in their feeling and smoothness; but he never has revealed the tremendous power with which the use of his voice endows him. Wil-

See Interference
Evelyn Brent, Clive Brook, Doris Kenyon and William Powell
Carthay Circle Theatre
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liam Powell plays what is the most sympathetic part in the whole picture, although technically he is a heavy. He has a good voice, and as he always has been one of the finest actors the screen ever has had, his work is wonderful. Evelyn Brent plays the feminine heavy for all she is worth. There is no one who can touch Miss Brent at a certain type of characterization and this is one of them. Doris Kenyon uses her charm and acting experience to good advantage, and gives a very good performance.

The good taste reflected after the picture was over on the opening night at the Carthay is a credit to Famous Players.

**SOMEONE to Love** is an amusing little picture which won't arouse great interest, nor will it be a failure. The team of Buddy Rogers and Mary Brian is good enough to put over practically anything; and as the story and direction of this are very well handled, it manages to be a very worthy little picture. F. Richard Jones was the director, and he has some ideas on making a love story which I think are great, although nobody else may think much of them. The first time the two lovers meet they go through a little scene where first they smile at each other, and then they laugh. After that they become friends or lovers, depending upon one's view of the situation. Another scene was where Jones held the two of them in a long close-up, in which they did nothing but look into each other's eyes. That was one place where a close-up would have been effective. He did the second thing again, although the camera wasn't quite so close this time; but it was spoiled by the long kiss which he injected. Incidentally, if there is anything I cannot stand in a motion picture, it is this gag of showing the girl's love for the boy by having her run all over a daisy field like an insane grasshopper. Pictures will be a great deal better when that old war horse is laid in its well earned grave. Paramount is going to have no difficulty in maintaining its advanced position if it continues to turn out well produced, well acted, and well directed programs pictures like this.

As I said before, Rogers and Mary Brian are a great team. Due to her greater experience, Miss Brian dominated *Someone to Love* with her charm and growing acting ability. Rogers was given a new character, the first time the two lovers met he was in *Varsity*; and ought to do very well as a star if he has any more parts like this. William Austin and Jack Oakie did well as a pair of comedy heavies, and James Kirkwood made a sympathetic father.

**HOW anybody ever stood a courtroom sequence in the silent films is something I cannot understand after seeing *On Trial*, Warner's latest all sound picture. I always had an idea that Archie Mayo was a good director; and if he ever got a story with any sense to it, he would do a piece of work which really would be worthwhile. Well, they gave him *On Trial* and he has made it into a fine picture. Even without the sound it would have been noteworthy, but not nearly so entertaining. Mayo is one of the few directors who makes any effort toward building up individual characterizations for his casts, and be did very well with all the fiilmakers he had in this picture. The action takes place in a courtroom, with cutbacks to whatever the witnesses happen to be talking about. As everybody in the cast is a good actor, there isn't a slow moment in the picture, everything moving along smoothly up to a powerful crisis. The funny thing about pictures like *On Trial* is that they are going to weed out all but good dramatic actors. The lighter pictures, where ability is not so vitally important, will use our present crop of poor actors who chance to have personalities or followings; but a single weak link in a more dramatic film will ruin the whole thing. There wasn't anything to criticize in *On Trial*. It went on so smoothly that I was completely wrapped up in it, and didn't even notice any of the little things which Dad undoubtedly did. One thing in particular, however, did catch my interest. It was a good point, though. A witness on the stand would testify, and the camera would swing from him to one of the spectators in the courtroom but the voice of the witness would go on. It was a very good idea because then the audience could see the reaction of the statements upon the persons hearing them. This "voice-off-stage" is one of the strong points of sound pictures, as numerable situations can be improved dramatically by it. Sound can put over emotions far better than the silent drama ever did, because the natural thing for anyone to do when suddenly aroused is to make a noise of some sort. The marvelous voice of Pauline Frederick greatly enhanced my enjoyment of the dialogue, although she had a

**AL JOLSON**

has been a source of profit to himself, to his producing associates, and to every box-office where his artistry has been shown on stage or screen. I, too, have been a gainer, through writing for him over a period of years such comedy material. I believe if inquiry is made of Al, he will speak well of my work.

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W HENEVER Buster Keaton comes to town, I anticipate some real enjoyment from going to the motion picture. I always laugh myself sick, and am not troubled by worrying whether or not the picture is good technically. His latest, The Cameraman, has a more definite story than usual. There were sequences at the first and the last which didn't do more than arouse a few chuckles, but there was stuff in the middle which made up for it. I can't understand where on earth Keaton gets all the gags he uses. Edward Sedgwick handled the direction on The Cameraman, and did a good job; but Keaton is the whole picture. There isn't much to say about the picture except that I laughed harder at it than I have at anything for a long time. The swimming pool and Tong War gags are classics. The cast contained Marceiline Day, Harold Goodwin and Eddie Gribbon.

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be driving. That is the most peculiar thing about these heavies. The minute they get free, they want to kill the driver of the car; and it never seems to occur to them that they are liable to get damaged, too. However, the old thrug way, which the industry is founded upon; American boy, as he did in this, he should cut his hair a little shorter; because it is a bit too Bohemian as it is now. Jobyna had little to do but look pretty and appealing, something she is adept at. Why isn’t she given the break she deserves? Robert Edeson made a good city editor, and Philo McCollough did well in a heavy characterization. Wheeler Oakman and Mildred Harris were more or less unsympathetic, too; but they did good work.

My review of Noah’s Ark was written after I had seen the picture in a projection room, and I must confess that I was terribly disappointed after I had seen it in a theatre. The things which overwhelmed me in a small room seemed small and insignificant at a greater distance.

Reviewed in this Number

CAMERAMAN, THE—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by Edward Sedgwick; story by Byron Morgan; adaptation by Lew Lipton and Clyde Bruckman; continuity by Richard Schayer; titles by Joe Farnham; settings by Fred Gabourie; wardrobe by David Cox; photographed by Elgin Lessley and Reggie Lanning; film editor, Hugh Wynn.

The cast: Buster Keaton, Marceline Day, Harold Goodwin, Sidney Bracy, Harry Griibon.

DAUGHTER OF DESIRE—
An Excellent picture. Directed by Burton King; story, continuity and titles by Isadore Bernstein; photographed by William Miller and Joseph Walters; technical director, Robert Stevens; edited by Betty Davis.


INTERFERENCE (Sound Version)—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Roy J. Pomeroy; from the play by Roland Pertwee and Harold Darden; based on a Lothar Mendes production; photographed by J. Roy Hunt and Farcot Edouard; assistant director, George Yoahlem.

The cast: Clive Brook, Evelyn Brent, William Powell, Doris Kenyon, Louis Payne, Brandon Hurst, Wilfred Noy, Tom Ricketts, Donald Stuart, Raymond Lawrence.

ON TRIAL—
A Warner Brothers picture. Directed by Archie L. Mayo; from the stage play by Elmer Rice; scenario by Robert Lord; assistant director, Joe Barry; film editor, Thomas Pratt.


POWER OF THE PRESS—
A Columbia picture. Directed by Frank Capra; story by Sonya Levien and Frederick A. Thompson; scenario by Sonya Levien; photographed by Teddy Tetzlaff; art director, Harrison Wiley.


WOMAN OF AFFAIRS, A—
A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. Directed by Clarence Brown; from the story by Michael Arlen; continuity by Bess Meredith; titles by Marian Ainslee and Ruth Cummings; art director, Cedric Gibbons; gowns by Adriam; assistant director, Charles Dorian.

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photographed by William Daniels; film editor, Hugh Wynn.


SOMEONE TO LOVE—
A Paramount picture. Directed by F. Richard Jones; from the story by Alice Duer Miller; adapted by Ray Harris; screen play by Keene Thompson and Monte Brice; photographed by Allen Siegler; assistant director, Arthur Jacobson.

The cast: Charles (Buddy) Rogers, Mary Brian, William Austin, Jack Oakie, James Kirkwood, Frank Reicher.

THE LAUREL GROVE
By FRANK T. DAUGHERTY

It was one of those books which the editor, in his gusts of antipathy, for certain classes of reading matter, had sworn with a good deal of force clear across the room, where it slithered under a table, across a rug, and landed at last, open, half under a taboret with some kind of jug on it. I picked it up, and the name brought a flood of memory. "Upton Sinclair, a Study in Social Protest (Geo. H. Doran Company, publishers), by Floyd Dell. Upton Sinclair. I had almost forgotten the name; and the fact that he could still be in the public eye sufficiently to get a book written about himself came with a little shock of surprise. Yet by one time, I had heard bright-eyed students discuss his ideas as though the very structure of our national life depended on him. Usually, it is true, these students had a day or two's growth of beard, and affected round, horn-rimmed spectacles, and wore their hair long and dark and dank, and had pale faces. But sometimes they didn't. I remember a certain freshman with bright ruddy cheeks and clear eyes, whose father owned a newspaper, and who switched his major course from journalism to English hard upon the heels of the publishing of the "Brass Check" by the Sinclair press. This freshman even contemplated at one time taking a pilgrimage to Pasadena to help in the great good work of suppressing his father's, and his father's associates' hydra-headed, capitalistic papers. (Isn't it always the boy whose father owns a steamship line who wants to become a stoker?) Anyhow, someone dissuaded him, and afterwards, I know, he was glad he didn't take that trip.

I had the doubtful pleasure myself of hearing Sinclair speak in old Fisherman's Hall in Berkeley. And on the platform with him was just such another young pilgrim as our freshman might have been, this one all the way from Old England. And this lad's eyes, too, were bright, and his voice quick and nervous as he boasted how he helped Sinclair with some sort of demonstration for or against (I don't remember which) the American Constitution. And how he had spent a night or two in jail at Long Beach for it. And while the young Englishman was talking, the thought came to me that the influence of an older man with enthusiasms over a young man with enthusiasms can be very great indeed. And I was glad again that my young friend hadn't gone to Pasadena in the heat of that freshman year. Because if he had, he might have been the one to make the demonstration for or against (and I don't see why a young English radical would want to make a demonstration for) the American Constitution. And he, instead of the young Englishman, might have been the one to spend the night in jail. Only, I'm quite certain he wouldn't have bragged about it afterward to that motley group in Fisherman's Hall.

AND Floyd Dell goes on and paints us a picture of young Upton Sinclair throwing stones at practically everything we are pleased to call our national structure. But unless I am badly mistaken, the usefulness of Upton Sinclair's type of criticism is clearly finished and not just beginning, as Mr. Dell assumes. Because—or so it has seemed to me—there has been a growing feeling among our young writers and critics that the way to build up that structure was brick by brick from within—and not standing off and heaving the bricks at it to see what they could knock down.

I've read a mother who writes almost every day in her diary "Oh, how mysterious are God's dealings with us!" and a man's thoughts naturally turn, in maturer life, to his own relationship to the universe and its Creator.

And so, in the chapter called Looking Forward, we find Jerome K. Jerome (My Life and Times. By Jerome K. Jerome. Harper and Brothers, N. Y.), echoing intellectually the simple faith of his Nonconformist mother. "God tried us in the furnace. But whatever happens we must always believe in Him. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!" This trust, he says, was not for some future Nirvana of rest. "It was not that we might escape punishment, win happiness, that we were given an immortal soul. What some were, here there have been in that! Work is the only explanation of existence. The joy of labor, the joy of living, are the wages of God." There, agree or disagree as you will, speaks the artist as well as the man of faith—the actor-editor-playwright whose work has for a half century amused, stimulated and instructed the English and American literary and theatrical worlds. Between that first chapter dealing with his mother and his early boyhood, and that last chapter of simple faith in homely virtues and honest toil as the reward of life, pass many people and many things. Many a struggling extra, for example, would find encouragement.

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and consolation in his account of his own Discontented Youth on and about the London stage. He knew the chief theatrical people of his times as few have been given to know them; not only the great and renowned, but the obscure as well. Reputation didn't seem to mean a great deal to him. He knew Alla Nazimova when she came to him as Alla Nazimow. "A quiet, simple girl," knocking on his door with letters of introduction from mutual friends in Russia. Later, he found her changed as the great Nazimova who was drawing all New York. Zangwill, Forbes-Robertson, Barrie, the Frohmans, pass across his stage in simple review. Drew always seemed to him like "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court."

Haunted Soho and Hyde Park when the former was a simple Bohemian rendezvous and the latter known chiefly as the place where Bernard Shaw was making daily speeches. Letters were appearing in the press during this time, recounting the brutal handling Shaw was receiving at the hands of unfeeling reporters—all written by Shaw himself. When Jerome first knew Barrie, that really great humorist was being looked on by his publishers as a young lunatic, handing in his manuscripts partly written on the backs of old envelopes. He tells of giving Sir Arthur Conan Doyle one of Arthur Machen's early thrillers—and of Doyle, author of a hundred thrillers, trying in vain to woo sleep after reading it! Jerome's own early writings took at once, but brought him little return. His first two books went into editions of hundreds of thousands in America without his receiving a cent for them. Which accounts in part, perhaps, for his not liking America.

STEVENSON, Kipling, Hardy, Barrie, Zangwill, wrote for his publications, of which there were later two, "The Idler" and "Today". As editor, he found his chief joy in the friendly and encouraging relationships he was able to establish between his young writers and himself. He delighted to hear them refer to him as "The Chief". Shaw's mind seemed to him the quickest and the Wittiest he knew. "His mind works like lightning." When the president of The Playgoers Club came to Shaw one day during the early triumphs of the cinema, wanting his opinion "on the question: Is there any danger of the actor being eliminated?" "You don't say which actor," answered Shaw, "and, anyhow, why speak of it as a danger?" His own humor he was never quite sure of himself, though doubtless it is the thing he will be chiefly remembered for. If the notes of this volume are sketchy and the incidents related too little in conformity with that book that both he and Mark Twain wanted to write, "nothing extenuating", there is yet much of interest and instruction in its pages. It is a pity Jerome couldn't have come to America after the war, as he was often urged to do, to lecture; for surely now he would have found many of the faults corrected that he called attention to, and not a few disciples won to his own clear-headed ideas. And, who knows whether he might not have been won over to the motion picture, which, as a dramatist, he hated fervently for years.

IT was to be expected, of course, that someone would want to know what The Laurel Grove means. I suppose it ought to have some hidden significance like, say, The Bowling Green, or, to descend a step or two, The Lancer. I'm sorry. It hasn't. Laurel is just a name I've always liked, and Grove seemed to go with it. I threw the article in for good measure. Pronounced together, the words have a certain euphony, a cool, secluded sound. I've read books in a laurel grove, or play, or even weep. But if these explanations don't seem to explain, I can add that laurel is related to the ericaceous shrubs of the genera Rhododendron, which is my state's buttoniere and my favorite flower. It is also very near kin to the green bay tree, which, as everyone will remember, the proverbial sinner flourishes like. Although this column hopes to flourish without sin. If there are any other reasons why I named it The Laurel Grove, I've forgotten them—unless it was that altogether silly one that occurred to me one day when I was reading Sir Roger in that great Spectator for which this one was named—that it seemed a name the eccentric old gentleman himself might be expected to like.

In the past two issues I have been referring to

Emory Johnson
— who can tell you much more about himself than I can.
Call HEmstead 6167.

Neil Hamilton
P. S.—Emory Johnson is the man who spent $317,650 to make six pictures which grossed $2,154,231.
## JEAN HERSHOLT

Peppy Stories, French Flavored,  
by  
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## GEORGE SIDNEY

— Says —  
"Silence is a Polite Negative"  
Quoth the movies "Nevermore"

---

## Norman Taurog

Has Completed His First Fox-Movietone Subject,  
"THE DIPLOMATS"  
Starring Clark and McCullough

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## Scott R. Dunlap

Now  
With Columbia

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## JOHN FARROW  
WRITER WITH PARAMOUNT

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## TAY GARNETT  
Director  
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Demmy Lamson, Manager  
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## Howard Bretherton  
Now Directing  
"The Greyhound Limited"  
with Monte Blue  
A Warner Bros. Vitaphone Feature

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## ROWLAND V. LEE

Director  
THE FIRST KISS  
PARAMOUNT-FAMOUS-LASKY
To Motion Picture Producers, Directors and Stars

You have prospered.

Being finite creatures whose stay on earth, compared to eternity, is no longer than a lightning flash, it ill behooves you to feel important, to say “Look what I have done.”

You might say “Look what the Author of all things has done for me.”

You didn’t make the sunshine or the fine warm days or the rich background of mountains, valleys, and sea that have made Southern California an ideal place to film photoplays.

You didn’t even give yourself your talent, your feeling for drama or wonder or beauty.

They were all given to you by the Author of all things.

And they can all be taken away from you.

It has been written “Even as ye do unto others, so shall it be done unto you.”

And no matter how much money you have—it won’t quiet an uneasy feeling in “the secret places of the heart.”

A quarter of a million poor, sick, old, crippled and orphaned fellow citizens of yours are cared for every year by the Community Chest—in this same city that has prospered you.

What the Community Chest needs are more $25,000-and-up “big givers.”

If in doubt as to how much you should give, check up your last year’s income tax report—and pray to the Author of all things for guidance.

This page contributed by The Film Spectator
What recent elections can teach motion pictures

Screen industry has become real stage-door Johnnie

Doug MacLean wants to spend Sue Carol’s money

Reviews by the Editor

SOMEONE TO LOVE
SINS OF THE FATHERS
HOMECOMING
NIGHT WATCH

By the Junior Critic

HOMECOMING
SINS OF THE FATHERS
THE SPIELER
NIGHT WATCH
The most amazing instrument you ever heard

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What We Can Learn From
Late Presidential Election

Noticing coming as close to all the people as the recent presidential election came, can fail to have a lesson in it for motion picture people. The majority of the people of the United States have said that they want Herbert Hoover for president instead of Alfred Smith. It is for these people, the majority of the people of the United States, that motion pictures are made. No producer can expect to please all the people. He realizes this, and aims to please only the majority. The profits he makes reflects the degree in which he has been successful in achieving his aim. One disadvantage that he labors under is that he does not know what the majority wants. If he could find out what all these who voted for Hoover desire in the way of screen entertainment, he would have something to go on. Let’s see if we can help him. I made three bets on the election, one, at odds, that Hoover would be elected; one that Smith would not carry ten states; one that Smith would be the most badly beaten candidate who ever ran for the presidency on the nomination of one of the major parties. I won all my bets. I did not follow the campaign from a political standpoint; I presumed that Smith would carry seven or eight states (he carried eight) but I had no idea which states they would be. I applied to the election the same kind of reasoning that I apply to the consideration of motion pictures. I know it is poor business to have vulgarity in pictures, as exemplified by huge close-ups of kisses; I know it is not good business to offend educated people with bad grammar and bad punctuation in titles. Thoroughly respectable people can commit these faults, and their commission does not carry any suggestion of moral regression, but the public, as a mass, will turn from them to people who are free from such faults, for the public is inherently clean and decent, and when given an opportunity to show its preference, has an unerring instinct for choosing that which comes nearest its own ideals. Smith could not have gone through the recent searching campaign without having the light thrown on any dark spots in his career, or without having his weaknesses paraded before the public. The fact that there were no dark spots found nor weaknesses uncovered proves that his private life has been as clean and as wholesome as that of the man who defeated him. Judging by the record we find that Smith is as fine, as upright and as honorable a man as Hoover. And yet I placed my bets upon my convictions that the people of the United States never would elect a man like Smith president when there was available a man like Hoover. I was convinced that the good taste that the majority of the public demands would not be a feature of the Smith campaign, and that it would be the chief feature of that conducted on behalf of his opponent. Those who listened to the final broadcasts from New York on the eve of election had the spirits of both campaigns summed up for them. For three-quarters of an hour a program that never mentioned Hoover was conducted with the dignity that we would expect from its sponsors, after which Hoover spoke for twelve minutes, not about himself, but about the duty of the citizens to vote. We were told that he was speaking from his library in which he was surrounded by his family. For the next hour we listened to a Smith program from Carnegie Hall in New York. While the preceding broadcast was dignified and impressive, this one was common and blatant. Smith spoke at length strictly about himself, and Irving Berlin, in an irritating and rasping voice, sang an exceedingly silly song dedicated to Al Smith, a vocal effort that stripped the Democratic campaign of the last vestige of its claim to dignity and which must have cost Smith at least one million votes. Next day it was demonstrated that the people as a whole favor that which reflects the best taste. Ever since I have been writing about the screen I have pleaded the cause of good taste in pictures. It looks to me as if good taste is a marketable proposition. Hoover sold it to the nation.

* * *

What Industry Needs Is Dose
of Introspective Stock-Taking

What always has been a weakness of the film industry is its inability to think clearly, its lack of ability to appreciate its own frailties and to apply to them the thought necessary for their correction. That the recent presidential election presented a situation that anyone could out-think was my contention from the first. My few bets will testify to the view I took of it, and there are a score or more of my friends who can vouch for the fact that while I presented no arguments which they deemed to have weight, I never for a moment, in conversations with them, would admit that Smith had a chance to achieve anything except the worst beating ever given a candidate. The only argument that I could advance to support my claim was my confidence in the public’s appreciation of good taste. The same reasoning can be applied to the lack of good taste in pictures. Even before the Literary Digest, as recorded elsewhere in this issue, devoted a page to the reproduction of Spectator arguments against screen vulgarities, various papers throughout the country had commented on articles which I had written on the subject, and since the Digest gave the matter national prominence, the clippings that have been forwarded to me have been of such volume and of such tenor as would indicate that huge close-ups of kisses really have very few friends. During the entire progress of the presidential campaign I did not read one article that approached the matter from the same angle that I did.
nor did I find one among my friends who was not convinced that I was crazy. No one started me along my line of thinking. Similarly, no one started me off on a campaign against screen vulgarities as typified by disgusting kisses, yet it has grown to be one that is awakening sympathetic interest throughout the country. This brings me to the point that I have been approaching along a path that I am afraid you have been considering as one strewn with self laudation: If I could see a menace to pictures in the vulgarities they present, why couldn’t those who make the pictures see the same thing without any urging from the outside? Introspective stock-taking never has been a habit of the film industry, yet it is a habit without which no industry can acquire permanent stability and achieve its potential prosperity. This inability to think constructively about itself and act constructively on what it discovers, is costing the industry many millions of dollars every year and still there is no sign anywhere that a change is impending. Although pictures are costing twice what they should, I know of no producer who is making any move to reform his methods and bring the cost down to what it ought to be. Although any producer should be able to sit in one of his projection rooms and see the vulgarity in a gigantic close-up of a kiss that is to be part of a picture bearing his trademark, he permits its inclusion, and because the picture makes a profit he attributes part of its success to its vulgar content, and is totally unable to grasp the fact that his product made money in spite of the vulgarity, and not on account of it. The talking pictures that we have had thus far would indicate that all the faults of their silent predecessors that gradually were emptying the seats of the film theatres of the country, are to be carried over to become a blight upon the new art. If the industry were possessed of a mentality that could measure its weakness, if it had the introspective faculty to determine what is the matter with its insides, it would discover and discard the mistakes that contributed to the growing unpopularity of its old products, and would make its new products conform to a pattern based on a greater knowledge of what the public has grown to dislike. The first thing that it would discover it must do would be that it no longer should apply practically the same treatment to every picture—the endless parade of close-ups that are used to cover the incompetence of directors, the camera-consciousness that all the groups suggest, the unimaginative clinch fade-out with which all pictures end—. You may finish the list.

* * *

Shouldn’t Forget That We Still Are Doing Business at Old Stand

FROM the Exhibitors Herald & Motion Picture World, in course of a discussion of the possibilities of sound: "Home Towners demonstrates that a stage play can be reproduced on the screen with much of the same fidelity and force of the stage play itself." Well, what of it? I have no doubt that with the aid of sound devices we could reproduce the interior of a boiler factory with all the fidelity and force of the original; or that we could demonstrate that the screen could repeat a lecture on the prevention and cure of hog cholera without losing any of the impressiveness that attended its original delivery, but I don’t see that those of us whose chief interest lies in motion pictures are interested in either stage plays, boiler factories or diseases of hogs. What interests us is the degree of sincerity, impressiveness and entertainment that can be added to motion pictures by making the characters on the screen talk. The fact that the characters can talk in no way alters the other fact that we are still in the motion picture business, which is not a business of putting stage plays on the screen, nor is it a business to be conducted by stage directors, stage writers or stage actors. It is a business, however, that always has displayed an enormous aptitude for making an ass of itself, and it could not be expected to confront the situation presented by sound without again demonstrating its weak mass mentality. The major part of its activity now ignores what it has learned during the past thirty years, and it has become a stage-door Johnnie. It is being ruled again by its inferiority complex, and it would rather take an unsuccessful New York play as the subject for a picture than risk its money on an original story upon which no one outside the industry has passed judgment. Perhaps the most bewildering stupidity is that demonstrated by those producers who are proceeding on the theory that now that we have talking on the screen there is no need for screen acting. Filling casts with stage actors on the assumption that their voices are important is about as silly as asking an osteopath to fill a tooth on the assumption that while he has been massaging back muscles he must have picked up some knowledge of dentistry, reason that would have some merit only if there were no dentists available. No stage actor is bringing anything to Hollywood that could not be found in abundance on Hollywood Boulevard before he left New York. The stage actor is not equipped to either talk or act on the screen. In Noah’s Ark Noah Beery goes back to his early training and speaks his lines exactly as he would speak them on the stage, with the result that his characterization loses its force and conviction when he talks, and becomes as artificial as stage characterization must be. In Interference the lines are spoken with both force and conviction because they were made parts of screen characterization and were not reminiscent of stage elocution. In spite of direction that seems to have concerned itself more with voice reproduction than with motion picture technic, it is apparent that the members of Interference cast were governed in speaking their lines by what the screen had taught them of naturalness, and in no way were influenced by memories of stage technic. However, in spite of what they might learn from this Paramount production, most of the producers seem to be proceeding on...
The theory that the advent of sound has relegated screen art to the background and that motion pictures hereafter must be patterned after stage productions. It is a folly that the industry will outgrow, but not, however, until it as proven a most costly one, and one that has done talking pictures great harm. It has brought screen art to a standstill at a time that should mark its greatest stride forward. It has instituted a revolution at a time when no evolution was necessary. Screen art had reached its most advanced stage when it was handed something that could carry it along the road to greater achievement, but it has chosen to forsake the road and to strike out in another direction that can lead only to artistic retrogression.

* * *

Jannings Is Magnificent in Latest Paramount Picture

The performance which Emil Jannings contributes to Sins of the Fathers is not as colorful as the inspired one he gives in The Patriot. The new picture is set in kitchens, cheap saloons and bootleg circles; the other had a palace for its setting, royal rainment and glittering baubles to decorate it, and armies of marching soldiers to serve as background. Ludwig Berger, a German who never had made a picture in this country, was given the distinctly American Sins of the Fathers by Paramount and has done a beautiful job with it. Before passing final judgment I would like to see both pictures again, but at the present moment, fresh from the Berger production, I am inclined to the opinion that in the bootleg yarn Jannings gives even a finer performance than he did in the Russian picture. In any event, the two performances prove him to be a magnificent actor, a truly great artist who is equally convincing when as a waiter he carries his tray along a corridor, and when as a ruler he mounts his throne. The Berger picture permits Jannings a wide range of expression. We discover him as a contented waiter rejoicing in the birth of a son, and follow him to prosperous heights, into prison, and back to his waiting job. We can see the gradual hardening of his face and his whole personality changing with the successive changes in his circumstances. There is a tremendous range of expression between his half-drunk waiter in a paper hat carousing in a beer hall, and his distracted father realizing that his son has become blind through drinking bootleg liquor manufactured by the father, and from the prosperous and alert bootlegger to the aged and broken convict. And through all his joys and sorrows, while he is showering affection on his son or turning out bootleg liquor, he never quite loses our sympathy. He makes us grasp his point of view, something that all actors should do, but which few can. Berger's intelligent direction was a great help to the star. This man whom the Fox organization let go without making a picture, unquestionably is one of the best equipped directors in the business. He is a story-teller. His narrative runs along swiftly but smoothly from the first scene to the last, and there is no resort to those weird camera angles that used to be the trademarks of foreign directors. The chief characteristic of Berger's direction is the intelligence it displays. Not one character is introduced in close-up. In the opening sequence, a particularly effective restaurant, corridor and kitchen, Jannings is but one of the many waiters, and while the atmosphere is being built up, he is deemed to be of no more importance than any of the others. When, however, the story begins to point to him, we are given a closer shot in order that we can become better acquainted with him. Many times in The Spectator I have advocated this treatment. Throughout the entire picture Berger does not introduce one close-up that is not justified. When two people belong in a scene, both of them are shown, as always should be the case. I commend Sins of the Fathers to those American directors who use close-ups to veil their weaknesses. This picture introduces Ruth Chatterton to us. The young woman has come among us to stay. She has a peculiar part, as the whole story could be told without her, but she contributes a gem of a performance that matches Jannings' in artistic finish even though Miss Chatterton is not allowed much latitude in showing us what she can do. That most versatile of all screen actresses, Zasu Pitts, has a short part. The fact that we do not see her on the screen more frequently is a sad reflection on the intelligence of those who make pictures. Barry Norton plays the bootlegger's son, and the part is one to which he is suited admirably. In the scene in which he goes blind and the father discovers it, both Norton and Jannings are great. Matthew Betz gives a fine performance, and Jean Arthur, Jack Ludens, and some younger who plays Norton as a boy, round out a fine production.

* * *

Erich Pommer Sends Us Over An Entirely Satisfactory Picture

Erich Pommer, one of the world's outstanding picture geniuses whom Hollywood did not appreciate sufficiently to keep here when it had the opportunity, has sent us a picture from Germany, Homecoming, which compares most favorably with the best we can do in the way of production, acting, photography and direction. Pommer, who has more international successes to his credit than any other supervising producer, demonstrated before he came over here that he was one of screen art's few real masters. If he increased his knowledge while he was here, he applied it to his own way of making pictures instead of allowing it to revolutionize his methods. The opening sequence of Homecoming is reminiscent in its treatment of the first scenes of Hotel Imperial, the first picture he made here for Paramount. The desolation and bleakness of the country in which the two war prisoners around whom the story revolves, are brought out graphically by the use of distorted, leafless trees in the foreground, through the dead looking branches of which the landscape is photographed. In other shots we see the same locale, covered with a low fog into which the men descend when they set out on their adventure of escape. The technical perfection of these scenes and the quality of the photography should make Hollywood jealous. In estimating the values of a German-made picture it is not fair to it to look at it only through American eyes, as it was made primarily for its domestic market and if it was successful in pleasing its immediate public it cannot be condemned if it fails to supply all that we demand in our screen entertainment. Homecoming is too long to satisfy completely my personal tastes, and the tempo is too slow in scenes that are not sufficiently dramatic to warrant the footage the slowness of the action consumes. The story is a variation of the Enoch Arden theme: the hus-
band is recaptured when he and his comrade are endeavoring to escape; the friend gets through, reaches home, and falls in love with the wife of the man for whom he almost sacrificed his own life. The story reaches the peak of its drama when we discover that the friend and the wife love one another. Prior to this discovery I think it should move faster than it does to bring us more promptly to its more engrossing stage when slow tempo is more permissible. The husband returns home while the friend and the wife are out. We see them returning, and we anticipate a dramatic encounter when they reach the apartment in which we have seen them living together in a respectable manner. Pomer builds up suspense by having the camera follow the two every step of the way while they mount three flights of stairs. Another effective travelling shot takes us along the entire route that one of the men takes from his ship to the apartment. There is but one example of those composite shots that we used to regard as the foreign trademark. The friend and the wife are sleeping on opposite sides of a partition, and filmly superimposed shots acquaint us with the thoughts of both in a distinctly striking manner. For Hollywood an interesting feature of Homecoming will be the appearance in it of Dita Parlo, whose performance earned her a trip from Germany to Hollywood and a contract with Paramount. She is a beautiful girl, an accomplished actress, and if the difficulty of language is not a too great handicap, she should prove a good investment. Lars Hansen, whose performance in Captain Salvation is one of my pleasant screen memories, is the husband in Homecoming, who eventually returns to the sea, leaving his wife to his friend. He gives a splendid performance of a serious role. The friend is played by Gustav Froehlich, and it surprises me that Paramount did not send for him also. He is an intelligent, convincing artist. It is seldom that we turn out in Hollywood a picture as good as Homecoming. It is not screen fare for morons. It will appeal to the mezzobrows, and from there up, for it has much in it to interest those who view screen offerings intelligently. I don't know how our audiences will react to the ending, which shows the husband relinquishing his wife to his friend. No other ending was possible if the degree of intelligence that distinguishes the production throughout its course was to be continued to the fade-out. But you can't always sell intelligence.

* * *

Panning Dick Jones and Then Telling Him That He Made a Good Picture

MARY Brian and Buddy Rogers climb to the top of a hill while on a picnic jaunt in Someone to Love, a title that would fit practically all the motion pictures ever made. The fact that they have no breath left is shown by the director, F. Richard Jones, in an exceedingly long shot. Later in another shot just as long, we are told exactly where the young people would like to place the piano in the dream house they would build on the top of the hill. Judging by the rest of the picture, it is fair to assume that these sequences would have been treated in close-ups if it had been possible to squeeze the business within narrow camera lines. This not being possible we are fortunate in having the scenes presented to us exactly as they should be. Later, when she reaches home, Mary tells her father that when Buddy asked her to marry him, "I whispered 'yes', but I felt like yelling it right out loud." Mary need have no misgivings. The director yelled it right out loud, vulgarly and blatantly, by means of a huge close-up of the betrothal kiss. Because he could not help himself, he brought out all the values of the picnic and piano-placing scenes by showing them in long shots, but when he came to something so delicate that, as the title intimates, it should be whispered, he takes all the tenderness out of it, all the beauty of the boy-and-girl romance, and presents his betrothal scene as all other directors have presented them and for the sole reason that it is the way that all other directors present them. At the beginning of this year I said I would present a gold medal to the director who shot the best love scene of the year, and I have not seen one for which I would present the pin that keeps a medal on. In Someone to Love Jones had the setting, the sentiment and a couple of attractive and talented players at hand, all the ingredients required for the ideal love scene, and all he shows us are lips clinging to each other. And Dick Jones does another thing of which he should be ashamed; he fades out finally on another kiss. It is the standard fade-out to which not the slightest trace of intelligence need be applied. In fact, if any thought were applied to it, it would be fatal, for no director who gives thought to his final fade-out possibly could give us one of that sort. Now, having panned Dick quite enough for one paragraph, I would like to remark that he has made a nice little picture of Someone to Love, a clean, jolly little thing with a pleasing atmosphere, well dressed people, and in good taste all the way through except for the undue intimacy of the camera, a fault that can not be ascribed either to the story or to the acting. And I don't think the things of which I complain will affect the picture greatly at the box-office. If people stayed away from pictures that contained too many close-ups they would see about one a year. But the abuse of close-ups undoubtedly was one of the factors that contributed to the alarming falling off in attendance prior to the advent of sound—not because of the fact that they were close-ups, but because their uniform treatment made pictures monotonously alike. In Someone to Love Rogers has a part that suits him admirably, a light but vigorous part that presents him as a charming American boy. I have spoken already of my high appreciation of Mary Brian's acting. It is a far cry from her dramatic role in The Big Killing to her romantic flutterings in Someone to Love, but she is equally at home in both parts. William Austin, Jack Oakie, Mary Alden, James Kirkwood and Frank Reicher round out an excellent cast. The picture is a remake of Charm School and is going to give general satisfaction, despite all the nasty things I have said about it.

* * *

Doug MacLean Wants to Get Most of Sue Carol's Earnings

O back a little way: Douglas MacLean was induced to engage Sue Carol to play opposite him in Soft Cushions. She was a girl with no serious thoughts of a screen career, and the idea appealed more to her sense of humor than to any artistic or commercial sense. Her first contact with the material aspect of the adventure was when MacLean told her that to get the Soft Cushions part she would have to sign a contract placing herself in hi
ands for a period of five years. He assured her that it merely was the usual routine of getting such a part. She said that she supposed that it was all right, but that she knew nothing about contracts and would like to consult her mother before signing anything. That would not suit Mr. MacLean; she must sign there and then or lose her part. The privilege of playing opposite such a great star was a rare one, it was pointed out to her, and she would lose it if she insisted upon carrying the contract about for anyone to read. And again she was assured that there was nothing unusual about the matter, that all girls secured their first parts in that way. Sue signed. A clause provided virtually that if she made a hit in *Soft Cushions* he contract bound her; if she proved a failure, it did not bind MacLean. At the end of any six-month period MacLean could drop her, but she could not free herself from him until the end of the five-year period. MacLean risked neither money nor judgment in the transaction. He secured a leading woman for one hundred dollars a week, and if he proved a success he could get that much money back by renting her out for two or three times what he had to pay her. Sue Carol's personality appealed to the public. Almost overnight she became a great favorite. She has an extraordinary personality whose dominant note is niceness. She is in demand by producers—and they must deal with MacLean. Already she is worth, and he is paid, several times what she draws from him. She merely is a hattel to rent out for what she will bring. Some individual producers have players under contract to assure them being available when they are wanted for their employers' pictures. Not so MacLean. He doesn't use Sue Carol in its own pictures. He can rent her out for several times what he need pay someone else to play opposite him. If he wants a new suit of clothes, Sue need work only a day or two and earn it for him. If he wants a new car, a few weeks of Sue sweating before a camera on a stuffy set, or shivering through night work on location, will earn it for him. He risked nothing—took no chances—invested no money—spent no time in teaching her anything—but for the next four years, if the courts uphold him, the golf balls he uses will be paid for by her labor, the suppers he serves his friends will represent hours she spends on sets, and he can laugh at a dollar lost at poker because he can get it back from Sue. Rich already, and with a princely income, he snarls his way into court to fight for the extra dollars that this girl's labor will bring him. Like Shylock, he has but one argument: "It is so nominated in the bond!"

A contract that outrages all sense of fairplay and decency may be legal, and perhaps the courts will present Sue Carol with the alternative of leaving the screen or keeping Douglas MacLean for the next four years. I would have no quarrel with this if she had been told frankly in the first place what she was signing, if she had not been given to understand that it was the only way in which a girl could get a part, or if MacLean had contributed anything, no matter how little, to the success of her career. Nor am I interested in it as a personal matter between the two of them. I regard it as a reflection upon the motion picture industry which tolerates such practices. MacLean claims that he has made but little money out of the contract. Why, in God's name, should he make any? And, as for the truth of his statement, will he permit me to appoint an accountant to examine his books? He may accept that as a challenge.

* * *

From the Literary Digest of November 10th: "The excitement over the prospect of hearing the movies talk hasn't dealt much with the problem of what they will say. We have worried, as have the actors themselves not a little, about how they will say it, but what—that has been neglected. When crucial scenes come on the silent screen even the continuity writer is silent. The climax of the love-scene is that guilping kiss, and the preliminary instant in each case seems to give evidence that the lovers intend to swallow each other. It is a relief to see some of these features of the film drama discussed at last in The Film Spectator (Hollywood), and it is not less interesting to see that the words proceed from The Spectator's 'eighteen-year-old critic,' Donald Beaton, who treats the subject with vigor." The Digest proceeds to quote Donald at length, and devotes the remainder of one of its valuable pages to quoting my remarks about the vulgarity that is injected into screen love scenes. Estimating on the basis of its circulation, The Digest has at least five million readers. It has not gained this great number by publishing what it deems the public ought to know. It has become one of the world's greatest publication successes because it gives the public what it wants. It would not devote an entire page to quotations from such an obscure little paper as The Spectator if it did not know that the quotations dealt with a subject that would be received with favor by the public. In other words, The Digest knows that its readers are fed up on vulgar kisses, and it pleases its readers by quoting from a publication that has put into words the thoughts of these Digest readers. And in still other words, if The Digest did not know that The Spectator's criticisms were sound, that the evil complained of is a real one, it would not devote one inch, much less one page, of its space to a discussion of it.

* * *

ALEXANDER Korda directed Night Watch with rare intelligence, succeeding in making it one of the most enjoyable pictures I have seen for some time. The story formula is interesting. One difficulty that is encountered when a story is told in cut-backs is telling the story convincingly under the handicap of being forced to tell only that part of it that could be known to the person from whom the cut is made. For instance, A, in giving testimony in court, cannot repeat a conversation that took place between B and C when A was not present. Night Watch gets away from this difficulty cleverly. Billie Dove takes the stand at the naval court martial of her husband.
on the charge of murder. She says there are those present in the room who can round out her story; she names them, and they surround her while she gives her evidence. When the recital reaches a scene in which she did not appear, we presume it is being carried on by those who were a party to it. Korda uses the camera in the trial scene in a highly effective manner. It might be the eye of a spectator that roves all over the room, resting for a moment on those whose connection with the case makes them interesting. First National has placed its gorgeous Billie in an impressive setting in this picture, providing a production of both pictorial and dramatic value, and Korda fills it with clever touches. We have a shot of Paul Lukas listening to something, and superimposed on the shot is a scene showing what he hears—his wife leaving him and closing the door behind her. That Korda understands the use of groups instead of close-ups as aids to drama, is apparent throughout the picture. Another good touch is the omission to tell the audience the verdict reached by the court-martial. We see Lukas being congratulated by his friends and we know all about it. Miss Dove, Lukas, Nicholas Soussanin and Donald Reed contribute excellent performances to what is altogether an exceedingly satisfactory picture.

* * *

An interesting method is resorted to by Erich Pommer, who produced the Ufa picture Homecoming, to add impressiveness to the sacrifice made in the last sequence when the husband goes to sea and leaves his wife to his friend, with whom she fell in love when the husband was a prisoner of war. An early title acquainted us with the fact that the husband relinquished the sea to please his wife. Now he is going back to it, still loving his wife. We see the officer on the bridge order the lines cast off; we see Lars Hansen, the husband, repeat the order to men on the dock; we see the lines cast off—and we continue to see each of the score of things that are done when a liner is pulling out. With each bit of action the finality of the sacrifice of the husband becomes impressed upon us more. It is a display of picture intelligence that we could expect from Pommer. Homecoming was directed by Joe May, but bears the unmistakable mark of Pommer all the way through.

* * *

When sound is applied generally to pictures there will be no age limit for screen lovers. Heretofore the screen has been trying to make us believe that romances were the exclusive possessions of people in their early twenties, and this in spite of the fact that precious few people of that tender age have any ability to act part of a romance convincingly. When our players talk, however, we are going to be permitted to learn that occasionally older people fall in love, and when the older people enact their love scenes we should have some that realize all the tenderness, sweetness and romance that such scenes must have to make them true to life—that is, we may obtain such results if directors can be persuaded to allow experienced players to enact them in their own way. I understand that Irene Rich and Richard Tucker are to carry the romance in a picture to be made shortly. Somehow or other I can't quite imagine them enacting a love scene in exactly the same way as Clara Bow and Jimmie Hall, say, would enact one, but I am sure their method of handling it will be a refreshing departure that will retain the sentimental quality that love scenes should possess.

* * *

Among the medals which The Spectator will offer for worthy film accomplishments during 1928 probably will be a pair for every couple of screen people who become engaged or marry without supplying the papers with photographs of them kissing one another.

GARNERED IN THE MAIL

I congratulate you upon the able manner in which you accepted the producers' challenge to outline your method of instituting production reforms. You presented your case brilliantly, but have you taken into account, in advocating the preparation of stories one year in advance, that styles in stories change, and that a story prepared this year might not be the kind of story the public will be looking for next year?

A. J. B.

A good story made into a good picture is never out of date. The reason a given kind of story ceases to interest the public when presented in a picture, is the poor manner in which it is told. Producers create a vogue for a certain kind of picture, and kill the vogue by the many inferior imitations of the picture that scored the first success. But it is good business for producers to follow the current trend, which makes A. J. B.'s question pertinent. However, the trend would not change enough during the time that would elapse under my production plan between the preparation of a story and its production to affect seriously its success as a picture. It takes a few years for the mind of the public to complete its turnover, and the vogue for one kind of screen entertainment dissolve slowly into the one that is to succeed it. During the transition period a good picture along either line will have no box-office worries. But to my mind, the way to make money producing pictures is to forget vogue, box-office and everything else except the particular picture in course of production at the moment. Any great picture will establish its own vogue.

The directors who have given the best they have to motion pictures for years should be grateful to you for the manner in which you have criticized producers for bringing in stage directors from the East to take the jobs of those who brought the silent drama up to the place where sound found it. I, for one, thank you.

A DIRECTOR.

Directors had better restrain themselves when they feel any wild urge to thank me. Taken by and large, directors have a lower mental average than the personnel of any other branch engaged in the making of pictures. Only a handful of them know what it is about. I think this correspondent would have come nearer the truth if he had said that our present directors brought the silent drama down, instead of up, to the place where sound found it. The advancement of any art has been brought

PAT ROONEY and MARION BENT

are among the highest salaried comedy entertainers—headline features on any bill. While active as a vaudeville author, it was my privilege to write two very successful acts for them.

JAMES MADISON

Originals — Adaptations — Titles — Dialogue
323 North Citrus Ave., Los Angeles
Orreg 5627
January 1, 1928

THE FILM SPECTATOR

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about the fact that each of its products has been a separate creation, on account of the lack of intelligence on the part of directors, each product of screen art has not been a separate creation. The patrons of the art were forsaking it because pictures became monotonously alike. Not more than one in two score of them contained a suggestion of a new thought, and it is only on new thought that any art thrives. I have opposed the importation of stage directors on principle, for I think it is of importance to us to remember that we are still in the motion picture business and have not been taken over by the stage, but at the same time I can not see from where producers are going to get enough directors with sufficient intelligence to handle talking pictures as they should be handled. Heretofore the stupidest director had the cutting-room to rely upon to help him make a good picture. With talking pictures, intelligence much more is played than all the time shooting that is needed. That is what is going to make it tough for most of the directors we have now.

There is another thing, a little difficult to explain, but very irritating on the screen. I saw it exemplified in Jolson's Singing Fool—all the more noticeable in an otherwise perfect picture. His little boy is dying. He arrives at the hospital trembling with agitation and opens the door. It is a small room and the bed with the boy in it is right in front of him. Does he make one dash to the bed? Certainly not. Says the director: "Get suspense!" So he stands motionlessly at the door—eyes wide open, with an agonized expression, then, my God! He sees the bed! Hah! He sees the child!... And the rest goes on all right. It is the same when a person receives an important letter or telegram—one that he has been expecting with impatience, as it means life or death to him or his hopes. The message arrives; and he brandishes it to the actor. Does he snatch it, tear it open and devour the contents at once? Oh, no,—nothing like that. He invariably looks at the person who has given him the letter—a long, bewildered stare—then his eyes travel north, south, east and west before he glances down and sees to his surprise that he is holding the letter. Then the light dawns in his mind: "I, the audience is not spared any of the dawning—"Hah! I will open the letter," Which he does to everyone's relief and to
my own private and particular rage.

—An Admirable and Constant Reader.

If Constant Reader has read my comments on the note from a Director, she can fix the responsibility for the stupidities of which she complains. No director knows why he makes an action drop into the eyes of another actor who hands him an important letter. It always is done, and that is enough for the average director. Nor can any director tell you why A, when entering a room in search of B, does not make a quick survey of the room and spot B, but instead, looks elaborately in every direction except the right one, and then, by a process of visual elimination, finally discovers B directly in front of him. At which he shakes himself violently, looks astounded, extends his arms and then hops off in the direction of B. These utterly ridiculous things are variations of follies which the screen inherited from the stage, and the fact that practically all our directors use them is one of the reasons why I have a poor opinion of the mentality of directors as a class. Of course, not all the stupidities in a given picture are blamable on the director. There are producers and supervisors who can see no virtue in anything that is not done as it always has been done since the first man did it. They remind me of the hens on Uncle Will's farm. When I used to visit the farm as a boy, Uncle Will had a dog, Rover, whose chief duty it was to chase the hens out of the vegetable garden. Soon the hens learned to wait for the dog; then they would call, "Rover!" they would beat it. That was over forty years ago. To-day on the same farm, when the hens get into the vegetable garden, someone calls "Rover!" and they scurry through or over the fence. They don't know why they do it, and because they have no greater reasoning faculties than the average motion picture director, they never will find out why.

I hope you will turn out to be a false prophet in predicting that Vitaphone short subjects will take
the place of the prologues which have hitherto been a feature of Mr. Grauman's theatres. My contention is that we can see these Vitaphone comedies any day for a very moderate price of admission, but there is only one Chinese theatre. (The Carthay Circle apparently having abandoned stage shows as part of their program.) With the exception of Robert Benchly and Edward Everett Horton, I have found these Vitaphone comedians very third rate. Surely you do not seriously mean to suggest that a couple of vaudeville comedians acting funny in front of a camera and a microphone can take the place of the gorgeous tableaux which preceded and formed a perfect atmosphere of King of Kings? And what of the waste of the possibilities of the magnificent stage at the Chinese, second largest in the city, I believe?

ROBERT S. SHILLAKER.

Mr. Shillaker makes the same mistake that nearly all of my correspondents make in their letters to me about sound pictures. He seems to think that audible screen art already has progressed as far as it is going to. When I stated it as my opinion that the Grauman prologues some day would be presented on the screen instead of on the stage, I did not mean to say that the stage would be made until there was available screen entertainment that matched in quality the stage entertainment that hitherto has been provided. All my enthusiasm for sound is based on the promise given in what we have seen already, and I have accepted nothing that I have seen yet as more than a suggestion of what we will see in the future. As to the waste of the Chinese stage—that will be more than offset by the saving that sound pictures will effect. One feature of all industrial progress is the process of scrapping equipment that has been outgrown. It is waste that is absorbed by the greater earnings of the new development. No one can bemoan the passing of anything that is succeeded by something better.

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AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By Donald Beaton—The Spectator's 18-Year-Old Critic

THERE was a time when any German made picture brought shrieks of ecstasy from everyone connected with the industry, due to what was supposed to be their artistry. However, that time has passed; and American pictures are far better than anything Germany has to offer, judging from Homecoming, which is supposed to be the best German effort to emerge from that country. All I can say is that the Germans must be patient people who must have everything explained plainly for them, and who can't understand subtlety. No American audience would stand the nine reels which were used to tell five of the story, nor could it sit through all the careful explanations of what it was all about. The Germans must be a peculiar people, anyway. In this country, if a man comes home and discovers his best friend living with his wife, he picks up a chair and bounces it on the friend's cranium; but the man in this picture just sat around heavily and moaned. Then he departed and got a job on a ship, leaving his wife to the friend. True, he nearly shot the friend, but after due deliberation, he changed his mind. In a situation like that the tendency is to shoot and think afterwards. All this was put over in a series of uninteresting closeups which made the picture drag like a travelogue. It wouldn't have been so bad if the picture had told the story swiftly and concisely, and had been only five reels long; but the way it was, it would have worn out any audience.

Foreign made pictures have to be very good to go over at all in America because the temperaments of the people are so different that what seems natural to the one is abnormal to the other. Action is the only thing understood by both nations, and there wasn't any of that in Homecoming. There were just a lot of close-ups showing them trying to put over some emotion or other. It was quite difficult to know what they meant.

The cast of Homecoming. The latest foreign importation, Dita Parlo, was one of them. I will admit that she is somewhat better than most of the Europeans, but there are hundreds of girls right here in Hollywood who are far better than she. They can speak English, too, which is a consideration now. Lars Hansen, whose soul or something was revolted by the way the actress played the man who wasn't a member of the cast. No sour grapes, but we haven't lost much. His emotions are a bit too obscure for my obtuseness. The other member of the cast was a man with an unpronounceable and unrememberable name, but he put it all over the rest of them when it came to acting. He was good.

Joe May handled the direction, which probably makes him responsible for all the slowness. He must be given credit, though, for the way he used his camera at times. Why he put in trick shots which were good and speeded up the action, and then threw away all he had gained by a lot of stupid closeups is a mystery. Germany isn't going to be America's great rival if this is the best it can do.

The latest stupidity to be committed by the motion picture moguls is the feverish singing of stage people to play in sound pictures, when there are so many picture trained actors who could do just as well. A motion picture actor who knows a lot about the mechanics of acting before the camera and nothing about stage stuff is far more valuable than the man who has never been filmed before, but has done work before the footlights, because the art of acting in talking pictures is something absolutely new, and it is far easier to teach someone something than to make him forget the training of a lifetime. Picture people will soon pick up the art of speaking for the microphone, but it will take much longer for the stage actors to unlearn everything they have known for years. Another popular but mistaken idea is to make up for pantomime, thereby making everything but the knowledge of correct speech unnecessary. The main fault with Interference was that it was nothing but a camera view of a stage play, and didn't realize its opportunities as an exponent of an absolutely new and different art. Sound pictures are going to reach their ultimate and can't ultimately be bound by the tell-all, necessary to the telling of the story to a minimum. Therefore, trained screen actors are going to be the important people; because of the two qualities vital to sound pictures, which are a knowledge of film technique and the ability to speak dialogue, the picture training is the most important.

Stage people will have to learn to tone down their voices and not make their emotions quite so robust as they do when appearing before an audience which is a little way from them. Sound pictures bring the actors so close to the people viewing them that the stage calmnesses are too actoarish. An actor before the footlights has a tendency to throw his voice out as much as possible, while sound pictures demand that they be so far removed from the people to hold themselves back in the dramatic moments; but a picture actor, who is trained just for the talkers, will experience no difficulty, because it will be the thing to which he is used.

Incidentally, while this rush is going on, some producer will do very well if he goes down and takes a look at the work of Stanley Taylor, who is playing in Nightingale the differential offering at The President. Taylor does a scene which is masterly due to the suppression and feeling in it, and makes it the outstanding thing in the play. He has done good work in small parts on the screen for a long time, but never has seemed to get a break. Whoever gets him is going to be glad of it later, when the public signifies at the box-office its approval of his talent. I am not going to make the assumption of comparing the two, but it is going to be far more profitable if Jannings were given more stories on the order of that of The Patriot, where he had plenty of support. Also, I think he ought to essay some comedy, which he could do splendidly. In spite of the old story, Sins of the Fathers is a good picture, though it drops in spots. Ludwig Berger directed with intelligence and cleverness, his work saving the scene from dullness. The whole effort might have been speeded up by the elimination of a lot of scenes which weren't vitally necessary to the development of the story, and the big moments didn't seem to click as they should have. There were some intensely dramatic scenes which didn't realize their opportunities, and left one with a rather unsatisfied feeling. However, much to my gratification, they didn't put on any mind numbing sentimentalities which we used to get by a Jannings picture. There was no reason why the story shouldn't have ended with everybody happy, but everyone seems to think that any picture which Jannings is in must end with him jumping in front of a truck or dying with a gizzard full of lead. One thing in particular which I liked was the fact that Barry Norton wasn't given back his sigh by a miracle or something. Things like that

WHOEVER has the job of thinking up and selecting the stories for the Emil Jannings vehicles ought to snap out of the present type, which is being done to death. I'm getting awfully sick of seeing Jannings going to wreck and ruin, even though he does it well; and I imagine that there are other people who think the same thing. The Jannings pictures are being made more and more dependent on the star himself. There is no man who can carry a whole whack of NIcholas, and it would be far more profitable if Jannings were given more stories on the order of that of The Patriot, where he had plenty of support. Also, I think he ought to essay some comedy, which he could do splendidly. In spite of the old story, Sins of the Fathers is a good picture, though it drops in spots. Ludwig Berger directed with intelligence and cleverness, his work saving the scene from dullness. The whole effort might have been speeded up by the elimination of a lot of scenes which weren't vitally necessary to the development of the story, and the big moments didn't seem to click as they should have. There were some intensely dramatic scenes which didn't realize their opportunities, and left one with a rather unsatisfied feeling. However, much to my gratification, they didn't put on any mind numbing sentimentalities which we used to get by a Jannings picture. There was no reason why the story shouldn't have ended with everybody happy, but everyone seems to think that any picture which Jannings is in must end with him jumping in front of a truck or dying with a gizzard full of lead. One thing in particular which I liked was the fact that Barry Norton wasn't given back his sigh by a miracle or something. Things like that
THE NIGHT WATCH is the finest picture which Alexander Korda has done, because he has been given a story and opportunities to demonstrate how well he can handle his camera. Added to that he has fine performances from his entire cast, which is headed by Billie Dove and Paul Lukas. Though logically and intellectually he didn't mess it up with a lot of closeups, a sin he has committed with great regularity until this picture. Just why he dressed all his characters in modern clothes when the story is laid at the opening of the World War is unexplained. That's a common fault of directors, and Michael Curtiz deserves credit for not committing it in The Night Watch. The continuity performed a miracle when he made the girl get caught on the battlefield without making her an absolute idiot, as nine out of ten would have. Most writers would have had herittenishly concealing herself in one of the boilers, meaning to pop out later and surprise everybody into a state of collapse. The scene where her party caught on the departing wagons is powerful and logical. Korda has a great stunt of superimposing the figure of one of his characters upon whatever he happens to be thinking of or seeing. Thereby we are enabled to see the action and the reaction at one and the same time. It is one of the cleverest camera artifices yet employed.

All through The Night Watch the camera work is brilliant, and smoothness with which it tells its story is greatly aided by Korda's habit of pan shots rather than cuts, a thing which gives a very valuable sense of continuity and doesn't distract the attention with a lot of spasmodic jumps. The story of the picture is concerned with a woman who saves her husband from a murder charge by telling which, to say the least, doesn't do the latter any good, although she really is innocent of any wrong-doing. After the trial was over, I expected that, in accordance with motion picture traditions, her husband would have none of her after; and she would take to drink or something for a reel or two, until he saw the error of his ways. Much to my surprise, nothing like that happened, which shows that Korda has some enough to start another story in a picture where he already has completed the telling of one. The husband took her back into his heart (I ought to write romances, like Jim Tully) in what was a splendid ending.

It was highly satisfactory and another evidence that Korda is a wizard with the camera.

As I said, the acting in The Night Watch was above reproach. Billie Dove gave the finest performance she has yet to her credit, to my knowledge, at least. She was given a chance to do more than stand around ornamental, so she used it by giving a performance which was outstanding for its artistry and power. Paul Lukas has a screen personality which would have made an impression even if he couldn't do the wonderful work he did. Nicholas Soussanin, as usual, was the suave, polished menace; and Donald Reed did very well as the slightly indiscreet young lieutenant. The man who played Reed's orderly was very fine, but I couldn't get his name.

* * *

TAY Garnett in The Spieler takes one of the oldest plots yet known to man and with the aid of four fine trouper, makes a very good picture. This is the first picture of Garnett's I have seen since he was elevated to director, and I must say that he learns rapidly. There is nothing fancy about his work; he tells his story without any frills or wasted motion, something which is not yet becoming a lost art. Taking it all in all, The Spieler is a very good workman-like job; and since they are rather rare, Garnett deserves a great deal of credit. He and I never did agree about Skyscraper, which he thought was great, and which left me cold; but I think we'll agree about this one. The story is that good old standby about the girl who is trying to run her deceased father's business and about bringing in help from the underworld. The hero comes to see what he can gather from the ruins; but after eating one of her waffles, remorse or indigestion makes him reform; and he cleans out the crooks. It's pretty hard to do much of anything with a theme as old as that, particularly when it is laid in a carnival, a setting which is being nearly as much as the underworld. However, good direction and good acting will go a long way; and they made this quite good. Oh yes, before I forget, the story was so old that it even had the two roughnecks who were pal through everything. One was killed, of course.

Garnett's direction revealed that he has gained by his association with Howard Higgins on a picture or two. There is no one directing who can touch Higgins when it comes to drawing roughnecks as such, and not as made-up actors. When one of his characters makes love, he does it about as delicately as a kick from a mule, not as would the Russian prince he played in the preceding picture. Garnett has absorbed a lot of that, so his romance in The Spieler is exceedingly good and true to type. It is enacted by two of the finest trouper we have, Alan Hale and Renee Adoree. Never once do they go into the clinch prescribed by motion picture conventions, yet their love is just as powerful and far more wholesome than that purveyed by our two leading wrestlers, Gilbert and Garbo. They weren't the type for such stuff, and Garnett had some work to do.

I've only one quarrel with the direction. The heavy and his gang got away with stuff that was far too raw. He shot a man in plain view and hearing of hundreds of people, but wasn't caught. I wish I knew the secret of immunity, because there are lots of people I would like to shoot publicly.

All the praise to Hale and Miss Adoree, the cast of The Spieler contained Fred Kohler and Clyde Cook, so the roster of brilliant actors was kept intact. Hale can put over more subtle acting and still be a he-man than anybody in the business, and Miss Adoree always captures the sympathy of the audience, in addition to leading them to admire her splendid work. Kohler has an elemental courage and vigor which put him at the forefront of roughneck heavies. Cook's work was a clever blending of comedy and pathos, with not so much humor as usual. John Krafft, as usual, wrote a set of titles which were in keeping with the picture to a degree which seems to make his future as a writer of dialogue safe.
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THE FILM SPECTATOR

December 1, 1928

Reviewed in this Number

NIGHTWATCH, THE—
A First National picture. Directed by Alexander Korda; adaptation and continuity by Lajos Biró; photographed by Karl Struss; costume director, Max Ree; art director, Max Parker; edited by George McQuire.

The cast: Billie Dove, Paul Lukas, Donald Reed, Nicholas Soussanin, Anita Garvime, Gustave Partos, William Tabbert, Emmanuelle Gerperioli, Nicholas Bela.

SINS OF THE FATHERS—
A Paramount picture. Directed by Ludwig Berger; story by Norman Brentwine; adaptation and continuity by E. Lloyd Sheldon; photographed by Victor Milner; dialogue scenes directed by Roy J. Pomeroy.


SOMEONE TO LOVE—
A Pathé picture. Directed by F. Richard Jones; from the story by Alice Duc Miller; adapted by Ray Harris; screen play by Keene Thompson and Monte Brice; photographed by Allen Siegler; assistant director, Arthur Jacobson.

The cast: Charles (Buddy) Rogers, Mary Brian, William Austin, Jack Oakie, James Kirkwood, Frank Reicher.

SPIELEH, THE—
A Pathé picture. Directed by Tay Garnett; produced by Ralph Block; author, Hal Conklin; scenarists, Hal Conklin and Tay Garnett; assistant director, R. M. Fellows; production manager, Harry H. Poppe; photographed by Art Miller; art director, Edward J. Jewell; edited by Doane Harrison.

The cast: Alan Hale, Renee Adoree, Clyde Cook, Fred Kohler, Fred Warren, Jimmy Quinn, Kewpie Morgan.

THE LAUREL GROVE
By FRANK T. DAUGHTERY

FOR the nth time I have been reading an old book that has given me much food for thought. It is a book about human weal and woe, and between its covers are some of the most delightful stories it has ever been my pleasure to read. I am amazed that the movies seem hardly aware of it. I remember in particular a story that tells of two young men and of a friendship that was formed between them. One of these young men was the son of the reigning king of the land, and what his father would eat till sun down. And for this slight fault, the choler of the king was aroused and he determined in himself to put his son to
death. The ways of fathers with their sons were stranger in those days even than they are today. But the army objected, and the young man was allowed to live.

AND hardly had this matter been settled when the king's army was set in array against another invading host. And this time things looked very dark indeed for the people of the land, who had been sure up to now that their king would save them. And from one of the countrysides over against one of the mountainous districts of the land, came a young stripling from his father's humble home. His father had trained him as a soldier for three years, and in the army of the land, of whom had joined themselves to the army of the king, and with fresh cheezees for the captans of his brothers' companies. And as very often happened in great battles of those days, about this time the enemy sent out a champion between the lines to challenge the best warrior the king's army could send against him.

So the king offered one of his daughters to whoever would undertake to slay this champion. And this young stripling was hotly denounced by his brothers, who called him a bragging country bumpkin or something and tried to send him home after the manner of brothers everywhere; but the king had heard the words of the stripling, and they pleased him, and he sent him out to fight the challenger.

And in a very short while the stripling came back with his hand on his sword and set it before the king. I haven't read yet whether he got the king's daughter; but I am minded that, a little after this, the young prince and the valiant stripling chanced to meet, and when they looked at each other, the book says, they loved each other... and you don't wonder at it at all. And the name of the young prince was Jonathan, and of the country boy, David.

AND of course someone is going to take me to task and say, "Oh, you mean the Bible—but that's been done. Look at The Ten Commandments and The King of Kings!" And I will have to answer that I do mean the Bible—but that I don't by any chance mean The Ten Commandments or The King of Kings. They were all right as entertainment, but they didn't seem to me to get very much either from me or either of them. I mean the pictures, of course; not the real Ten Commandments or the real King of Kings. Those two things have guided many a civilization and many a nation and many an individual into higher planes of thought than I dare to venture very often. But that's just my complaint. Here they are. They are pretentious in seven reels and in two hours, while the rest of the world has spent upwards of six thousand years learning and pondering. Why, any one of the Ten Commandments, or any one of the acts of the King of Kings ought to make a movie—ought to make a hundred movies. Somehow, both these pictures seemed just as preposterous to me as if some movie producer should attempt to make a history of the universe—seven reels. And maybe that should be more adequately handled... ** * *

BUT in the Old Testament and in the New, are stories of transcending charm and far-reaching import, which could be made into pictures very nicely. And very profitably, too. Think what a pastoral the story of Ruth would make. Beginning with the tragedy the Israelites suffered at the hands of the Amalechites, and ending with the golden harvests in the land where "th' people" shall have become "my people", and with the marriage of Boaz to Ruth. Such stories are not, strictly speaking, sermons. They do not ram a moral down your throat and then seal it there with a lot of self-righteous preachers, as so many of us do when we try to tell a story with a moral. They tell as simple narratives of events not so much as a hair's breadth from their originals, they stand in their own right as great and noble histories of the race. Does
some producer think he will be taking a chance because they are "religious"? But who can they offend? If the preachers, then the preachers do not believe their own Book. And if the public—then the fault will not be with the stories, but with the way they are produced.

SAFARI, A Saga of the African Blue, by Mr. Martin Johnson (G. P. Putnam & Sons) I stopped reading when I came to the place where Mr. Johnson tells how he and Mrs. Johnson are going to remain for the rest of their lives in Africa beside a lake of ultramarine blue called "Passajeros". There was a picture of the lake. You can call it jealousy if you like. Anyhow, it's much easier to see Mr. Johnson's pictures, with pretty Mrs. Johnson in them, than it is to read his prose.

E. Scoggins' White Fox (Bobbs-Merrill Co.) is another of his Saturday Evening Post stories got out in book form for those who care to keep him permanently on the shelf. I number myself among these.

THERE is something about a young man setting out to seek his fortune that stirs even the most unromantic heart. I never fail to thrill at it. If I am seeing such a young man off, I want to slip onto his train or into his boat-birth and remove the care unknown to conductors or deck hands until we are too far from our starting point for them to throw me off. I want to forget all about duties and cares and all the homely, everyday things that hold me in bondage, and just start out again—another young man seeking his fortune, a light heart his only asset. And yet, of course, I never do. And I never do because suppose I were out that fortune-seekin' long before the average young man of today has graduated from fractions to long division. At any rate, the tender age of thirteen found me lying on my back looking up at very cold and very distant stars, while under me rumbled and shook and crashed the slow midnight freight northward bound from the coast. How thrilling! What visions I had! What dreams I dreamed! But after a while the visions and the dreams passed, and sleep which I had learned for thirteen years to expect every night, didn't come. Instead, came quakins, and wonderings, and bone-shaking cold. What would my mother think? Why hadn't I told her? Why hadn't I asked for a little money? But I won't go into all that.

Centuries later it was dawn, and the new quite horrible and terrifying freight pulled into the little town of Everett, thirty miles from home. Somehow I made my way back, but it was the first olive out of the bottle and the rest came easy. That summer it was Yakima and fruit-picking, and the next Prosser and the high Horsehead, and later on to Washington, D. C., Alaska. Fortune was always in the place I wasn't, always just lying over the next hill.

WHAT an old story that is. Older than this nation. Old as the race itself. Centuries ago, barbarian tribes sent their youths to Babylon, then Egypt, then Athens, then Rome, then Oxford and Paris, New York, Hollywood! And what a false siren is that lure. How doted with rich young blood which, left to its natural habitat, might have flowed naturally into productive activity, a fireside, children, wise old age. All the centuries that have gone before teach that lesson. All the writers, all the painters, all the poets who ever wrote or painted anything worth while, began at home—and usually stayed there. Byron, Shelley, Keats, Wilde, have a lesson for anyone with eyes to see. Manet, he had lived there, could have painted the back fences of Watts as beautifully as any of his pictures of his beloved France. Emerson's adage about the world coming to your door-step for your better mouse-trap is so true, so axiomatic, that everyone but youth knows it, has learned it long years ago through the hard trials of experience.

BUT there he goes, that young man, off for Mexico City, for Trinidad, for London, for Constantinople! The quick step, the light heart, the devil-may-care look in the eye—you can mark him in every city in every land. He is courting trouble, but doesn't care, because he doesn't know it. He will suffer, but isn't afraid, because he has never suffered. He is on the boat now, so the conspicuously foreign boat he has wanted you to see. He points with his stick (ah, that stick—how much it reveals!) to the sign over the companionway and shows you his knowledge of the language by repeating it. "Passajeros!" He sees a little group of women go on and whispers, "Female Passajeros!" You are introduced in turn to "row-boats", "ropa", "masto", "deck chafers" until your sides shake with laughter. Then it is goodbye—"Buena suerte!" and you are standing on the dock and the boat is gone. Oh, young man—ah, all brave young men—there are so many things we wish we could tell you. But maybe it's better that we can't.

LIKE many another American of hardy English-Scotish-Irish-German-French-Basque descent, I am very fond of the dish known to the Menu Writer's Guild as Prime Roast Ribs of Beef a jus. On a recent journey to Hollywood in search of this specialty among the touted restaurants there, I happened, quite unfortunately, to enter one of the most celebrated of these establishments at a very inopportune time. For on either side of me, where I would normally order, I quickly recognized as motion picture actors. And very poor ones at that—actors who don't so much as get their names mentioned in the front pages of this periodical once in a twelvemonth. Now, it has been my habit, insofar as I have found that practicable, to avoid a certain type of actor. And these men were that type. And it wasn't long before I was wishing devoutly that I had chosen a different time to visit that particular restaurant, or that I had gone instead to some other restaurant far removed from Hollywood. For one of these actors, and one of the waiters, had become involved in a highly colored conversation about another actor's wife. With many a low tone and quick side-glance to make sure that no one could possibly overhear them, continually forgetting that I sat a scant six inches from the actor's elbow—they proceeded to tear this poor woman's reputation to shreds. In the space of five minutes I had the unpleasant experience of having every one of my sensibilities shocked, and my appetite completely spoiled. In strict justice, I suppose, it was none of my business what that actor said; and this department isn't very much concerned with actors, any way. But let not that waiter think—as George Bernard Shaw said of the little girl in Wales who didn't recognize him—let not that waiter think he will get my photograph that way!

WORDS measured into septemeters, heptameters and tetrameters of iambic, trochaic and anapaestic, do not always make poetry, as better poets than Stephen Vincent Benét have learned before now. But—sometimes they make a corking good story, as this same S. V. Benét has proved with his John Brown's Body (Doubleday-Doran). And yet, the true Benét of the poet—one who quite surpasses Benét the novelist and spinner of tales.

American muse, whose strong and diverse heart, So many men have tried to understand, But only made it smaller with their art, Because you are as various as your land... he begins his tale, and then tells why he is qualified to measure himself against it:

This flesh was seeded from no foreign grain, But Pennsylvania and Kentucky wheat. And it has soaked in California rain, And five years tempered in New England sleet.

The almost heroic story that follows this invocation to his muse is something new in the history of American
letters. Like a super-chessman, he raises up his pawns from the North, South and Border soil, New Englanders, Southerners, Kentuckians and Pennsylvanians and moves them symphonically into the maestram of civil war. Whites and Negroes, aristocrats, farmers, clerks, Congressmen, slaves, move for a brief moment across his board into the center of play, and are retired to give other players their innings. Through it all runs the theme of useless war, bloody and terrible, relieved at times by sudden notes of haunting beauty, of pure lyric poetry. I remember best a Negro spiritual or two, bits of slave dialogue; that charming picture of Sally Dupré, daughter of a Southern belle married to a French dancing master, whose relatives and neighbors always speak of her as a good match for "some Northern boy"; the unforgettable glimpses of the South:

That languorous land where Uncle Toms
Groaned Bibliedly underneath the lash,
And grining Topsy's mapped and mowed behind
Each honeysuckle vine . . .

where

The girls were always beautiful, the men
Wore varnished boots, raced horses and played cards
And drank mint-juleps till the time came round
For fighting duels with their second cousins . . .

a South summed up in the description of one of its sons who

. . . . could harrow the water and plow the sand
But he could not do the thing at hand.

O VER against the warm, wasteful South, impassive and gallant, Benet places a somewhat cold and rigorous North, whose type of justice he portrays in that prayer of John Brown's, "by his narrow bed".

I saw Thee when Thou did display
The black man and his lord
To bid me free the one, and slay
The other with the sword . . .

And should the Philistine defend
His strength against our blows,

The God who doth not spare His friend,
Will not forget His foes.

One could quote from this book forever. I understand that the publisher's reluctance to print it because of its form was only overcome by Benet's own enthusiasm and perseverance. We can be thankful for that. As a piece of writing, it is a glorious departure from our dull history and slang-filction. Certainly it will be much read, and there is meat there for a second reading, and a third. The fact that the entire book, with the exception of one or two pages, is couched in verse forms, should deter no one; it reads as smoothly as a novel.

WITH winter here, one of the things we have always lacked, it seems to me, becomes more glaringly apparent. The city fathers who let loose on Los Angeles that horde of real estate subdivision builders responsible for this blight have much to answer for—but I spare them. I am more concerned with the indifference of the people themselves. For, be it known, Los Angeles has no fireplaces. At least, comparatively few. It burns gas. Now a fireplace, as everyone knows, is the chief prop of the Anglo-Saxon home (and the Teutonic and the Icelandic and many another for the matter of that) and was, before the radio was even thought of. A man who hasn't a childhood to look back on which includes pictures of the whole family gathered around the crackling logs of an evening, not leaving their warm glow 'till Pa or Gran'pa banked

THE LAST WARNING

TITLES and DIALOGUE

TOM REED
the coals with ashes for tomorrow morning's fire—simply didn't have a childhood at all. In times past there were bean boilings, weiner roasts, barbecues, popcorn poppings and a hundred other things done over the open fire that have had to give place, in the course of events, to the automobile and motion picture. But fireside tranquillity had more enduring attractions also. Day-dreaming didn't begin on a Greek hillsise under an olive tree, as everybody supposes. It began before a fireplace. A man can win more battles, succor more damsels and achieve more glory before an open fire than anywhere else on earth. And considering that these are the only things men like to do anyhow, it behooves someone in this city of uplifters—I don't know whom—to get busy. Even when, on occasions, you are invited out to this Hill or that Crest, where the Movies and the rich people from the great marts of trade are building their new homes, replete with all antique improvements—including those great lone fireplaces gracing the living hall—even then, if you're imaginative, you can usually look with your mind's eye behind some door or chair or chaise-longue, and find a gas or electric heater burning somewhere.

A LAY JOURNAL'S OPINION

As a matter of passing interest, we present the following list of pictures to show how the sprightly magazine, Time, sizes them up:

(a) White Shadows in the South Seas: Sharks and natives in swimming... The Night Watch: Billie Dove on the witness stand. While the City Sleeps: Lon Chaney gets his man. The Singing Fool (Jolson): Mammy on the Vitaphone. Kriemhild's Revenge: Sequel to Siegfried, last of the great German pictures. Three Comrades and one Invention: Russian comedy. Lonesome: Telephone girl's holiday done in the same style as The Crowd.

(b) Our Dancing Daughters ($50,000—Capitol, Manhattan); The Singing Fool ($53,000—McVickers, Chicago); Mother Knows Best ($8,000—Carthay Circle, Los Angeles); Excess Baggage ($14,000—Loew's Toronto).

BRITISH STARS RETURNING HOME

BioScope, London:

I HEAR of many British artists who have hitherto been chiefly associated with American pictures, who are coming over here with contracts for British films. Lillian Rich, who claims Dulwich as her birthplace, has starred in many American films; Nigel Barrie has done outstanding work on both sides of the Atlantic; Wyndham Standing and Winter Hall, well known as Anglo-American stars, are both over here; and in addition Dorothy Cumming, who has made great success in a wide variety of parts; Olaf Nylton, who was a prominent member of the Stoll Stock Company some eight years ago, with Syd Chaplin and Percy Marmon, make up a strong list of British players of established fame who are now working hard to ensure the success of British films.

SOMETHING WORTH WHILE

HERE'S The Spectator's idea of a real boast. It appeared on the cinema page conducted for The Times-Press, Akron, Ohio, by Evan Williams, Jr. Mr. Williams writes:

"By the way, if you are interested in things cinematic you will do well to subscribe to The Film Spectator. "This department is not in the habit of 'plugging' film magazines, because it regards most of them as so much applesauce. But The Spectator has the happy faculty of being witty, sparkling, and entertaining, at the same time putting forth sane, substantial and constructive views on the movies."

"The Film Spectator is published at 6362 Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood, Calif. And this department does NOT get a percentage on subscriptions gained through this 'blurb'."

—speaking of dialogue—give Rupert Hughes some solid thought. In his books, in his plays, at the head of the banquet table and on the speaker's platform, his brilliance is internationally known. And his last book—

The Lovely Ducklings

—the story of Hot Toddy (and what a title)—a young modern who knows and knows and knows. Succinct, poignant wise-cracks and truths snap from her carmined lips like machine-gun fire. In her wild, impetuous, wayward way, she saves herself from ruin and her whole damn family, too.

John F. Goodrich

GRanite 9525

6683 Sunset Boulevard
In The Film Spectator you have found a publication that is different—one that speaks frankly and bluntly about pictures and their producers. You may not always agree with it, but you admire its sincerity.

Why not share this pleasure with your friends? What would make a more suitable gift than a year’s subscription to The Spectator? It is not only worthy of the giver, but will please each friend to receive it not only at Christmas time, but throughout the whole year.

We will send to each of the several friends you wish to receive The Spectator a suitable announcement. It is $5.00 for 52 issues in the United States; $6.00 foreign.

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Why not let writers learn how to write?

Will talkies dim the luster of our stars?

Fine sound work in Fox first all-talker

Reviews by the Editor

THE SPIELER
THE GHOST TALKS
HEART TO HEART
THE SHAKE DOWN

By the Junior Critic

SYNTHETIC SIN
OUT OF THE RUINS
HAUNTED HOUSE
THE SHAKE DOWN
The King of Reproduction

The New

Victrola - Radiola Combination 9-54

An Automatic Combination Phonograph and Radio

E.A. Bowen
Music Company
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Give Writers a Chance to Learn Their Business

VARIOUS letters have been written to The Spectator approving or disapproving our comments of two weeks ago on the best way to go about reforming the method of producing motion pictures. One correspondent does not agree with me that there are in Hollywood a sufficient number of writers to turn out enough perfect scripts to keep even one studio busy. If that be so, it becomes apparent that it is the duty of the industry to increase the number by allowing those now lacking the knowledge an opportunity to acquire it. The industry's method of handling its writers is perhaps the greatest manifestation of its inefficiency. The method that prevails at Metro is typical, with slight variations, of all the studios. Out there they employ a writer and put him in a little office, and he gets the idea that if he pokes his nose outside the door before the whistle blows someone will shoot him. He can learn just as much in that office about how to write for the screen as he could learn in a box-stall at Tia Juana by spending the same length of time in it. Most of those so employed know how to write before they go on a studio pay-roll. What they lack is a knowledge of screen technique, and this they are allowed no opportunity of learning, notwithstanding the fact that the studios have at hand an exceedingly simple method of teaching them. There is some truth in the claim of producers that it is seldom that their writing departments deliver scripts that do not have to be turned over to a conference of supervisors and directors to be whipped into shape. Whose fault is this? The producers'. If they wish to put a stop to the life being pawed out of their stories, they should provide their writers with an opportunity to learn how to write in a manner that would make the pawing unnecessary. In every studio there are writers who for years have been turning out scripts that have to be altered in the shooting. Obviously if these writers had a thorough grasp of that end of the business that can be learned only on a set and in the cutting-room, they soon would be producing scripts that could be shot as written. To a certain extent, and in varying degrees, they now have a grasp of the fundamentals of production technique, but if they visit sets in an effort to learn more, they are looked upon as a damned nuisance. All of them should be given the post of script clerk on at least two productions each, and they should follow the film through the cutting-room. If after two such experiences they have not supplemented their plot ability with a thorough knowledge of the requirements of screen technic as applied to writing scripts, they should be let go as something too expensive to maintain, and others should be given the opportunity at which they failed. I can imagine nothing more wildly absurd, more artistically and economically a crime against common sense, than the action of producers in importing stage writers, locking them in offices and telling them to write for the screen. Perhaps the most capable among them might be able to turn out something shootable after spending six months as script clerks, but to expect them to do it without any experience in screen technic is not one whit less ridiculous than to expect an automobile manufacturer to make a washing machine without being given an opportunity of learning the difference between an automobile and a washing machine. But, the producer will argue, all we want the stage writer to do is to provide the ideas and we will put them in shape for the screen. And I suppose all we want the automobile manufacturer to do is to provide the moving parts and we will put them together and try to make a washing machine. How much simpler it would be to employ a washing machine expert in the first place. He is the only one who can give us parts that will fit and make a perfect machine, as the trained screen writer is the only one who can write scenes that will fit into one another and make a perfect motion picture. Producing motion pictures requires no particular training, but actually making them does.

* * *

Fox's First All-Talker Marks Another Big Advance in Sound

WILLIAM Fox shortly will present to the world his first all-talking picture, The Ghost Talks, a comedy that will be a sensational success, not as a sound novelty, but as a screamingly funny piece of screen entertainment. No more contrasting vehicles for their first adventures in the all-talking field could have been selected by Fox and Paramount than this rollicking comedy of the former and Interference of the latter, but together they show the greatest step forward that sound yet has made. Interference concerned itself chiefly with the reproduction of voices, while Ghost Talks goes farther in the way of making its microphone mobile. It follows two characters along a street and allows us to hear their conversation, and it picks up the yelps of a gag of dogs that provide hilarious comedy by chasing a terrified colored gentleman from a haunted house to a police station. The feature of the Fox picture that interested me most from a sound standpoint was the impression that it conveyed that the microphone was left to take care of itself. Interference makes us aware of the microphone lurking in the immediate neighborhood. When characters in the Paramount picture begin speeches while seated, the volume of sound increases when they rise, indicating that the microphone is placed above the upper frame of the picture. Not once while viewing the Fox production did I get any intimation of the location of the microphone, and in long shots its obvious distance from the action that was photographed showed how extraordinarily sensitive the Movie-
tone "mike" is. The picture opens in a depot train shed as a train arrives, and the incidental sounds are reproduced without the slightest distortion. It is the finest bit of sound reproduction that I have heard yet. In several shots there are groups of as many as six people, each of whom takes up the conversation and close-ups are not resorted to to show us who is speaking. They are not necessary for at no time is there any doubt about the identity of the speaker. Lewis Seiler must have directed the picture in the manner in which all sound pictures must be directed, having grouped his characters with full regard for motion picture technic and leaving it to the soundman to work out his end of it after the screen requirements had been attended to. The result is that we have a picture that flows along naturally, one that is not noisy, and which asks us to overlook nothing because the medium is a new one. As was the case with all sound pictures, I ceased to be aware of the background noises before the first reel was half way through, but in about the middle of the picture I was reminded of them in a wholly unnecessary manner. An insert was flashed on the screen and the background noises ceased, only to begin again, with a suggestion of renewed vigor, when the insert was succeeded by an action shot. An easy way to have got around the difficulty would have been to have the man holding the letter read it to acquaint the audience with its contents, making it unnecessary to present it as an insert. In another shot two men are shown listening at a closed door to a conversation taking place in the room to which it leads. It would be more convincing if the audience could hear what the listeners must have heard. As we have it, there is nothing to indicate that the men listening outside the door could hear anything. But those are just two little flaws in an otherwise splendid example of what we can expect from Fox in the way of talking pictures. It introduces a couple of youngsters whom I had not seen previously, Helen Twelvetrees and Charles Eaton. I am not sure about the young woman with the mathematically precise, arborescent name, but this picture marks young Eaton's first flight into the film world, and when his disposition to overact is calmed by experience, he is going to do splendidly. The girl is clever and pretty—about all that is needed. I am inclined to believe that the public will credit the colored gentleman already referred to, with stealing the picture. A long time ago I included in a review a warm tribute to the rich comedy of Stepin Fetchit, but I hadn't seen the half. In The Ghost Talks he is simply immense. And I would like to put in a good word for his picture consort, Baby Mack, who is not a baby, but a capable young colored woman. Carmel Myers, Earle Foxe and several others do their share towards making Ghost Talks a picture that no one can afford to miss.

Proving That All a Director Needs Is a Fair Share of Brains

TAY Garnett is going to be listed some day among the most prominent directors present. The Spieler, his latest picture, shows that he is making amazing progress. The story is set in a Barker atmosphere, and no doubt was inspired by The Barker, but as it has a couple of murders in it, and no young man who preferred circus life to school drudgery, Hal Conklin, the author, can not be charged with borrowing anything except atmosphere, and that is one thing that always is free. Except for one short jail sequence that opens the picture, the whole story never leaves the carnival grounds, but it moves briskly within its narrow geographical limits, and contains enough comedy, suspense and thrills to supply a locale as big as Texas. It is obvious that Garnett felt sure of himself when he tackled this, his second picture, for it bears all the earmarks of its director's assurance and confidence. When I reviewed Garnett's first picture, Celebrity, I pointed out two or three things that I advised the new director to avoid in his future work. I have forgotten what the things were and The Spieler does not remind me for I can find no flaws in it. The picture interests me because it helps to convince me that the thing that the screen is most in need of is more brains in direction. No particular skill is required in the direction of a picture. What is needed is plain, ordinary intelligence, and as only about ten per cent. of the pictures we are getting are worth looking at, it follows that only ten per cent. of our directors are intelligent. When a young fellow like Tay Garnett can step into the business and with his second picture make ninety per cent. of our old directors look like a lot of bushe leaguers, it demonstrates two things: first, of course, that Garnett has brains, and, second, what an easy thing it is for a person with brains to make a good motion picture. Screen art is the most unhampered of all arts. It is the only pictorial art that can move its living persons and things, and the only dramatic art that can carry its action to any locale that suits it, yet the people who make motion pictures would have the rest of us believe that there is something mysterious about the process and that only gifted persons are fitted for it. It is easy for people with motion picture brains to make motion pictures. The trouble is that the industry as a whole does not allow its brains to function. Occasionally someone breaks through, as Garnett has done, and he succeeds, not because he has had long training in the business, but because he is endowed with an ordinary allotment of horse sense. In making The Spieler he was fortunate in having a story that moved briskly with mounting interest and a cast capable of giving good performances. It allowed Alan Hale to demonstrate against what a really fine actor he is. Every time I see him I become more convinced that Pathé should launch him boldly as a star, for I know of no actor in Hollywood who is supplied more abundantly with everything that the public wants. Still young enough to carry the love interest, as his romance with Renee Adoree in The Spieler dem-

"She Goes to War"

HENRY KING'S PRODUCTION
FOR
INSPIRATION - HALPERIN
PICTURES
LLOYD NOSLER
FILM EDITOR
Will Talking Films Change the Status of Our Stars?

HARRY Carr says there are not going to be any more Mary Pickfords. "With the advent of the talkies," he writes in the Times, "producers find they can dash out onto any stage and capture a stage-star with a ready-made reputation more quickly and more profitably than trying to build up a little movie girl." I don't see why Harry limits the dashings of the producers to the stage. If they are going to dash out of film circles for the stars which Harry says aren't going to be, why not dash all over the place, hither and yon, and grab off all the ready-made reputations they can find? If the public hereafter is to be fed by the screen only reputations made off the screen, what possible reason is there for going only to the stage for the reputations? According to Carr screen acting in the future will have nothing to do with making a player a screen reputation. The reputation will be made elsewhere, will be delivered to the public f. o. b. the neighborhood house, with "use no hooks" stencilled on it. But I am afraid the public will use hooks. Carr's whole argument is so utterly absurd that I would not waste time on it if I did not think that perhaps some ambitious girl who is seeking the rank of star might read it and feel discouraged. She has no reason to. There always will be Mary Pickfords, screen stars made famous by the screen. Fame on the stage can do no more than put a player promptly on the path to screen stardom, but only by learning screen technic and how to speak in front of the microphone; only by forgetting almost everything he learned on the stage, can the player become a favorite with picture audiences. He can come from an office or a shop and become as great a favorite. Producers don't make stars. The public makes them, but if you can show any producer a "little movie girl" who might develop into a star, keep your eye on the producer and you will see something brisk in efforts to help the public make her one. Unless Harry Carr can think up something more sane in the way of an argument, I am afraid the market for Mary Pickfords will remain steady. "There is another reason," Harry goes on, "even stronger, but less easy to state. One of the reasons why girls like Mary Pickford became so famous was the appalling intimacy of the movie close-up. Having no words with which to tell the story, they told it by the expression of their faces; the lifting of an eyebrow—a wistful look in the eye. Now that words have come in, no actress will ever again receive such close attention. She will more than divide her fame with the invisible author." I must agree with Harry that his other reason is hard to state, for he certainly falls down when he tries to state it in a manner that makes it look like a reason. As nearly as I can understand him, there was nothing remarkable in Mary Pickford becoming a great star through her facial expression, her eyebrows and her eyes. "Having no words with which to tell the story," says Harry, she had to rely on the other things. The Mary Pickford of to-morrow, if we are to believe him, may have the same facial expression, the same eyebrow and the same eye, but she is never to become a great star because she has been given words as a help to her in telling the story. In the past the close-up enabled her to juggle the expression, the eyebrow and the eye in a way that made her a tremendous favorite with the public, but now that she can add voice to the jiggles she is undone. I had an idea that Mary's intelligence, personality and charm endeared her to the whole world, but I find I am wrong. She got there by lifting her eyebrow, and as no other girl in pictures has remained such a favorite for so long, we are left to presume that since films began Mary is the only girl who knows where, when, and how to lift an eyebrow. But she will receive no more close attention because "we will listen as well as look." Again I agree with Harry that his reason was hard to state. The poor devil never should have attempted to state it. He should have known that he was muddled when he said that stars hereafter will share fame with the authors. Eddie Horton has been starring successfully at the Vine Street theatre for a long time. How many people know the name of the author of one of the plays he presented? How many people remember the names of the plays? And who cares about either? No one. Horton is the drawing card. And the Mary Pickfords always will be the drawing cards.

LIONEL Barrymore, in an interview published in the Examiner a couple of Sundays ago, revealed a friendliness for talking in motion pictures, but expressed a doubt if Shakespeare ever would be done as satisfactorily on the screen as it could on the stage. I share his doubt. It is the exquisite music of the Shakespearian lines that will keep the Bard of Avon alive forever, and this music always will sound better when it does not come to us strained through a microphone. But this consideration is not going to keep Shakespeare off the screen. However equally or unequally the screen and stage may be matched in ability to make productions, the screen always will have a tremendous advantage in the facility with which it can make reproductions. John Barrymore is the greatest living Hamlet, but how many people have seen him in the part? A mere handful, when we consider that vast number that could see him do Hamlet on the screen. Granted that he would not be quite as effective on the screen as he is on the stage, is Oskosh to be denied the screen presentation because the stage presentation is just a little better? Are we to deny Oskosh bread because we cannot give it cake? I agree with Lionel that the human voice probably never will be reproduced mechanically without losing some of its quality, but will not the loss of quality be more than made up by the camera's ability to supply a much grander production than is possible on the stage? But as I view the addition of sound to pictures, I do not believe it will be as valuable as a medium for broadening their scope as it will be as an instrument that will enable them to do much better only what they had done before. Screen art always has been more of a story-telling art than a dramatic art. Suddenly acquiring an ability to talk has not changed its status, although producers seem
to think it has, as is indicated by their rush to the stage for actors, writers and directors, a move as ridiculous as it would be for Ford to turn over the entire manufacture of his cars to someone who designed a new wheel. It is a passing folly, and when it has cost producers a few million dollars they will revert to their old business of making motion pictures.

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WHAT may be accepted as a truism is that anything that is done well has entertainment value on the screen. If there never had been a poor close-up, there never would be a complaint that close-ups were too much of a good thing. But not more than one in one hundred close-ups that we see on the screen has artistic justification for being there. Those who use them so freely have not the slightest knowledge of the idea upon which the close-up is founded. No other single feature of pictures betrays the incapacity of directors and supervisors as unmistakably as does the close-up. In theory the close-up is designed to give a player a greater opportunity to register emotion, the closer view we have of his features making more vivid his portrayal of the emotion. Obviously, the resort to the close-up in a given instance must be predicated upon the assumption that the player is capable of portraying the emotion. But it never is. In the script you will find, "Scene 184: c. u. of Joe Doakes," and the script will be written long before anyone has the slightest idea who will play Joe Doakes. When the part is cast, the fact that Joe is to have several close-ups is not considered, and his ability to register in a close-up is not questioned. The script calls for a close-up, and that settles it. If some one thought of close-ups in terms of screen art, the terms in which everything in a picture should be thought of, one of two things would happen in this instance: a player who could do justice to Joe's close-ups would be selected, or medium shots would be substituted for the close-ups. We do not need the testimony of the screen to prove that close-ups are abused ridiculously. The fact that they are written into scripts irrespective of who are to play the parts, is enough to demonstrate how insane the practice has become. At the request of a producer I viewed one of his pictures the other day, and when I left the projection room I advised him, among other things, to cut out two close-ups of his leading woman, my reason being that in them she had failed to register anything. He actually argued that he had used the close-ups in the customary manner, and it was apparent that the fact that they conveyed nothing meant little to him. However, the check he gave me for doctoring his sick patient was good at the bank, and I let the matter rest there.

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OUT at Universal they'll soon be calling Willie Wyler William. He's directed another picture. Some time ago he made Has Anyone Here Seen Kelly? which was so good that it surprised me, for Willie still is so young that I suppose that he resents being called young. When he becomes a little older, he'll want to be, which has nothing to do with either his first picture or his second, which is called The Shakedown, and which deals with a gang of crooks which roams around the country, stopping every little while to fleece a whole town with a fake prize-fight, James Murray first being planted in the town to secure its betting support before George Kotsonaros, fierce-featured and most ungentlemally, is lead to the scene of action by Wheeler Oakman, master crook, and knocks Murray flat, after which Oakman pays off and the gang moves to the next town where the whole thing is done over again. Finally Murray comes to a town in which Barbara Kent works as a waitress, and Fate steps in and the gang gets its comeuppance. It is quite a trite little story, containing nothing whatever that is new, but Willie Wyler has breathed life into it and directed it with a skill that gives me great confidence in his future. He is one of Carl Laemmle's nephews, and for some reason or other, probably because I like Uncle Carl, I get a kick out of any of his relatives making good. It is with such youths as young Wyler that the future of motion pictures lies, and Carl Laemmle is to be commended for giving so many of them a chance. In the cast of Shakedown there is a boy, Jackie Hanlon, who gives a splendid performance, one that stamps him as an actor with a future. Wyler tells his story with directness and assurance, and builds his suspense convincingly. I have but one quarrel with him. When Murray reforms and trims the trimmers, he does not show us the shattered gang in its moment of defeat. He created in me a hatred for the crooks and denied me the opportunity to gloat over them. When I hate, I want to gloat. But, on the whole, I found the picture a most entertaining one.

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THOSE who still are of the opinion that the screen can not bring people to us in a manner that will present their personalities as vividly as the stage presents them, would have changed their minds if they had been present at the midnight show at Warners theatre a couple of weeks ago. Al Jolson in person preceded the showing of The Singing Fool. He sang three songs and did considerable talking. I was so far back that I could not see his features, in this instance an advantage that would have been a catastrophe if Billie Dove had been in his place on the stage. When the picture was shown it was different. His voice sounded exactly as it did when he sang in person, and I could see his every expression, no matter how fleeting. He seemed much more of a real person on the screen than he did on the stage. As I sat and

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listened to the huge audience giving him prolonged applause, I wondered again what under the sun it is about Al Jolson that gives him his tremendous hold on the public. I gave critical attention to his singing, and suffered exquisite agony. He certainly knows nothing about singing. His overwhelming conceit is obvious in every note he sings, every word he utters, and every movement he makes in his acting. But I cheerfully admit that he makes more money at his business than I do at mine, and that many people, against whose mentalities I do not bring the charge that they are dimwitted, get a great kick out of his form of entertainment. On this midnight adventure I saw The Singing Fool for the first time with an audience. After seeing it in a projection room I proclaimed it as great screen entertainment. Noah's Ark impressed me in the same way when I saw it in the projection room, but when I saw it in a theatre all its virtues seemed to have disappeared. Not so with the Jolson picture. I enjoyed it more the second time than I did the first time. But I do wish that Al Jolson would learn how to sing.

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The title, Heart to Heart, probably will keep discriminating picture patrons from viewing it, but it is one of the best little pictures that I have seen this year. It was directed by William Beaudine for First National, and in the cast are Mary Astor, Lloyd Hughes, Louise Fazenda, Lucien Littlefield and Eileen Manning. Beaudine's direction is masterly. He makes the story human and engrossing, and the romance tender and sweet. One feature of the love story that startled me was the fact that there is not a kiss in it, but it is none the less convincing on that account. It is told with perfect taste without losing any of its vigor and warmth. If you can find the picture at any of the community houses, view it and enjoy two of the finest characterizations that ever have been shown on the screen. Louise Fazenda and Littlefield divide the picture between them. They are magnificent. They play husband and wife, a lovable couple in a small town that is shaken to its foundations by the return to it of Mary Astor who has become an Italian princess. There is nothing extravagant in the characterizations, none of the caricature antics that these players could perform so well. Miss Fazenda's reaction to her mistaken idea that her husband is unfaithful to her, is a superb piece of acting. I can not understand the folly of First National in giving this splendid little picture a title that damned it in advance. Under some such title as The Princess Comes Home it could go into any house in the country and score a success. It has what I am confident the public wants, cleanliness, rich comedy, humanness, a beautiful romance, and acting that reaches an artistic height seldom achieved on the screen. Bill Beaudine has my sympathy and at the same time my congratulations.

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At some theoretical exact moment there will be enough houses wired to warrant the big producers in discontinuing entirely the making of silent pictures. There will be a sufficient number of silent pictures available at that time to keep the unwired houses supplied for a considerable period, but not enough to keep them going until all houses are wired. It looks as if this would be an opportunity for the independents to enlarge their market. And when they set out on this laudable commercial exploit, they should give heed to the advisability of effecting an artistic reform that might hold as friends of their product those who had become its new customers. When you criticize an independent producer to-day for aping the big fellows by turning out the same kind of pictures that they do, he will tell you that exhibitors dictate to him, that the only way he can compete with a two-hundred-thousand-dollar production is to turn out one that looks as if it cost that much, but which, in reality, costs less than a quarter of it. The little fellow lacks the money of the big fellow; he can get just as good stories as the big fellow, but as he can not compete in production, he must offer competition that costs nothing. And the way is open for him to do this. He has no stars or featured players on his pay-roll, therefore even if he be ass enough to think that close-ups help a player, he is under no obligations to close-up a picture to death. He can employ directors who can group their characters naturally, who do not walk them into scenes and turn them to face the camera; who do not commit all the silly, brainless sins that brought screen art to such a low level. He can make pictures that make up in artistic treatment what they may lack in expensive production; and by "artistic treatment" I mean merely doing sensibly the score of things that now are done so foolishly.

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Producers of talking comedies apparently must give serious thoughts to spacing their laughs, but apparently those who provide the more serious forms of screen entertainment are not going to be worried with the problem of applause. I was of the opinion that when pictures spoke they would provoke applause as stage plays do, but so far there is no indication that they will, which is a matter of importance to producers. Even at the opening night of Interference, an audience composed largely of friends of the members of the splendid cast did not reward the fine work of the players until the closing scene was reached, when William Powell received warm applause for his effective exit with the police officers. I started that applause myself. I wanted to see if I was right in my surmise that it was the timidity with which the audience approached the new art that kept it from giving audible demonstration of its approval, and that all it needed was someone to lead the way. I gave the audience every chance by postponing my experiment as long as possible, but when the final scene was reached, my tentative hand-claps started a wave of applause that swept over the house. I presume from that that if someone had started the applause during the opening sequence, the entire showing of the picture would have been punctuated with it and that many lines would have been drowned out.

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The Ghost Talks, reviewed elsewhere in this issue, was cut with regard for spacing the laughs to provide against any of the dialogue being lost. I did not see the picture with an audience, being alone in a projection-room when I viewed it, but it seems to me that when it reaches the public it will provoke but one laugh that will start in the first reel and end with the last. I do not see how this particular picture could be cut to provide against the loss of some of the speeches, for most of the scenes are so funny that they will carry the laughter into the scenes that follow them, and drown out a considerable amount of dialogue. In one scene Stepin Fetchit is in
bed; the ghost's hand tickles him; he thinks it is his wife's, and he keeps up a running fire of remarks that are exceedingly funny, but I am confident that audiences will not get one word of what he says, for the situation in itself is so funny that the laughter will be continuous. This is all right, for the scene is presented to make people laugh, and if they can be made to laugh without having heard the words, the scene has achieved its destiny. The damage will be done when a dramatic scene follows a funny one and is introduced by a speech vital to it. It is a nice little problem that will be worked out as we get acquainted with the new medium, but I stick to the opinion I expressed some weeks ago, that the public will help to solve it by learning how to laugh.

**V**IRGINIA Gray, a charming miss who I imagine has reached the advanced age of ten years, gave a delightful performance in some Universal picture which I reviewed, and in the review I said so. And now I say that she gives another delightful performance in Heart to Heart, an atrociously named picture which Bill Beaudine made into a little masterpiece. Hitherto I have not written one line for The Spectator that was prompted by any hope of personal gain or that did not express my opinion uninfluenced by any ulterior motive. I have told only the truth about Virginia, a sweet and winsome youngster, but I have gone out of my way to do so because I want her to do something for me. In Heart to Heart she gives her dog a hath, and the dog doesn't make the slightest attempt to jump out of the tub. If Virginia will come out to my house and teach Virgil and Ko Ko to stand still while they are being washed, I'll give her the finest line of notices ever written. During the week we have a strenuous time keeping Ko Ko out of the swimming pool, and on Sunday morning we have a more strenuous time keeping her in the stationery tub. Perhaps Virginia can help. Or was it Bill's direction?

**A**FTER belatedly going through a great accumulation of the excellent English film publications which the postman persists in piling in front of me, I have come to the conclusion that Warners pulled a boner in sending The Terror to London as the first all-talking picture to be shown over there. With extraordinary unanimity the British critics characterized it as trash, and some of the less thoughtful ones accepted it as proof that talking pictures never would be successful. The Terror gave the cause of sound pictures in England a tremendous setback, although some sensible commentators, such as Cinema's "Onlooker", refused to accept it as anything more than a hint of what talking pictures could become when they were made properly. It will interest "Onlooker" to know that all the technical faults that the London reviewers detected in the Warner picture, will not be found in Fox's The Ghost Talks nor in Paramount's Interference. When these two pictures reach Wardour street the British film industry will get a new conception of what the future holds for this new form of screen entertainment.

**H**AROLD B. Franklin says that in the West Coast theatres the good silent motion pictures are more than holding their own with the talkers, and various trade papers accept the statement as one of great significance and discuss it gravely as something that casts a light on the future of the talkers, attaching importance to it that no doubt will surprise Franklin himself. He is too good a showman to put the talker on trial for its life quite so soon. Up to date all that the public has been given a chance to approve have been the Warner potboilers and Paramount's Interference. When the flock of talkers now in production is released we will have something to go on. Good silent pictures will prove box-office magnates for some time yet, but when we get talkers that have as much merit as motion pictures and have the added advantage of well written and well spoken dialogue, I think that we will find that the good silent film will not be able to stand the competition of the good talker.

**A** QUEER angle of the introduction of sound comes up in discussions of the relative merits of the silents and the talkies. The former still have some champions who regret their passing, and when you engage one of them in conversation he sooner or later will charge you with defaming the silent art. Silent pictures are not losing their vogue because they no longer have the power to please. They are losing it because talking pictures have the power to give greater pleasure. While it was mute, screen art made marvelous progress, none of which is lost now that it has ceased to be mute. It still will make progress towards glorious achievement, its ability to talk being something that will aid it on its way, but in acquiring this new aid it will shed nothing that it had acquired previously.

**O**NE great advantage that talking pictures have over the stage is the ability of the former to put over every word so clearly and distinctly that those in the audience will not have to strain their ears to hear what is being said. I would make a guess that that part of a theatre audience that is ten rows and farther from the stage, loses from five to ten per cent. of the lines of a play. In any case, what it does get is the reward of sitting-up-straight attention. Sound pictures can do better; they can bring either a whisper or a shout to the back row without distortion. But they must be allowed to do so. I suppose it has been remedied since, but at the opening night of Interference at the Carthay Circle, the volume was held down so much that I, for one, failed to get all the lines. Exhibitors must be careful.

**A** PPARENTLY they were as muddled in England as we were over here by the many rumors that were current about the activities of Warner Brothers. The Bioscope, an excellently conducted London film weekly, stood the situation as long as it could and then decided upon a method of reducing its worry. It says: "We are establishing a rule in this office that will save much trouble. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays all Warner Bros. rumors are true; on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, they have never been heard of. In this way we shall hold the scales with scrupulous truth."

**A** notion that I've had for a long time is that a series of split-reel subjects depicting camera tours through leading cities of the world undoubtedly would be popular with the public. Recently a Fox news-reel presented a large number of views of London, which I hope will become a habit with it. To me this London reel was of great
interest, but that may be because I am familiar with that city, which gave the scenes considerable reminiscent value. However, I am sure I would be little less interested in a reel devoted to some city that I have not visited. To want to know how the other fellow lives is one of our standard curiosities.

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The addition of sound is going to be responsible for better photography and more careful work in laboratories, and the cutting-room will lose some of its status as the great rectifier of screen art. It will not be possible to cut out frames at will without affecting the timing.

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A TITLE in The Spieler reads: "You! Of all people." I think it would have come nearer to expressing the meaning of the man who wrote it if it had been presented this way: "You, of all people!"

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When producers of sound pictures become more accustomed to the new medium there will be a general speeding up of tempo. There is no reason why the dialogue should drag as it does in nearly all the talking pictures that I have seen. The microphone can work just as fast as any actor can talk, and as long as he does not sacrifice clearness to speed the actor can talk as fast as he likes.

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Besides my campaign to force Doug Fairbanks Jr. to get his hair cut, I think I'll embark on another that will have as its objective the improvement of the screen laughs of Noah Beery, Alan Hale, and Fred Kohler. They always laugh with their mouths open in a way that isn't pretty.

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Perhaps one of the nice things that sound will do for us will be the banishing of glycerine from motion pictures. When our heroines can put sobs into their voices, we may be spared the rivulets of imitation tears that heretofore have made them look ridiculous.

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In the screen credits for The Ghost Talks we learn that a new personality has entered pictures—the soundman. I presume he will supplant the sandman, who was getting such a foothold before sound came.

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AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By Donald Beaton — The Spectator's 18-Year-Old Critic

William and Robert Wyler, who are the only director and supervisor I know of who get along with each other, have turned out a remarkably good little program picture in The Shakedown. William attends to the directorial end of the picture, and Robert to the supervisory. Bob is in line for a melody or something for being the first supervisor to be reprimanded by the director for being absent from the set for a couple of days. The story which Charles Logue gave them can scarcely be called new, but it was made sensibly, and without the exaggerations which are customary. When the hero turned from his wicked ways and said he was going to win the fight squarely, the pack of tough citizens he had been associating with didn't perpetrated everything but a train wreck to stop him. The theme was old and all that, but it was big, which is the main thing. A little picture with a big theme is better than a large one which hasn't any to speak of. James Murray had the big part in The Shakedown, although Jack Hanlon ran him a close second. Murray is one of the few really fine young actors, and would go a long way if he only would take some interest in his career. His work was the high-light of the picture, due to a depth and strength which are uncommon in one as new to the screen as he. He does one scene in which he acknowledges that he is a fake and a crook that is splendid. Wyler's direction can best be commented upon by saying that the pictures were smoothly and logically developed, and built up nicely to the crisis, a prize-fight. Incidentally, the fight, although it is obvious that the hero must win, is one of the most exciting I have seen yet. There were some comedy scenes of a man and a boy who indulged in a perfect orgy of making faces whenever they met. In the projection room it was even funnier, but I am told that when the picture is viewed in an audience, it goes over big. The cumulative effect of the laughter apparently is felt, and I don't doubt that it would be funny under such circumstances. Sound effects and dialogue are to be added later, which will do the picture a great deal of good. While I am thinking about it, Wyler avoided a fadeout clinch at the end of the picture. The love between the girl and the boy was established, and there was no need for it. So many pictures are logically finished, but have to go through with the clinch demanded by moth-eaten tradition.

As I said, Jack Hanlon, a hoary old trooper of ten or twelve, nearly walks off with the picture. He puts all he has in his work, and the result is a performance which stacks up very well with those of the older and more experienced members of the cast. Barbara Kent provides the beauty necessary to any good picture, and Eddie Gribbon chips in with some comedy which is unworthy of him. George Kotsironas plays a hardboiled prize fighter with a ferocity which would make an armored tank a little nervous. Wheeler Oakman is another menace, but he isn't quite so blood-curdling. There isn't much to be said for the titles, which were rather uninspired.

Synthetic Sin contains a remarkable performance by Colleen Moore and some rather good little touches by William Sciter, but they don't keep it from being insane and silly. The whole thing is based on the faulty premise that a motion picture can be good even if it has a fool for a heroine. Miss Moore did a very good characterization as the fool girl, but her work didn't redeem it any. There is no one on earth quite so dumb as she was supposed to be, which was perfectly all right until they tried to make her sympathetic. She acted like a clown, but Antonia Moreno was as close as you could fall in love with her. Never during the entire length of the picture did she reveal any lovable or sympathetic characteristics, yet the audience was asked to enjoy a romance between her and Moreno, whose strongest point is his intensely likeable screen personality. The only reaction possible to the personality she built up was a desire to crack her face on the jaw, but I don't think it was her fault, although somebody had a weird idea of what constitutes a heroine.

In addition to Miss Moore's impossible role, the whole story was weak. The idea was that an unknown country girl is put into a play; and when she fails, is told by friends that she doesn't look experienced enough for the part. Then the poor idiot decides to live a life of sin, to begin with, she never would have been put in the play, just because of the playwright's mental aberration; and if she had been, it wouldn't have been in one of the leading roles.
made a very human character out of the uncle who had prejudices against being poisoned, and Eve Sothern walked about attractively looking for a misplaced father. Barbara Bedford contributed a good performance, as might be expected from such a clever artist. That's some cast.

OUT of the Ruins is the type of picture which is harder to write up than any other, due to its lack of either outstanding faults or merits. Two good performances by the leading characters and smooth direction made it passable, but a general lack of punch and power damaged it some, so what is there to say? Never at any time funny, I found this one very weak indeed. I entertain much sympathy for the actors. If the love story had been a bit more gripping, the sacrifice of the hero when he deserted to go to his sweetheart might have been impressive; but as it was, he just seemed weak. Part of the failure of the love story was due to the fact that the development of it was told in a title, not shown on the screen as it should have been. As far as the eye knew, the hero was kissing a comparatively strange girl, a thing which won't endear him to an audience. It was a war picture, but there wasn't much of the actual battle-field stuff, for which I was very glad. Neither did the hero have a buddy who went West with appropriate gestures, although there was one who went blind, which is second in popularity among producers. My comments for unhappy endings that I was quite surprised when Out of the Ruins turned out to have the old-time "happy ever after" ending. However, it was a matter of indifference to me whether or not the hero lived or died. In addition, I'd like to see a heroine once who had nerve enough to tell her family to hop in the lake when they ordered her to marry some old reprobate and trade in her love. I haven't seen one yet. The minute the parents start, they throw up their hands and scream for help.

Richard Barthelmess, who was starred in Out of the Ruins, gave a performance which compensated for the rest of it. He has played few roles where he could show a little lightness and sense of humor, but in this, for the first time as it should have been. As far as the eye knew, the hero was kissing a comparatively strange girl, a thing which won't endear him to an audience. It was a war picture, but there wasn't much of the actual battle-field stuff, for which I was very glad. Neither did the hero have a buddy who went West with appropriate gestures, although there was one who went blind, which is second in popularity among producers. My comments for unhappy endings that I was quite surprised when Out of the Ruins turned out to have the old-time "happy ever after" ending. However, it was a matter of indifference to me whether or not the hero lived or died. In addition, I'd like to see a heroine once who had nerve enough to tell her family to hop in the lake when they ordered her to marry some old reprobate and trade in her love. I haven't seen one yet. The minute the parents start, they throw up their hands and scream for help.

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Man Who Knew Lincoln, which was beautifully done, but I don't think it is the right thing out of which to make a motion picture. When an audience has to see a serious, dramatic picture as the feature, the things leading up to it should be humorous, instead of tragic, as the picture itself will attend to that part of the entertainment. The audience is not in the mood to accept anything very serious prior to the big feature of the evening, which was the only reason for two reel comedies.

Another angle which interests me is how they are going to standardize the humor so it will go over equally well in the cities and the sticks. City people, as a rule, like stuff which is a little subtle for those in the country, and are bored to death by the humor which parodies the great wide open spaces.

A Movietone reel or two reels of nothing but a choir singing, or someone playing a violin, or a person singing is without a doubt the dullest thing invented by the mind of man. Anybody can get exactly the same thing over the radio without having to look at the facial contortions of the performers. The radio and the phonograph have made music obsolete as entertainment outside of the home.

I wonder if there ever will be Movietone variety houses where nothing is shown but a carefully selected program of short subjects. It could be run upon exactly the same idea as the present vaudeville, and probably would be cheaper. The fallacious idea that people will never get over wanting to see actors in the flesh will soon disappear. Human beings can get used to practically anything, and it is only a question of time until all stage stuff becomes out of date.

Another benefit of the Movietone stuff is that it will provide good vaudeville entertainment for the smaller houses which insist upon uplifting the peasantry with a species of stage entertainment too awful to mention. A lot of octogenarian hoosegow with a few bum song-and-dance acts comprise these hills, and the damn things have driven me away from all the neighborhood houses, since one never knows when he is going to discover one. I don't go much anymore, however. I never have felt the same since the night at the Advershow, or whatever it was, when that garage mechanic beat me out by two numbers for the possession of a tea-set.

Reviewed in this Number

GHOST TALKS, THE—
A William Fox picture. Directed by Lewis Seiler; story by Max Marcin; scenario by Frederick H. Brennan; dialogue by Frederick H. Brennan and Carlin Thompson; assistant director, J. Raymond Grainger; photographed by Glen MacWilliams and Al Bricket; soundman, F. B. MacKenzie.

HAUNTED HOUSE, THE—
A First National picture. Directed by Benner C. McRae; story by Owen Davis; photographed by Sol Polito; produced by Wid Gunning.

HEART TO HEART—
A First National picture. Directed by William Beaumont; story by Jules Wilbur Tompkins; continuity by Adelaide Heibron; photographed by Sol Polito; art director, John J. Hughes; costume director, Max Ree; film editor, Frank Ware; produced by Wid Gunning.
The cast: Mary Astor, Lloyd Hughes, Louise Fazenda, Lucien Littlefield, Thelma Todd, Eileen Mann, Virginia Gray, Raymond McKee.

OUT OF THE RUINS—
A First National picture. Directed by John Francis Dillon; from the story by Sir Phillip Gibbs; continuity by Gerald C. Duffy; photographed by Ernest Hallor; art director, John J. Hughes; costume director, Max Ree; film editor, Cyril Gardner; produced by Henry Hobart.

SHAKEDOWN, THE—
A Universal picture. Directed by William Wyler; story and continuity by Charles A. Logue; adaptation by Clarence Marks; titles by Albert DeMond; photographed by Charles Stumar; edited by Lloyd Nosler; supervised by Robert Wyler.
The cast: James Murray, Barbara Kent, George Kotsosanos, Wheeler Oakman, Jack Hanlon, Harry Gibbon.

SPIELER, THE—
A Pathe picture. Directed by Tay Garnett; produced by Ralph Block; author, Hal Conklin; scenarists, Hal Conklin and Tay Garnett; assistant director, R. M. Fellows; production manager, Harry H. Poppe; photographed by Art Miller; art director, Edward J. Jewell; edited by Doane Harrison.
The cast: Alan Hale, Renee Adoree, Clyde Cook, Fred Kohler, Fred Warren, Jimmy Quinn, Kewpie Morgan.

SIN, THE—
A First National picture. Directed by William A. Seiter; from the play by Frederic and Fanny Hatton; adapted by Tom J. Geragthy; titles by Tom Reed; photographed by Sid Hickox; art director, Max Parker.

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THE LAUREL GROVE
By FRANK T. DAUGHERTY

The psychology craze had its chief influence, so far as my observation goes, in four departments of life: in medicine, where I know almost nothing of its effects save that the majority of reputable physicians will have nothing to do with it; in the university curriculum, where it has become the chief "grind" course (because compulsory), and where it is looked upon by students like compulsory chapel, as something to be endured with as much forbearance and fortitude as possible; in commercial salesmanship, where it had its greatest influence, perhaps its fullest trial, and its most abject failure; and in the psychological novel.

The first two departments I dismiss as being too little within the ken of this article. The third and fourth, however, seem pertinent enough to merit space. It is not many years since every book, real-estate and clothing salesman one met, as well as sellers of buttons and shoe laces, fastened one with a beady eye and practically tried to hypnotize one into buying the commodity they were selling, whether one had any use for it or not. Stores and sales organizations gave courses in "sales psychology," where it was attempted to map out for the salesman all the "reactions" a subject was likely to have to his sales talk, and the victim's objections prepared for beforehand. This led inevitably to a sort of goose-step procedure on the part of salesmen, a parrot-like harrowing of the poor devil confronting them, that was first resented and then laughed at by the public.

Better class organizations today with large sales forces will no longer tolerate this "high-powered" salesmanship. A man's sales potential are now taken into consideration, and it is recognized that to try to force one to buy something one doesn't want is to create a dissatisfied individual capable of much mischief among other potential buyers. Granted that it is a far cry from "sales-psychology" to the psychological novel, the two yet have much in common.

WHERE the notion came from that the intensive study and observation of sick and perverted individuals makes great art, I don't know. It may have been, as many suggest, an after effect of the war, an hysterical desire to plumb the depths of pain and misery. Or it may have been, as its chief votaries are so fond of saying, an attempt to find something beautiful even in the ugly. Once started, however, it seemed to have no end. Methodical-minded medical men invaded the field of literature with books full of frightful terms designed to tell one all about the thoughts one was thinking when one wasn't aware that one was thinking at all. If one were overly mothered, he had an Oedipus-rex complex. If he happened to be a timid individual, or of a forceful nature, he had a superiority-complex or an inferiority-complex. If he were ambitious, or lazy, or fearful or bold, or impulsive or cautious, or short or tall or fat or thin, he had some other sort of complex. Everything he said or thought was a matter of grave significance to these brilliant minds, who observed therein, or thought they observed therein, the reasons why poor creatures did all the other things they did.

The novel, it seems, had just been waiting for some such ally. All its time and effort heretofore had been spent with mere objective things—with customs and habits, and families and evolution, with the love of a man for a maid, or, often enough, with the love of two men for a maid. How childish that had been. All the time the old-fashioned novelist's hero was making love to his heroine, both were probably thinking about something entirely different—she about the man hiding in her garden or her boudoir, and he about other maids and other light loves, or maybe just about ordinary things like business or last night's play. And poor George Eliot and poor Jane Austin and poor Hawthorne—they hadn't even dreamed of such a state of affairs. It was possible to set down now in all detail what a fat old man or a thin old maid, or a kitchen wench or a frowning student were thinking when the world didn't see or didn't hear or didn't know. For this purpose, all the novelist had to do was think back into his own past life, his own unconsciousness, and unearth all the things he had ever done that he had been ashamed of, pin them on one of his characters—and he had a psychological novel. The wretched incidents were then named truth, because he had actually acted them himself, and so had everyone else at one time or another. Wasn't the whole of life but a roll of film or what? Of what was a decadent race most fond? Of decadence. Ergo, make the picture so miserable that the beholder can't help but recognize himself and you have—again the realistic psychological novel.

HERE and there, it is true, a Hardy and a Galsworthy and a Walpole raised their heads and went on with the serious business of trying to see life, and see it whole, and put down what they saw in novels that will represent this age to the generations who will follow. Their novels were not, it is true, made up wholly of the weaknesses and meanesses and evils of life, but neither did they ignore these. For over against this stuff they

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painted what more than balanced it—unsympathetic devotion, high courage, mercy and pity and faith and love, the color and the gallantry and the achievement of life—what Matthew Arnold called its “sweetness and light”. These novelists conceived their characters as something more than automaton, capable of judging between what they thought was right and wrong, exercising judgment. In short, making their lives and breathing and love and hate like a thousand generations of human beings had done before them. As an instance of this, when Galsworthy brought Soames to his end, in his last great novel, the press of the world echoed the event as the passing of one of the distinguished citizens of this age.

**ND all this is prefatory to remarks I want to make about The Closed Garden, by Julian Green (Harper and Brothers), whom no less a personage than M. Andre Maurois, in his introduction to the book, has called “the best of his generation”. In spite of the fact that Julian Green is an American born in France and writing in French, in spite of the fact that he went three years to Charlottesville, Virginia (where, as it is proudly stated in the back of the book, Poe studied), and wrote a novel about three American old maids called Avarice House—in spite of all this, one must disagree rather heartily with M. Maurois. This novel of Julian Green’s, which has been variously described as “violent, forceful, ambiguous, rich, powerful”, is not a subjective psychological novel such as I have attempted to describe in the foregoing paragraphs. Not at all. He has left the self-torturing methods of these weavers of hair-cloth coats for the neoclassicism of a Stendhal, a Flaubert and a Charlotte Brontë. Although he himself has “never understood” these “categories”—he is not subjective, he is objective. We have the word of a number of French critics in the back of the book to prove it.

In other words, when Mr. Green wants to tell you what is going on in his heroine’s mind, he doesn’t tell you what he thinks, judging from his own past experience, is going on in her mind. Nothing so easy. He simply returns to the classic method of describing what, if you were there, you would see going on, or hear going on, or feel going on, etc. It is the objective method. If Adrienne is in the secrecy of her bedroom, and he wants to reveal her innermost moods to you, he places her before her mirror, her round arms on its marble top, and has her blush when she suddenly recognizes that she is beautiful. Instead of putting his own interpretation on her thoughts as she stands across the street watching a house wherein dwells her lover (an old doctor who goes about his business of healing patients and doesn’t even know of her existence), he tells you that “she ran across the street and pressed her lips on the garden wall of the little white house.” This action is then explained. “As she did so, she came to her senses and looked sharply around her. The street was empty. She stifled a queer little laugh. ‘Suppose someone had seen me,’ she said to herself. ‘Bah! They would not have understood!’ No more do I, and no more will you.

**MR. Green is not only one of the “greatest living French writers.” At the tender age of twenty-seven, he is also to be ranked among those Europeans whom America—and seeing, gone back sadder but wiser men. I quote his comment on that occasion in toto, as given by Frederic Lefevre in Les Nouvelles Litteraires, and also in the back of the novel.

“I went to America with all the prejudices of the European. I expected to find a race concerned above all with its material welfare, practically indifferent to all literature as well as painting and music. But the thing for which I most reproached Americans was that they were, as we say in France, a young race. There was something in the superabundance of their health which exasperated me, and I hated their good humor”. . . . “At the core of the American soul is a profound sadness, a melancholy of which we haven’t the faintest notion in Europe. A carefree attitude is not an American product. Life presents itself for them under the aspect of tragedy. The thing that deceives one is their physical appearance, their love of sport, but that is only superficial... .”

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F course, this has very little to do with Julian Green's Closed Garden, you will say, and I shouldn't let provincial Americanisms creep into such a serious business. Our real problem grows when Longfellow and Hawthorne began that never ending trail into the fastnesses of European learning. It is true, they came back with their eyes opened; but those who followed them, have swallowed the ancient civilization bugaboo in its entirety. Now, not satisfied with hearing cultured Europeans rant at us over there, we listen to our travelers and invite them over to rant at us here. We pay them fat purses to lecture to our ladies' clubs on our unmitigated barbarities. We loan them money, and straighten out their economical tangles, and feed their starving thousands—and then fall on our faces and lick their hands when they send us a new novel or a new painting or a new symphony, because we aren't supposed to understand such things. And this is the country that supports more symphony orchestras, prints more books (and reads them), and has the highest level of education and the highest standard of living the world's history has ever known.

* * *

AGAINST VULGARITY IN PICTURES

By HAROLD HUNT, in the Oregon Journal, Portland

ough holding with Emerson that "All mankind loves a lover," The Film Spectator, a weekly magazine edited by Welford Beaton and published in the motion picture capital of America, Hollywood, holds that decency in love-making is a cardinal virtue. Beaton is directing editorial blasts in his magazine that, aimed at motion picture directors who persist in showing close-up scenes depicting long and passionate kisses, should have the hearty support of all who appreciate good, clean films. "Close-ups of kisses are about the last stand of vulgarity, and commonness in pictures," he remarks. "They coarsen romances that should be beautiful; they please 1 per cent in audiences and disgust 99 per cent. Their inclusion in pictures is due to the fact that the majority of our directors lack the fine sensibilities that should constitute the major portion of their equipment for their jobs. "Such directors cannot see any vulgarity in a close-up of a kiss. To the vulgar mind, vulgarity is a normal manifestation that is not recognizable for what it is. And as the mass mind of pictures still is vulgar, I suppose we will continue to have vulgarity as part of our screen entertainment. We will have to content ourselves with the few pictures for which we can be thankful for the good taste of their romances."

Keeping in mind Beaton's words, it is interesting to note the type of pictures that have and are establishing records in attendance, both here and elsewhere. Wings proved as clean a film story as one could desire, yet it has packed houses wherever shown. The Singing Fool is a picture that surely none could criticize from the standpoint of vulgarity, but people flock to see it.

No film story could be sweeter than Uncle Tom's Cabin and how many have enjoyed it? Seventh Heaven and Street Angel have demonstrated their drawing power, but who can deny their cleanly beauty? The romances in King of Kings, The Covered Wagon and many other great spectacle films, which have delighted untold thousands, have been without vulgarity.

Strange, isn't it, that clean pictures draw and yet directors continue to inject vulgarity into their pictures?
AN ENGLISH OPINION

Evening Standard, London:

ONE of the most stupid of the many irritating habits of film producers is the attempt to impose on the public pale repetitions of a successful picture.
Beau Geste, for instance, was followed by Beau Sabreur and a host of Foreign Legion films made by rival companies, none of them worth anything. Circus stories tumble over each other since Variety. So with the Mother film and the Russian film and the Great War film and the crime film—especially the crime film.
More than one good picture may be inspired by the same theme, of course, and the underworlds of New York and Chicago have inspired several of undoubted quality.
One of them was Underworld. Josef von Sternberg (who once worked in an English studio as plain Joe) made it very exciting and dramatic, with the aid of George Bancroft, as the chief gangster, and Clive Brook and Evelyn Brent his associates.
In The Dragnet, at the Plaza this week, Mr. Sternberg has attempted to repeat his success, with Mr. Bancroft as a detective, for a change, and Miss Brent as a bad lass. Mr. Brook is missing. Mr. William Powell is the villain. This picture is a mere shadow of Underworld. It shows a detective accustomed to using his "gun" as freely as any gangster, broken because he is led to believe that he has killed a young assistant. He resigns, takes to drink, is treated with ignominy by the crooks who used to fear him, and is redeemed at the end by the woman criminal who loves him in spite of all.
Mr. Powell, who always wears evening dress to commit murder, is as suave and sinister as ever until he is hit himself. Then he smiles a sweet, forgiving smile, grips hands with the detective, and shows that a cold-blooded assassin may have a heart of gold beneath his starched shirtfront.
Mr. Sternberg must have perspired in the effort to find new effects. In the cabaret scene (oh, yes!) the chief char-
acters are almost buried in paper streamers. Most of them are smoking, and a casual cigarette end might have led to effects unforeseen by the director.

THE EXTRA GIRL

By Margery Meadows

"All on the set, all on the set!"
This call in your dreams haunting you yet.
Assistant directors shouting away
Is all in the course of an Extra Girl's day.
"When do we eat, when do we eat?"
Murmurs some blonde, dead on her feet.
"Who wants to know?" someone replies,
While a seedy faced Sheik complains of klieg eyes.

"All on the set, all on the set!"
"Wait till I powder, my make-up's a wreck."
"Aw, we're only shooting the back of your neck"—
Yells the assistant, "all on the set."
"Hit em—Kill em—Kill em again."
"Sounds like murder," yaps a new dame,
"That's for de lights, where from you came?"
Pipes up a Spanish bull thrower from Spain.

Seven-fifty your pay, seven-fifty your pay,
To the tune of N. G. and the sound of O. K.
Maybe you'll star when you've smile decay—
Still high is the hope in an Extra Girl's day.
"My Uncle's a Viscount"—"My Dad is a Peer"—
"My allowance from home is twelve thousand a year"—
"Cut out the gab, your brain is all wet"—
Yells the assistant, "All on the set!"

Back to the dish—Back to the plate,
A waitress become before it's too late,
For you'll soon tire of crashing the casting gate—
For such is the end of an Extra Girl's fate.

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DE MILLE STUDIO

Demmy Lamson, Manager
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Howard Bretherton
Now Directing
"The Greyhound Limited"
with Monte Blue
A Warner Bros. Vitaphone Feature

ROWLAND V. LEE
Director
THE FIRST KISS
PARAMOUNT-FAMOUS-LASKY
Who's to be financial king of the movies?

A girl who thought she didn't know how to talk

We enter a plea for some grey-haired romances

Reviews by the Editor

OUT OF THE RUINS
THREE WEEK-ENDS
SYNTHETIC SIN

REVENGE
HAUNTED HOUSE

By the Junior Critic

THE OUTCAST
WIN THAT GIRL

SHADY LADY
THE WARE CASE

THREE WEEK-ENDS
The Last Word

In Tone
Beautiful Cabinets
Workmanship

Is the verdict of those who have heard the New Victrola-Radiola Combination Phonograph and Radio

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Nominating Joe Schenck
As the King of the Movies

The financial convolutions of the motion picture industry never excited me very much. But I would like to know what is going on in the heads of Joe and Nick Schenck and Adolph Zukor. They're going to provide us with something to talk about. This merger business really hasn't started. When it reaches a more advanced stage, I think we will find that the Zukor-Schenck group will have things pretty much their own way. Fox and Warners have been grabbing the headlines for a year or more, and the others have been eclipsed. But it won't be for long. Both the Schencks and Zukor already have more money than they know what to do with. It means so little to them that any one of them would bet ten thousand dollars on a pair of sights without batting an eye. There is just one thing that men like them want—the headlines. They want no more money, but they want a lot more power. Zukor and the two Schencks mean Paramount, Metro and United Artists. It is amusing now to watch the headlines going to the Warners, and probably no one is more amused than Zukor and the Schencks. When they want the headlines—and they will—they will gobbled up everything that stands between them and supreme power. If they ever want First National, they will take it. Warner Brothers are prominent now only because the Schencks and Zukor don't care if they are. In two years the brothers will have receded to the place they occupied before their sudden rise. They can't be great producers because they haven't the germ of greatness in them. They could hold their position, and solidify it, if they would allow the brains of others to function, and if they would get over their petty cash ideas; but there is no danger of them doing either. I hope they are enjoying to the limit their hour of triumph. It will be a brief one. The most interesting figure in pictures is that lone ranger, William Fox. I'm not so sure just where he comes in. But I am satisfied that he never will be snuffed out because he is showing more sense than any of the others in consolidating his position; he is making the best pictures. That wise little Irish newspaper man, Winnie Sheehan, the greatest box-office-production mind in the industry, realizes that as it is a business of making pictures, the sure way of making it a strong business is to make good pictures. As long as Fox is making the kind of pictures he is making now, he will continue to be a big factor in production, and his position will be so strong that he can resist any onslaughts made on him from the outside. Universal occupies its own position, and I can't see why anyone should want to disturb it. Standing a little in the background now is Joe Kennedy. I got a note from him the other day stating that he wasn't sure if he were going to stay in pictures. I think he is. The Irish psychology is as definite as that of the Jew. Zukor and the Schencks want power because it appeals to their oriental love of splendor; Joe Kennedy wants to be something in pictures for the unholy joy he would get out of cracking a lot of pates that cracked his. The Spectator was the first film paper to ask what good Joe Kennedy was accomplishing in pictures, and was the first to suggest that his stay in them would not be long, but in the back of my mind when I was putting all that on paper, was the idea that the young Irish banker could be a factor in the business if he would get a closer acquaintance with pictures themselves and cease to regard the financial side as the only important one. If he ever got mad, it was a cinch he would be dangerous. Kennedy is smiling, but an Irishman can go into battle with a smile on his face. I think we safely may put it down that Joe Kennedy is mad. His future in pictures will depend upon the extent to which his brain will be capable of supporting his anger. Meanwhile he stands in the background as a possibility, while our chief interest centers in Joe and Nick Schenck and Adolph Zukor. And the greater of the Schencks is Joe. If we ever have a king of the movies, I think it will be Joe—Joe Schenck, I mean—but even at that, the Irish Joe always is a possibility.

Someone Should Give This One a Voice Test

The other day I sat beside a director and listened to one of our young screen actresses plead with her screen husband not to leave her. His suspicions were unfounded, she declared; there never had been anything irregular in her relations with his friend "I am innocent!" she declared. "You must not leave me! I love you only you!" It was a bare little set and she was a drab little person, enacting a scene for a silent picture. She is one of that sizable army of girls, fairly well known, ambitious, and with talent that can be developed. I chatted with her before she went into the scene. She...
was feeling pretty low for only that morning she had received word that someone else had been cast for a talking picture part upon which she had counted. "A girl from the stage got it," the screen girl told me. "They told me her voice was trained. I haven't been able to get a voice test yet. I'm not under contract, and no one will give me one. Do you think girls from the stage are going to get all the breaks now?" 

Before I could answer she was called to the set for her scene, a close-up. The young man to whom she was supposed to be making her plea had gone off the pay-roll the day previous. She was alone on the set, and faced a "nigger," one of those black, narrow uprights that vie in inspirational qualities with a piece of tar paper. At this dead, dark, unresponsive surface she directed her plea for forgiveness; before it she batted for her home, for her husband's love. Tears flowed from her eyes as in a voice, choking with emotion, but clear, and warm, and vibrant, she pleaded for the faith her husband once had in her. "O. K.," said the director when she had concluded. He wiped the tears from his eyes as I wiped those from mine, and she came back to me and continued our conversation. I wondered about the stage actress who got the part this girl wanted. I wondered if she could stand in front of a "nigger" and reproduce a heart-break; if she could put tears into the microphone, if she could sob out words that voiced her yearning and be unconscious of the words as the screen girl was. I imagined how the "trained" voice would do it, the voice that would give heed to sibilants and syllables, that would rely upon elocution to show an emotion that came raw and bleeding from the heart of the girl who feared for her future because she had not been trained to talk. 

When the sound situation gets settled down I think that we will find that our talking will have this order of merit: first, the actor (or actress) with years of training on both the stage and the screen; second, the screen actor with no experience on the stage; third, the stage actor with no experience on the screen. And here and there among those in the first class we will find some of those whom we have put in the third class. From the sidelines of sets innumerable times I have been moved by speeches spoken in front of the camera by young screen artists who have no stage experience. I think I am safe in asserting that for every scene that causes a tear when reproduced in a motion picture theatre there are twenty that cause tears on sets during their shooting. I nearly sobbed out loud while watching Jack Barrymore do a scene for The Beloved Rogue, and when I saw the same scene on the screen it moved me not at all. 

In this instance, there was the trained stage voice to help the scene as I saw it, but I know of scores of other instances when the tear-producing voices were those of the boys and girls who never have been on the stage. They are trained only to feel emotions, and prior to the event of sound they used their voices only to increase the emotion within themselves. And when the microphone catches that kind of talk it will have the finest thing it can give us in the way of dramatic dialogue. And I think that among those we like to listen to will be my young friend who pleaded with her screen husband not to leave her. Will some one please give her a voice test?

* * *

Using Chester Conklin to Restore Shattered Nerves

The Haunted House is a clever picture. It was directed by Benjamin Christensen for First National. It is a mystery picture without the weakness common to most pictures of the kind, that of being almost meaningless until the last reel is reached, when we are told what everything in the previous reels meant. We are baffled by what goes on in the haunted house, but we find it none the less entertaining on that account. There is no question of the identity of someone; instead there is a series of mysterious and weird things happening before our eyes, gripping on their own account, and having an entertainment value that is not dependent upon an explanation when the dénouement is reached in the final reel. By placing his camera almost on the floor, Christensen gives a eerie quality to his characters, an intelligent treatment of a story that is designed to give brave men goose-flesh and make cowards shriek. The heroic proportions of the characters supplied by the lowered camera gain added effectiveness by the clever use of lights and shadows. In this regard Christensen does not go to extremes. There are no dazzling shafts that bore their way through gloom to pick out characters, no weird effects offered on the theory that the story needs assistance. Nor did Sol Polito shoot any of his scenes from distorted angles. Occasionally he placed his camera behind a chair and shot scenes through its back, but such shots were consistent with the usual low positions of the camera. There is no doubt that pictures like this one—Paul Leni's Cat and Canary is another—have a devastating effect on the nerves of those of their viewers who have nerves, and fault might be found with them on that account. In this respect there is a further exhibition of cleverness in the treatment of The Haunted House. Every time the spookiness gets to a point that would strain stout nerves, Chester Conklin strolls into the scene, his attitude expressing his intense longing to know what the deuce is going on about him, and if his every appearance is not greeted by shrieks of laughter it will mean that audiences will not follow the example Donald and I set in the projection room. The Haunted House really is a comedy, and an exceedingly funny one, made so almost entirely by the superb performance given by Conklin. His reaction to all the weird and mysterious things that go on around him assures the picture a hilarious reception by the public. He and Thelma Todd, a First National contract artist who is being built up and who has enough ability to justify it, are the featured players. Behind them is a remarkable cast—Barbara Bedford, Eve Sothern, "She Goes to War" 

HENRY KING'S PRODUCTION FOR INSPIRATION - HALPERIN PICTURES 

LLOYD NOSLER FILM EDITOR
Flora Finch, Montagu Love, Larry Kent, Edmund Breese, Sidney Bracy, William V. Mong, Johnnie Gough and Erville Alderson. Miss Bedford’s appearances on the screen have been all too rare. The splendid performance she gave in Mockery opposite Lon Chaney should have earned for her recognition as one of our most talented dramatic actresses. It is a strange business that does not make more use of a girl endowed so abundantly with both beauty and brains. In Haunted House Monty Love and Bill Mong give extraordinary characterizations as a couple of nuts who are responsible for most of the hair-raising stunts that agitate the cobwebs in the spooky place. Despite all the fine performances, however, the picture belongs to the director who made use of the human elements, the camera, and such externals as wind and rain to put together a piece of screen entertainment that will please the world. There are a couple of slips. Conklin’s hat blows off and apparently rolls in the direction from which the wind is blowing. Although we get the impression that it is raining outside people coming into the house have no rain on them. The source of light in the haunted house is not indicated.

* * *

Clara Bow’s Friends Will Like Her Latest Picture

C

laras Bow and Neil Hamilton stage a gesticullarly energetic quarrel in the middle of a cafe, with well populated tables on all sides of them, but attract the mild attention of only three or four people. In real life that kind of a scene in that kind of cafe would have created a sensation. Later the same two young people stage a fervid love scene in the midst of a large crowd that surrounds them on the street corner. In real life such an exhibition would be impossible. Three Week-Ends, the story accredited to Elinor Glyn, is going to suffer somewhat from its treatment, but it is going to make money because it is entertaining and because Clara is its star. It is cut strictly to the Bow pattern and permits its star to give one of those scintillating, extraordinarily artistic performances that box-offices tell us delight the picture patrons of the world. I was alone in a projection room when I viewed the picture, and when I discovered that the story was a simple little one that made no demand on my attention, I occupied my thoughts, with that degree of concentration that only a projection room permits, with a close study of Clara Bow’s performance. With hawklike intensity—although I know nothing about hawks—I watched every action of the young woman, her fluent arm and body movements, her fleeting expressions, her smile, her power, and marvelled again at her amazing artistry. There was not one instant when she was not acting. Yet not for one instant did she give the impression that she was acting. But she does definitely give the impression that she will last. Paramount will have to watch its step with Clara. I do not blame it for playing its one-role stars out to the end and then letting them go without making any effort to give them other characterizations, for its primary business is earning dividends for its stockholders, not nursing stars to keep them alive; but in Clara it has an artist who will pay dividends on thought, time, and patience expended on her future while she still has a present. She has done just about enough of these pictures in which she can have unnoticed brows in cafes and love scenes in streets. Also I think she has exposed her person quite sufficiently to make superfluous our further acquaintance with such intimate details of it as good taste would indicate should be secrets shared only by her and her bathtub, not something for the whole world to gloat over. Her future program should consist of stories of ascending merit until she reaches the realm of high screen art, a position that I am confident she will reveal sufficient talent to maintain. There are a few other spots in his direction of Three Week-Ends where Clarence Badger indulges in screen habits that directors soon must discard if they are to keep abreast of advancing art. Neil Hamilton stands by his employer’s desk. The employer enters the office, slams the door, and walks briskly to the desk, and Neil is not aware of his presence until the two are close enough to one another for their elbows to touch. How long are directors going to ask the public to believe such ridiculous things? I know that glycerine costs money, but they say that Clara sheds real tears on the set, therefore there is no economic reason why she should not wipe them away, and there can be no doubt of the advisability of having her do so when the matter is considered from an esthetic angle. Throughout an entire sequence in this picture her beauty is marred by two smears as much out of place as a worm on a rose. But on the whole, Three Week-Ends is a rollicking little tale that will please Clara’s friends. Neil Hamilton gives another of those fine performances that have become a habit with him. Harrison Ford, one of my favorites who never fails to please me, does splendid work. Edythe Chapman and Guy Oliver are more than satisfactory as

ATTENTION, SPECTATOR READERS!

DONALD started the revolution. He began a march around the library, chanting “No work during Christmas week!” I just had laid down a letter from Stewart Edward White tempting me to Burlingame for a week of golf, an impossibility with a weekly on my hands. But I joined Donald’s revolution. I marched behind him and we united in wild shouts of “Down with Spectator readers!” Virgil and Ko Ko were thrilled by the spectacle and barked furiously as they brought up the rear, lending just the right touch of ferocity to the uprising, but so astounding Lord Roberts and Louie, our two cats, that they arched their backs and spat at one another, a ridiculous thing to do, for they really are the best of friends. The revolution lost its noise, but none of its human intensity when we were reminded that there was company in the living-room. The upshot of it was the decision to publish no Spectator during Christmas week. We’re going to skip one number at a time when people are thinking about other things, anyway.

There will be no Spectator under date of December 29. We’ll knock off for the year with the December 22 number.

Donald and I are going to Burlingame. Golf is going to occupy all my attention. If I meet anyone who even as much as mentions motion pictures to me, no doubt I will sit down beside him and enter into an animated discussion of them.
Clara’s parents. There are a couple of people in the cast whose names I do not know. One plays the head of an insurance company and the other Ford’s secretary, and both give admirable performances. The titles do not assist the production greatly.

* * *

By No Means as Hot as the Titles Proclaimed Her

DOLORES Del Rio still has but one performance to her credit. She was magnificent in Resurrection, but has done nothing outstanding since then because Edwin Carewe has not found for her another part that suits her so well. Solely on account of the fact that she is of Spanish type, Carewe persists in presenting her as something hot and sizzling; giving her parts that call for a coyness and cuteness that she does not possess, and not the kind of parts that make demands on the talent that Resurrection revealed her as possessing. After she had demonstrated her ability to handle capably a heavy dramatic part, Fox sought to please the box-office by starring her undraped legs in Carmen, and various other producers have presented her in roles that have explored her possibilities without finding anything that allowed her to repeat the success she achieved in the Tolstoy story. Dolores Del Rio is restricted by her appearance and personality to a definite line of parts. She really should play heavies, but it is all right to make an effort to establish her as a star by giving her sympathetic roles, but it would be easier to make her a female Emil Jannings than a successful Mary Pickford. Mary could have been a fascinating and amusing bear tamer’s daughter in Revenge. Dolores plays the part in a way that makes it neither fascinating nor amusing. It is a good example of bad casting, and the box-office will show the effect of it when her next picture is released. I can not see her as Evangeline, her current production, nor can I conceive of her coming anywhere near the world’s conception of the heroine of Longfellow’s great poem. Ed Carewe no doubt will build up alluring atmosphere for his poetic romance, but I hope he will profit by the lesson Revenge could teach him—that a mis-cast star can dissipate any atmosphere. No one could complain of the externals of Revenge. It is mounted sumptuously and has many beautifully composed and photographed scenes; and the acting is quite good enough to make any picture successful from the standpoint of dramatic art, yet when the film had run about half its length, I was relieved to discover that my youngest daughter shared my opinion that going home would be a more engaging way of spending our time. I, who never have walked out on Clara Bow, Laura La Plante, Colleen Moore or Norma Shearer, walked out on Dolores Del Rio because I was bored stiff by the whole picture.

The conflict between the titles and the action was too much for me. With dictionary-exhausting persistency the title writer kept telling me that Dolores was untamed, fero-cious, wild, passionate, primitive, and palpitating; that her blood was on fire, that she ate cinders and spat flames, and generally was hot stuff; and all the time Director Carewe persisted in presenting her as a young woman who liked to sit placidly in her father’s embrace as she told him how her blood was boiling, and who was somewhat timid in the scenes in which live bears shared the camera with her. “Burning passions—fierce hatreds—

wild loves” was the introduction to a scene showing a band of gypsies who failed utterly to produce anything that warranted the intense excitement of the title writer. “You scratch—and bite—and claw,” said LeRoy Mason to Dolores after he had carried her miles on his shoulders as she sat in his saddle and managed his horse. To ask us to believe that any man could carry an unfettered and unwilling girl away on horseback, especially such a wild, fierce and untamed daughter of nature as the titles proclaimed Dolores to be, is going a little farther than any intelligent picture patron is liable to follow, but to rub it in by telling us that throughout this impossible ride the sizzling heroine bit and scratched and clawed when we could see that she did nothing of the sort, is a safe way in which any production can commit cinematic suicide. And that’s what Revenge did.

* * *

Colleen as a Girl Who Tries to Sin, But Doesn’t Know How

SYNTHETIC Sin is not going to be Colleen Moore’s greatest box-office success although I think that her performance in it is in some respects the cleverest thing she has done on the screen. She plays a thoroughly dumb girl of seventeen or eighteen, and dumb girls are too rare now to be popular screen material. But those with a taste for a fine characterization will find much in the picture to delight them. Colleen Moore is an exceedingly talented girl, a fact that she impresses on us in this picture every moment she is on the screen. There are two high spots in her acting; she imitates Paderewski at the piano in a manner that will bring roars of laughter from any audience, and during a long dolly shot showing her walking along the street as the first adventure in the life of sin she has determined to live, she gives us a succession of facial expressions which show us the strides she is making in perfecting that branch of her art. In this day and age when we are told constantly that all our young people sin, and when the screen busies itself in presenting so many scenes of the wild life they lead, it is refreshing to have on the screen one young girl who would like to sin, but who doesn’t know how. The whole atmosphere of Synthetic Sin is clean, notwithstanding its contact with the underworld. William A. Seiter directed with the happy touch that is characteristic of his work, but I wish he would get over the horror he has of people’s backs. I believe that if in forming his groups he placed one or two people with their backs to the camera, he could photograph them without disastrous results. He seems now to have the idea that if he did such a thing the studio would blow up or the end of the world would come, but, even so, he should take a chance. Tony Moreno plays opposite Colleen. He seems to be getting handsomer with each picture, and also with each picture he shows that he is becoming a better actor all the time. We hear a great deal about the scarcity of leading men, but I have not seen Moreno on the screen often enough of late to indicate that producers used him as one way of getting around the shortage. Tony is one of the most agreeable screen personalities we have and as long as he is available no producer need worry about the lack of acceptable leading men. Others who give a good account of themselves in Synthetic Sin are Montagu Love, Gertrude Astor, Edythe Chapman, Kathryn McGuire and Gertrude Howard. Gert-
rued Howard is a colored woman with a soul. She plays
Colleen's maid, guide and comforter, and makes a big
contribution to the enjoyable features of the picture. Tom
Reed has supplied a fine lot of titles. One of them is
funny enough to make Tom famous. Colleen leads Moreno
to some queer looking motor contraption. When he looks
at it in surprise and expresses curiosity as to what it is
Colleen explains with that happy grin that is characteris-
tic of her: "Our Rolls-Royce married a motor cycle."

Carthay Circle Theatre Runs as an
Indication of What the Public Wants

W hat kind of pictures does the public want? Dur-
ing the twenty-six months that the Carthay Circle
theatre has been running it has shown twelve pic-
tures. The one that had the longest run was What Price
Glory? I criticized it on the score of its vulgarity and its
revolting eating scenes, but it has scored a great suc-
cess throughout the world. It ran to big business at the
Carthay Circle for twenty-three weeks, six days. Seventh
Heaven came next with a run of twenty-one weeks, six
days, indicating that the public had a slight preference
for the rawness of the war picture over the tenderness
and beauty of the Borzage masterpiece. The Volga
Boatman enjoyed the third largest run, lasting an even nine-
teen weeks. These three pictures have been the outstand-
ing Carthay Circle successes, and represent three totally
different kinds of screen entertainment. There is a drop
of nine weeks to the next picture, Colleen Moore in Lilac
Time, which ran just ten weeks, beating by one day the
run of Sunrise, which lasted nine weeks, six days. This
coldly correct attraction was followed both in booking and
in duration by the warmly human Four Sons, Jack Ford's
outstanding production, which ran eight weeks, six days.
It gave way to The Street Angel, which presented again
the Gaynor-Farrell-Borzage combination that delighted
the world with Seventh Heaven. But in the new picture
the combination lasted thirteen weeks, three days less
than the Seventh Heaven run, closing after holding the
screen for eight weeks, three days, proving after all, the
story is the thing, and not the cast and the direction. The
unspeakable vulgar Loves of Carmen had the next longest
run, lasting seven weeks, three days. What Price Glory?
was followed into the house by Seventh Heaven, and Loves
of Carmen was the next attraction. Apparently Glory ex-
hausted the public's capacity for absorbing vulgarity,
and after Seventh Heaven had purified the atmosphere, the
public showed a disinclination to support for a long run
another picture that was offensive. No doubt Carmen
would have lasted longer if Glory had not preceded it into
the house. Going back to the record we find that the
second picture shown at Carthay Circle had the ninth long-
est run, Bardeleys, the Magnificent lasting seven weeks,
one day. Mother Knows Best, which had Madge Bellamy's
imitations to offset Louise Dresser's magnificent perfor-
manee, ran for an even six weeks. When I reviewed Fazil I
stated that I liked it, but that it would have a shorter
run at the Carthay Circle than any other picture that pre-
ceded it. Not only has that proven true, but its run was
shorter than that of any picture that thus far has suc-
ceeded it. It ran five weeks, three days. Interference,
the first all-talking picture to be shown, ran five weeks.

One of the strange things about the makers of motion
pictures is their reluctance to give us grey-haired
romances. The screen would have us believe that anyone
over twenty is too old to love. Producers would have us
believe that in some mysterious way they determine the
average mentality of an audience. An easier task, I
imagine, and one whose result would be even more valuable
to them, would be to determine the average age of the
people who make up an audience. If I had to make a
guess, I would place the figure somewhere between twenty
and twenty-five, which in no way affects my belief in the
box-office value of grey-haired romances. Say we have
Edythe Chapman, that sympathetic, understanding, and
talented screen mother, and Alec Francis, the sterling
character actor, as wife and husband. Let us have a scene
in which they are standing together by the cradle of a
grandchild as they register by a handclasp, or in any
other way appropriate to their ages, that their love for
one another is as strong as it could have been when they
plighted their troth, that it has endured throughout their
lives, and has been mellowed by the gliding years. This,
I claim, would be rich fare for the twenty-year-old audi-
ence. The youth would reach for the maiden's hand, and
he would lean toward her and whisper, "That is the way
we will be," and the pressure of her fingers would signify
her assent. All the couples below the age of the couple
on the screen would get the same reaction. No young
romance has the tenderness and sweetness of a love ro-
mane that has endured. There is inspiration for young
lovers in the ripened love of grey-haired people who hand
in hand have marched forward with the years and taken
their romance with them. Love is something that takes
on beauty as it sheds its passion, that takes on a richer
glow as it first while heat grows cooler. It is a mis-
taken impression of the screen that the twenty-year-old
audience must of necessity be interested only in twenty-
year-old love. It is interested in young love as a fact of
to-day, and it is interested in old love as a promise of
what to-morrow has in store.

Believe Me or Not

I think I can four times out of five, tell in advance
whether spoken screen dialogue will get a laugh or
not. Nor is this so very remarkable. Any one born
with a vein of humor and who has had my extended
experience in writing for all kinds of comedians, play-
ing all sorts of theatres, to all grades of audiences, can
probably do the same thing.

James Madison

Originals — Adaptations — Titles — Dialogue
323 North Citrus Ave., Los Angeles 0Regon 5627
(My agent is S. George Ullman)

That all's fair in love and war is all right as an
apothegm, but it's a poor premise upon which to
build a screen story. First National seemed to think
that it would excuse these things in Out of the Ruins
that could be excused on no other grounds. The result
was an exceedingly poor picture, one of the kind that makes you
wonder as you view it how under the sun the producers
failed to grasp the impossibility of it long before shoot-
ing began. You can introduce your hero as a sneak-thief,
THE great army of Photoplay readers has decided that Seventh Heaven was the best picture of 1927. The presentation each year of Jim Quirk's medal is a matter of importance to the industry. The critics of the country pick the best picture of the year for Film Daily, but their decision is not half so significant as that arrived at by Photoplay readers who don't pretend to know what makes the motion picture wheels go around, but who do know what kind of pictures they like. In succession they have liked Humoresque, Tol'able David, Robin Hood, Covered Wagon, Abraham Lincoln, Big Parade, Beau Geste, and now Seventh Heaven, the picture that headed my selection of the ten best pictures of 1927. Look over the list. You will not find one picture in which the sex interest amounted to anything. You will not find one that belonged to any particular phase that the screen was passing through at the time it was made, such as the underworld phase that now is occupying so much of the industry's attention. The note common to all the Photoplay medal winners was cleanliness. They are wholesome pictures with heart interest in them, the kind of picture that the whole family could see and enjoy. Frank Borzage directed two of them, and the others were directed by Henry King, Alan Dwan, James Cruze, Phil Rosen, King Vidor, and Herbert Brenon. All of them are directing still, and turning out good pictures.

A GOOD example of the ignoring of non-essentials is given in Sins of the Fathers. Ruth Chatterton and Matthew Betz are shown as a pair of adventurers who foster themselves on Emil Jannings when his bootlegging activities bring him wealth. We don't know who the two are; we don't know if they are married to one another, whether they are brother and sister, or merely two crooks who have drifted together. We dismiss the idea that they may be married only when Miss Chatterton marries Jannings. Betz continues in the employ of Jannings, which keeps him in the picture, but it ends without revealing to us what his relation to Miss Chatterton was. It makes no difference. We are interested in the two only for what they do in the picture, and who they are or where they came from is a matter of no importance for it has nothing to do with anything in the story. In a novel an author no doubt would feel compelled to give us the antecedents of the couple as an assistance to the reader in visualizing them. In a picture we need no such assistance; we see them doing the things that interest us for their bearing on the story, and what they did before we see them is so unimportant that it does not even pique our curiosity.

DIRECTORS should give heed to the fact that the American manner of drinking liquor does not prevail in foreign countries. A Woman of Affairs is laid in England. In it Jack Gilbert drinks whiskey straight from one of the diminutive glasses common in this country. I have been in quite a number of English homes and clubs, and have lived among Englishmen in other countries, but I have never seen one of the little glasses used. An Englishman always takes his whiskey in a long glass with plenty of soda. In Night Watch, with a French locale, we have a Frenchman drinking a glass of wine at one gulp. Frenchmen sip their wines. I spent a year in France and during that time I did not see one Frenchman drink his wine as it is drunk in the picture.

HER Cardboard Lover, Edward Everett Horton's current starring vehicle at the Vine Street Theatre, is one of the best stage attractions offered in Hollywood for some time. Horton not only again demonstrates what an excellent actor he is, but in this play he proves that he is a generous star, for he puts it on a nice, big platter and hands it to Florence Eldridge, who shows her gratitude by proving worthy of the trust. She gives a delightful performance. She and Horton are captivating in all their scenes. If you are looking for a wholly satisfactory evening's entertainment you will find it at the Vine Street.

THE Movietone shots of football games, which are a feature of the Carthay Circle program, further expand our ideas of the possibilities of sound. Hitherto such scenes have bored me, but I found to my delight that the addition of sound made them so graphic that I became excited and alert to the point of being able to follow the plays. I suggest to Winfield Sheehan that he suggest to his

"Super-Secretary"

Competent young woman, eight years' newspaper, publicity, advertising and office experience, seeks salaried position as secretary to screen or stage writer, with opportunity to work into collaboration. Attractive personality; dramatic training; student of screen; widely read; analytical type of mind; phenomenally good memory for stories; excellent research and detail worker. Successful record in difficult and unusual positions. Ample proof of abilities in scrap books and references. Appointments by letter only. Miss Lynne, 2022 West Adams Street.
Movietone News men that they shoot an entire game, with someone at the microphone to call off the names of the men who make the plays. Such a feature would please the millions of football fans throughout the country, and it would please me, which is much more important, for I am not a football fan and if I can follow with any degree of excitement something in which I am not interested, it follows that millions of other people, also uninterested, would get the same kick out of it. I'll confess, however, that I rather would have William Fox make the experiment with his money than with mine.

* * *

We are beginning to read now how this or that stage writer is returning to New York, and this or that stage actor is called East by an important part that is awaiting him. Some of the papers are stating frankly that stage writers and actors do not fit into sound pictures, and that the studios are beginning to find it out. Six months ago The Spectator predicted precisely what is happening now. It said that we still were in the screen business and that there was no place in it for stage actors or writers without screen training. What a lot of time and money would have been saved if producers had listened to us.

GARNERED IN THE MAIL

Don't you think you have advertised Ko Ko enough? Why not leave your dogs alone for a few issues and get back to your old standby—the punctuation of titles? Or if you must ring Ko Ko in, why not give us her views on how little we know about punctuation?

A TITLE WRITER.

The last suggestion is not a bad one. If I could get Ko Ko's views, I believe they would prove sound. She is a puppy, approaching her sixth month, and is as persistently inquisitive as all puppies are. Her every voice is a query, every look in her eye a question, and to show that she knows a damned sight more about punctuation than most title writers, she carries her tail all the time in the shape of a question mark.

Criticism is absolutely necessary for the betterment of one's work, and The Spectator has never failed the actors, always giving them the opportunity not to repeat their errors, therefore, your constructive criticism is surely welcomed. If you can manage to see more sunshine than fog in my work, I assure you this will be perfectly topside with me, because I sincerely admire your opinion.

PAULINE GARON.

Startling as it may seem to you, the leading mind among the producers in the matter of the use of the sound-device is Joseph M. Schenck. His projection of Hugo von Hofmannsthal of Vienna into the ranks of cinema scenarists is the first important advance that the new medium has made to date. When you have laid down the Munsterberg book you may agree with Mr. Schenck—"The danger is that the public may be poisoned by talkies." Mr. Schenck, moreover, appears to have introduced into the movie industry the first real use of the element of surprise which is just as essential in big business as it is in military strategy. If you will quietly watch developments at the United Artists after the arrival of Reinhardt and Von Hofmannsthal you will see how true is my tip.

C. R., NEW YORK.

Somewhere nearer the front of this Spectator I already have nominated Joe Schenck for king of the movies. I believe he has the keenest business mind in pictures, essentially a Big Business mind which has no tolerance for details, but much time for big things, and I am ready to believe what C. R. says about his ability to grasp sound.

December 3.

I have been waiting to read of the manner in which you rewarded the Extra Girl who was instrumental in getting you to lower the price of The Spectator to ten cents on the newstands. I understand from one newsdealer that it has increased your sales three times over—and the Extra Girl gets nothing!

GEORGE B.

November 8.

I was astonished to read my little note in print and more than astonished when I discovered that you were going to grant my plea and make the price of The Spectator lower. But all this astonishment was nothing to the sheer joy I felt when I received your charming note telling me that hereafter I was to be a guest-reader of The Spectator—that I was to receive it every week with your compliments.

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AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By Donald Beaton — The Spectator's 18-Year-Old Critic

SUPERTITION from which the motion picture industry gradually is being freed is that the heroine must be so pure that she shames the lilies in the field, and that if she happens to get mixed up in an affair, it is either misplaced confidence or absent-mindedness; and the people who look askance at it are really evil-minded old hypocrites. Naturally, when Corinne Griffith was introduced in The Outcast as a lady of rather low origin I expected the difficult story of a lady in some material, or some other poor but honest person. Imagine my embarrassment when I discovered that she was frankly what she was, and made no bones about it. William Seiter, in a very amusing sequence, even satirized the usual motion picture stuff. That was the thing which made the picture interesting and the people real. It gave Miss Griffith with Edmund Lowe, who played the man who gave her a new start in life, a strength and poignancy which her splendid acting turned into a really beautiful and artistic piece of work. Seiter handled the relationship between the man and the girl very cleverly. Until the man was aroused by the faithlessness of the girl he thought he really loved, he never realized what the adoration of the other girl meant to him. The whole thing was handled naturally and intelligently.

In one sequence she prepared a New Year's dinner for him, but when he came, it was only to tell her he was going somewhere else. There was a lot of pathos then, but he ended it by coming back and taking her with him. He was shown to be fond of her, so it was the only natural thing for him to do. At the hotel she made a remark to one of the maids, which showed that there would be likely to make to another unless he was engaged in a quarrel. As a result they had a tiff, which was shot in individual close-ups, although they were sitting practically shoulder to shoulder. Seiter showed a tendency all through the picture to use the antiquated cut instead of the new and more useful method of swinging the camera from side to side. There was a scene where Miss Griffith was standing below a window, and Lowe was leaning out of it which would have been greatly improved by the abolition of cuts. Incidentally, during the battle in the hotel, Lowe informed her that she was lacking in refinement. She was shown as caring so much for him that a remark like that would hurt her more than it would anger, but it was a pitifully weak scene and handled quite unfairly. Lowe was shown as being of a kindly nature, so I expected him to feel sorry immediately for what he had said; but he didn't. Those were two inconsistencies which I didn't like so well. However, Seiter deserves a medal for ending his picture without a clinch, nor are there any clinging kisses in the whole thing. His two characters kiss each other without great pleasure, but they don't take away the appetite, which was fortunate, for I saw the picture just before Thanksgiving.

I have seen Corinne Griffith many times, but this time is the performance of hers which I like the best of all. The artistry of her work was greatly enhanced by a human note which has been more or less absent from her other work. Edmund Lowe handled his role capably, and Kathryn Carver made a good heavy comedian. Louise Fazenda, Huntly Gordon and James Ford completed the cast.

DUE to a weak climax, Shady Lady was prevented from being a really first class motion picture. When the action reached what was supposed to be its height, there was a lack of surprise which is one of the elements of surprise introduced when Louise Wolheim, who is apparently defeated, gains the upper hand again. As Wolheim was provided with several opportunities to get his enemies into his power again by simply pulling a gun, it was obvious to anyone that the openings were being ignored because of something to come. Naturally, when it came, the punch was all gone but there was no way out anyway. Acceptably. Miss Carol was quite as vivacious as usual, although her acting in the few scenes she had was chiefly dental.

* * *

DAVID Butler can direct comedy of a certain type, as he demonstrates in Win That Girl, a silly story which is made amusing in spots by his little touches. He had a good opening scene, and the picture never will get into any hall of fame. There are a lot of funny and clever things that read and enjoyed the story in The Saturday Evening Post from which it was made, chiefly because it was well written; but there wasn't enough in it to make a screen play. In the story, the hero started out to find himself a mate with athletic tendencies, because he wanted to make a good football player of his son. However, his well laid plan came to naught when he fell in love with someone who was not very husky. He married her, which was human and natural; but in the picture the man married the first strong woman he saw, which was distinctly not so good. It didn't seem natural. Another thing which was very, very unnatural was the head coach of a college team going into ecstasies over a player before the player himself got it. That was something that wasn't supposed to be. The only thing which ended Win That Girl wasn't so hot. It was too perfectly rehearsed, or it gave that impression. The players ran leisurely along until they were supposed to be tackled, then they fell, whether there was anyone around or not. At the last, where the hero grabs the ball and runs to a touchdown, he ran at least a hundred and fifty yards, and twenty-five tacklers. I thought he never would get there.

The two best performances of the picture came from Roscoe Karnes and Sidney Bracey, as the father and grandfather of the hero. I got a great kick out of their work. There was quite a large cast, the only remaining people I can remember being David Rollins and Sue Carol. Rollins is a throwback that was aclud here was no way out. Acceptably. Miss Carol was quite as vivacious as usual, although her acting in the few scenes she had was chiefly dental.

* * *

THE FILM SPECTATOR
December 15, 1928
her, as he has a very sympathetic personality in addition to an unusual amount of acting ability. He can be a heartbroken father and yet make the audience with him all the time. Louis Wolheim fulfilled the man of tragic emotion. He may be too looking, but his performances are works of art which will make his name known all over the world. His presence in the cast usually assures the picture a success. An experienced actor would be worried at being placed in the same cast with the three brilliant troupers I have mentioned, but Russell Gleason, whose screen debut this is, didn't let it daunt him. He stepped right up to the performance which was amazing for its ease and cleverness. Pathé has a great find in him, and should act accordingly.

The Ware Case is by far the best motion picture to come out of England for a long time. I doubt very much if English actors ever will be formidable rivals of the American films, but The Ware Case shows that they are improving by leaps and bounds. With the exception of the grouping of the characters, there is a decided lack of knowledge of fundamentals apparent in the picture. The photography is very poor, and the lights and the makeup of the actors didn't blend correctly. There was a good opening of the Ware story in the first standing. It was that of Stewart Rome, who played Sir Robert Ware. He was far more easy and natural than the others of the cast, with the exception of the man who played the booky, Manning Haynes handled the direction.

An analysis of the story of The Ware Case reveals that it is a picturization of one of the numerous English detective novels: if you can call them such. From the pen of Fletcher, the man who put English crime on the map. The eye of the camera sees all the clues as they are discovered, just as if the book were being read. In America, the dénouement is the scene where some witness comes running into court with the real murderer done up in a bundle under his arm. Apparently the idea of an American film is to make the sparks come from the sensibilities of the British, who are peculiar that way. At the beginning of the picture there was some reference to a detective who had waited twenty years for his chance and thought he discerned it in the Ware mystery, so I thought the picture was going to follow him and his work through to the bitter end and close by showing him happy in the eyes of the whole nation. This could not happen, however, without the responsibility of the murderer. However, he was treated in a most heartless manner. The story left him flat, and went meandering off somewhere else, while he wore himself to skin and bone digging up clues. When he had assembled all his evidence, and had had the man committed for trial (which, by the way, was a phase of English methods that was slightly amusing), and the jury were given a preliminary hearing to determine whether or not there was enough evidence to hold them for trial), the ungrateful thing blasted all his hopes by getting an acquittal. After that the poor detective was left right out of things, and wasn't even shown looking disappointed at the failure of all his hopes. The story should have dealt with him entirely or dispensed with him as a character of no importance. The idea of showing the unraveling of the mystery rather than having it told bit by bit on the witness stand is a good one, and one that American producers might do very well by trying in their mystery pictures.

The Americans should profit from several little things which the British introduce in The Ware Case. For one thing, the types for small parts are picked carefully, so that they stand out. In this country there is a tendency to disregard the importance of the people who are on the screen for only a short time. Undoubtedly, if some director used a little care and skill in picking his bit players, he would be hailed as the greatest master of character drawing. This is the first trial picture I have seen where the reaction of the people outside of the courtroom was shown. It greatly increased the suspense and interest. Another little thing which I liked was the scene where Ware is arrested. He is put in the hall, and his wife and friend are eating dinner in a room opening into it. He becomes excited and raises his voice, and, wonder of wonders, the diners hear him. It is about the first motion picture I have seen where a man is heard through a door. In most of them, a terrific verbal battle can take place without people on the other side of a thin door hearing it. It is one of the favorite unnatural traditions of motion pictures.

To my way of thinking, the thing which is holding back British films is the paucity of good native actors. They all look and act like made-over stage trouper, with the exception of Rome, who was the only one whose make-up didn't look like cement. There certainly must be people in England who have the style, looks, and acting ability to improve their output. The women weren't dressed attractively, and their make-up made them look middle-aged, whatever their real ages were. No one can tell me that a beautiful girl doesn't do a motion picture a lot of good. The names of the cast I can remember were Ian Fleming, Betty Carter, and Patrick Stewart. The unfortunate detective was among those whose names I didn't get.

There is no doubt that Clara Bow is destined to be one of our great actresses, but she will be old and gray before she gets a chance if she is put in any more like Three Week-Ends. In it she goes through the same insanities which seem to have been invented by the director who labelled her, or libelled her, depending upon one's view of the matter, the "It" girl. This picture is somewhat like Red Hair, which she and Clarence Badger committed some time ago, although it is infinitely inferior. Badger directed Three Week-Ends, too. The main fault in the latter was that it tried to make a heroine out of a gold-digger, which is poor motion picture stuff. All girls in real life are gold-diggers, but on the screen they have to be too pure for words. In addition to the weak characterization of the girl, the story was involved and disjointed. None of the characters seemed to know what they wanted. The one thing which I like better than anything else was the way the millionaire handled his affair with the chorus girl. It's a rule he becomes terribly infatuated and leaves his real fiancée to rot while he chases the working girl, which is the wrong idea because the lower class girl wouldn't appeal to him for more than a little while. In this he behaved sensibly.

One of the oldest of the numerous fallacious motion picture traditions is the idea that the proper place to stage a furious quarrel between two people is in a crowd. They also have love scenes in the presence of large numbers of people. Both of these mistaken ideas were used in Three Week-Ends. Neil Hamilton and Clara Bow stood in a cabaret in full view of the entire audience and fought vigorously, but when Neil was walking out, no one felt enough interest in him to look at him. In real life the whole crowd would have been staring at him, but, as it was it was just the final touch of artificiality to an absolutely unnatural scene. On another occasion Miss Bow chases Hamilton through the streets, wearing her scanty cabaret costume. That seemed improbable, but the height of something or other was reached when she caught up with him, and they did a love scene for the benefit of the large throng.

There were a whole lot of little things which I didn't like about the picture, one of them being Clara Bow's hair. Most of the time it looked as if some one had

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THE FILM SPECTATOR

December 15, 1928

from a title suggested by Leonard Praskins and Richard Sharp; assistant director, E. J. Babille; production manager, Harry Poppe; photographer, J. J. Mescall; art director, Edward Jewell; film editor, Deane Harrison.

THE THREE WEEK-ENDS

A Paramount picture. Directed by Clarence Badger; story by Elinor Glyn; adapted by John Farrow; screen play by Louise Long, Percy Heath and Sam Mintz; photographed by Harold Rosson; assistant director, William Kaplan; film editor, Tay Malmary; titles by Herman J. Mankiewicz.


WIN THAT GIRL

A William Fox picture. directed by David Butler; from the original story Father and Son by James Hopper; assistant director, Leslie Selander; cameraman, Charles Clark.

The cast: David Rolls, Sue Carel, Tom Elliot, Roscoe Karnes, Olin Francis, Mack Slunker, Sidney Bracy, Janet McLeod, Maxine Shelly, Betty Recklaw.

THE LAUREL GROVE

By FRANK T. DAUGHERTY

LOUIS Bromfield, presumably from the earnings of his three successful novels of American life, took a holiday in Italy—and the result is the Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg (Stokes). Now a holiday in Italy may do many things to many people. It may overawe some, as it did most of the early American writers; or it may tend to give greater contentment and more tolerance, as it did Leigh Hunt and Goethe and Frederick the Great and Gorky. Or it may make one write of Dionysian love, as it did Gerhart Hauptman and Bromfield. No doubt there are many of Bromfield's admirers who will backslide when they read the present volume, for he is one of the prophets whose voice has been listened to in his own country, in this case New England—and it isn't likely that said Boston will be pleased with this deification of Pan. But even if one can't go all the way with this story, one should retain his allegiance to Bromfield. It may only be (and I am one of those who hope so) that "Miss Annie Spragg" is his way of casting down his rod, and that seeing it become a serpent, like Moses he will go back later and pick it up, stronger for the experience. In the lives of most of us there seems to come a time when we feel that we will not have lived unless we can say we have experienced something short of death. And when we remember that Bromfield is still a very young man, we can solace ourselves by reversing the popular adage "Art is long, life is short"—and hope for what the years will bring forth.

NOT that I think Bromfield will ever be less frank in his handling of what he sees. Or need be. Only, perhaps, with riper years he will see less of the things he sees now. He is an artist of bold strokes and

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great strength, a really fine craftsman. I have thought him comparable to Willa Cather, whom I hold very high in the trade of writing. He has an innimiable way of turning a phrase that strikes me as peculiarly American—not New York American, not just smartness, but with rare insight embodying a feeling that we recognize as definitely our viewpoint, once it is expressed. "He (Mr. Whiteman) seemed to the sugary Italian wine, which he signaled abominably by a hand seated under the arcade. The Italians, he thought bitterly, are a musical people,"

Without wishing to appear dogmatic about it, I feel that none but a person very close to our soul could have written that thought of Winnery's in just that way.

FOR this reason, no doubt, The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg is altogether much more successful in those chapters dealing with the home scene than in the ones set in Italy. And this in spite of the fact that he draws Italians strikingly, and their country so that you can almost smell it. It is his expatriated Americans in Italy who never quite breathe for us. We are never sure why they are there, or what makes them stay. And when we can't be satisfied on that score, we soon lose interest in all else concerning them.

Cyrus, Uriah and Annie Spragg, and the great Middle West country in which they move, are, as I have intimated, too poetically Dionysian to be true; but they are new enough for us and to our literature, to give us hope of what they may ultimately become under such deft fingers as Bromfield's. At any rate, read the book; and if, when you have finished, you are inclined to quarrel with it—just keep in mind that a holiday gave it birth, and that all holidays end, while work goes on forever. And then, as I am doing, wait patiently for this writer's next. *

If a man tells you he just loves books, he's a fool. If a lady tells you she just loves books, she's a lady fool. There's no other name to call them. One simply can't love books. You never hear anyone say he loves people, or omelettes, or mountains, and it should sound just as preposterous in our trade. Nature provided the method of reading, and it's possible to love books. You can't say a single thing is this person, or that omelette, or that mountain—not just a mob, or eggs cooked in a pan, or the whole rocky backbone of the Americas from Alaska to the Horn. Yet in spite of this quite apparent truth, how unreasonably most of us go about the business of reading. A man or woman who in all other conceivable activities exercises the qualities Nature provided in the manner of reading, throws taste and discretion to the winds and will read almost any book a friend recommends, and all books recommended in print. Hence this Book Guild, and that Book League, and the other Book something or another.

This age has entered into a sort of mania of reading wherein one would actually be considered a lunatic who admitted to not reading everything the church presses turn out. If you read Cather you will not read Dreiser because his style makes your stomach turn over, you are not broad-minded. If you read Tomlinson but will not read Conrad, you lack culture. Or if you read Galworthy often and Arnold Bennett never, or Shaw with relish and D. H. Lawrence with shivers, you are something else. It is a question of how much of the hour to read; and what you read doesn't matter any more; you are obligated to read everything everywhere. This, of course, would lead to the same thing that eating everything on a restaurant menu would, except that mental digestion is generally less easily upset than physical. Or else there is no mental digestion and we are a race of mental dyspeptics. There are those who think even that.

MANY decry the passing of intimate discussions such as tickled the fancy of our fathers and mothers of a bygone age—the bandying of ideas, the wit, the quip, the brag, the toast, the repartee that passed over the table in homes, cafes and coffee houses. I know at least one writer who would better have gotten himself born into this age of monosyllabic conversation and great publishing houses. For Oliver Goldsmith never shone in conversation. "Let me tell you," he said once, petulant at Garrick and others of Dr. Johnson's circle who were laughing at his new coat, "when my tailor brought home my new bloom-colored coat he said, 'Sir, I have no word to beg of you. When anybody asks you who made your clothes, be pleased to mention John Fibby, at the Harrow in Water Lane.'" As simple as that. One can almost see the clumsy fellow flushing clear up to his great bulging forehead as he gave vent to this brilliant comeback to his jeers. Unfortunately there are not many. It is possible the great literary dictator felt this to be the kindest thing. But it didn't succeed in keeping his friend's tongue in his mouth. It was Johnson who said of him often in public, that "No man was more foolish when he had not a pen in his hand, or more wise when he had.

At least two centuries have approved Johnson's judgment. Vain, ugly, awkward Goldsmith; poor scholar and poorer doctor; but of the wits—his writing has lived to put most of his contemporaries to shame.

Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain... Sweet Auburn! parent of the blissful hour.

But everyone remembers The Deserted Village. And if you haven't read it in Io, these many years, it's just as beautiful as it was when you first turned to it back in your high school days. It seems to me, with no purpose, to ask if anyone has read The Vicar of Wakefield lately. I did, a few months back, with surprising pleasure. But I can't plead guilty to remembering The Traveller, or even what it was about. I call to mind very vaguely that there were also letters purporting to have been written by a Chinese in England to his friends at home.

It's a fact, then, that these book wasters are of no use at all, and I must beg you to be content to read the books that are written for your years.

But let anyone yawn while reading She Stoops to Conquer again! This was played last year in London with such surprising success that it is to be played again this year. Hollywood could do worse than play it at The Writers, or make a talkie of it...

The occasion for all this, of course, is that it's Goldsmith's bicentenary. And by all the laws of averages, the publishers should have sent us that new volume of his letters. But publishers are sometimes remiss, so while we give Oliver a little publicity on his birthday, we refrain from mentioning the publishers of his letters, or who compiled them, or anything about them at all. Among the vocations of this world of book reviewer is low indeed, a very whitewashings among literary tasks—but we have our rights.

I AM forever being jostled in this hurry of modern scribblers to get something said. As if it were as important as all that. I pick up a magazine, and settle back for a lot of nice gossip about books, only to learn, as these pen-pushers are at no pains to conceal from me,

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that they must hurry up and get this through with because they have a luncheon engagement at the Algonquin with St. John Ervine or Jo Hergesheimer or the Love sisters. It was not always so, I think—there must have been a day when things were done decently and in order. And then I remember the first coming-to-London of one of the great prose writers—George Borrow. In those days young hacks went to the big cities to write, just as they do now. And young Borrow, casting his eye over the Literary Supplement of The Times, and others of like ilk, felt a hollow sensation within him and wanted to return home and settle down to pleasant farming. For how could he hope to be clever enough to become one of that brilliant array of talent the press was sending forth in print daily? It took him days and sometimes weeks to write his painstaking stuff, which he often fashioned and refashioned—and which wasn't clever at all. But the sequel shows Borrow translated into many languages; but the London wits, all that fine assemblage of journalistic brilliance—the identical brilliance that we shall find in the Hearst syndicate and the New York World, and most of the reviews—are no more. "Sermones ego maltem repentes per humnum—"

EMIL Ludwig's now quite famous book on Goethe is full of illuminating illustrations, pictorial and otherwise: dozens of photographs, and photographs of photographs, and a generous recounting of the faults and foibles of great worlders. There's even a picture of a clay reproduction of his hand. All that's lacking is his collar size, the measurement of his cranium, and the knowledge of whether he had ten or only nine toes—and there would be no need to read his books to know all about him. Biography is unduly popular, and this sort of data is unduly popular in biography. For we see this stuff, and forget that the man was probably a genius in spite of, rather than because of, that fat hand. And as to his Demon, as Ludwig calls it, even telephone girls have demons. The next generation, reading and weighing our profound research into our great historical figures, will be apt to think great gifts came only where there were great faults—that Beethoven's deafness helped him write great symphonies; that Socrates was intelligent because he wore a number nine hat and had a shrewish wife; that Wagner's colossal genius came of not being married to Cosima; and ditto for Chopin and George Sand, and George Eliot as well; possibly that Homer's blindness accounted for his epic vision; or that Walter Raleigh wrote exquisitely because he was a dwarf, or Byron stirringly because he had a club foot. And following the logical line of this reasoning, they may wonder why no lepers were numbered among our great men, because that ought to be an affliction enough to give a man something to talk about. Well, I could tell about Naaman....

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You have captured one of the most difficult things a director can face, and that is the real atmosphere of a gypsy camp. This alone is a triumph for anyone, but in addition your gypsy people were splendid in their characters. They acted, in the best sense of that word.

If you can do this sort of thing, you should have a big career, and I shall be very happy to watch it develop.

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AN ACTOR EXPRESS HIMSELF

Dear Welford:

I should like to argue with you about two of your recently published opinions.

In the November 3rd issue you say, "Artists who have been successful on the screen will have an advantage over their conferees of the stage, for the former have to think deeply to have their thoughts recorded by the camera, while the latter have always depended more on their voices to put their thoughts over. As the microphone takes charge of the voices and makes them equal, the superior pantomimic powers of the actor trained in screen technic will give him an advantage."

If you remember our discussion of last Saturday, I said I felt that the intelligent reading of a line required quite as deep thought as that required to produce a facial expression, and you contended that if the player could create the illusion of rage in a silent picture he would not need to worry about his voice in the sound sequences of the same picture, as the proper inflections would follow naturally. So far I will agree with your argument.

But what will happen to the screen player who has not had stage experience when he encounters a long expository scene? It is an axiom of the theatre that almost anyone can play the climaxes but that experience and training count in the less interesting but quite necessary parts of the play. As you know, many prominent stage people have made tests at the studios and have been rejected for some slight facial defect. About two years ago I helped make a test of Miss Gertrude Lawrence for silent pictures and her test was not satisfactory because some executive felt that her nose was too broad. Since talking pictures arrived, Miss Lawrence has made two short subjects which have been very successful, and no one has ever noticed her nose.

On the other hand, I have watched several of our most prominent picture stars, whose features are quite satis-

factory to the executive and to the public, and believe me when I say that their faulty enunciation and untrained voices were much more prominent than the nose of the lady who had been rejected for that reason. From this I cannot help being convinced that stage training will not only help in talking pictures, but will eventually be an absolute requirement.

The other quarrel! I have with you is your opinion that talking pictures will not only kill silent pictures but the stage as well. Motion pictures, talking or silent, must necessarily be produced for a great and varied public. The stage can afford to appeal to a much smaller public and therefore can and does treat of subjects which would be worse than useless in motion pictures. I believe talking pictures will prove to be a great benefit to the spoken drama. Appreciation of drama is not instinctive, an audience must be trained just as an actor is. We must survive the Abie’s Irish Rose period before we can appreciate O’Neill, Howard, and George Kelly. Isn’t it possible that talking pictures will develop a great new audience for the spoken drama from those of this generation who have never been exposed to it?

The most hopeful thing about this revolution seems to me to be the new demands upon the writers. For two years you have been urging the value of a perfect script. Now it seems as if your arguments will have some weight. You cannot shoot a talking picture “from the cuff”, nor can you cut it to cover your mistakes afterward. The necessity for careful preparation is even more urgent than it is on the stage. If a play isn’t right when it is tried out it can be changed; if that doesn’t help it dies and the actors and the producer are the only ones who remember it. But when a picture is released it plays all over the world whether it is good or bad. It will not be possible to call in a wise-cracking title writer to bolster up a weak picture. I think you will agree with me that this alone is enough cause for cheers.

KENNETH THOMSON.

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