

CLOSE UP

JULY 1928

1 SHILLING
5 FRANCS
1 MARK
35 CENTS
1 FRANC SWISS

C L O S E U P

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July 1928

A S I S

BY THE EDITOR

With this number *Close Up* embarks on a second year. Its first has been sufficiently successful to make us confident that its future is assured, and its value recognised among the people, rapidly coming forward to fight for better films, who have sound, logical insight into the great. . . . I will not say possibilities, for these have long been proved. . . .but opportunities for development of the very best screen art into universal recognition.

Already *Close Up* has done much to realise its aims. Its second year will see fruition of much that it has already worked for. The ball has been set successfully rolling and goes on gathering speed. We do feel that we have brought together, as we first set out to do, hundreds of people whose individual belief in the cinema was crushed and powerless

and alone. We have helped people to realise how much is being done, has been done, and can be done to give them films which are a true contribution to the progress not only of art or education, but of the world itself. And this will seem a far fetched statement only to those who pick up *Close Up* for the first time to read these words. "Old stagers"—they soon become that in this world of dizzy movement—will know what I mean, and know too how much the screen has accomplished, in sociology (take *Mother* or *Bed and Sofa*) in education (take particularly specialised films for students of medicine, surgery, physiology, etc., and in a broader sense, *Moana*, *Grass*, *Mt Everest*, etc) in art (take *Jeanne Ney*, *La Tragédie*, *Sühne*—a dozen others) in history (*Potemkin*, *The End of St. Petersburg*, *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*—though I myself reject it firmly—) in science, enlightenment, amusement, poetry, design, refuge and delight. Naturally one does not categorise except as illustration. Almost any one of the films I quote is each and every of the random classes chosen. *Mother*, for instance, (the Russian *Mother* naturally. I have a sneaking respect for Belle Bennett, but not for her film of the same name) is certainly sociological, educative, art, science, enlightenment, amusement, poetry, design, refuge and delight. And in the long run *any* progress is world progress, so don't let us pick a quarrel over that.

The first natural prejudice that had to be overcome, or rather, the first impression of the public was that a journal devoted only to film art would be in the main limiting, and even a little bit pernicious, in that it would be getting away

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from facts and glorifying the bizarre, the stunted, the absurd—that, in short, it would have the precious sterility of every clique or group taking an “ism” for its torch.

It did not take long to prove that *Close Up* found “isms” as old-fashioned, dull and pompous as any progressive body must do ; that far from being caught in the just post-war flood of conventional freakishness, whose final aim was still destruction, it was suggesting that they were as responsible for the contempt of the trade toward so called “artistic” films as were custard pie and whitewash slinging farces for the superstition that films were for the guttersnipe.

In a word, *Close Up* was determined to be quite liberal, and to be a sort of battleground. It scorned dogmatism and the tiresome proselytising of the “fashions-in-ideas” groups, “This season the waist-line of thought will be slightly raised, and skirts a soupçon shorter” was the kind of thing at which it might have levitated any amount of justifiable wrath. Not that it would have been necessary, since the proof of such and all puddings is in the eating, if one may make bold enough to be so verbally dashing, yet. . . . here we were being accused of just that very thing we most certainly had no illusions about.

This stopped pretty soon, since it became evident that we were level headed and broad minded. Then people began to be friendly. Then they sent in ideas, and suggestions, which, whenever possible, we acted upon. It was and is desired to make *Close Up* a really useful organ to all who believe in the film, whether they are spectators only, or wor-

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king toward a means to have good films shown. It is their views we want, and their needs we desire to fill. If our motives were in the least meretricious we would need to appear aloof and Olympian. As it is we want to bring all groups together, and make them a unit, since massed strength is. . . well, we all know about the need for massed strength. And, lest I be accused of tooting my own trumpet (which I never could see was a fault) think only how much more I might have tooted it if this had been an advertisement page instead of an editorial !

With all its liberality, however, *Close Up* desires officially to state that it was in no way responsible for the development of the "talkie". This monstrosity is descending full speed upon us and I expect that most of us will be driven to the wayside movie house. Dolores Costello in *Tenderloin* is surely enough in itself without Dolores' voice honking mechanically through a loud speaker. Bad enough to have one's cinematic sense of criticism laid to waste, but when literary judgment too is called upon to judge such stuff the air really does become sulphurous. Let Londoners thank God for Mr. Ogilvie, whose views on the cinema you may read about in this issue. And what about the universal language of the screen ? However, do not let us forget that we are liberal minded.

I have remembered it with Dreyer's *Jeanne d'Arc*, and feel justified to state, in view of the article by H. D. that although this is going to be hailed as the masterpiece of the screen, and the epic achievement of all time, I don't think it is, and advise readers to be wary in their criticism of it. Great it is, stu-

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pendous it is, stupifying it is—so stupifying that it almost does stupify one into not seeing what an incorrigibly sentimental and softly romantic rendering it is. We are not given the superb sociological document we believe we are given. Judges are again gangsters. Joan is so lovely with her visions all departed from her that you are apt to forget that genius is never quite so at the mercy of mob. Sneering gangsters too would have been quickly placed in the mind of a veteran campaigner. This film ignores history, except that it uses some of Joan's answers, and has her burnt. Stripped of its peculiarly potent trimmings and technique it is as base in conception as *Seventh Heaven*, with its whipped innocent, its blowsy drunkard sister, its catering to the sheer squalid luxury of pity.

Dreyer's film is great however because Dreyer does understand grief. He understands beauty and the awfulness of mercy, but he does not seem to understand that accusation is part of daily life, and that casual brutality is not the pantomimic hob-goblinish snarling of debased and elderly monsters. Joan was the victim of law and order, not of hooliganism. Pity at any price is a bad principle. To any who have an historical, political, sociological, or even logical flair, Joan will be a failure. We are tired of seeing the War anyhow, but how insufferable it would be if we saw it tricked out in a romanticism that made it just a sensation to wring our hearts. So with Joan. The attitude toward her feminine incorruptibility is almost Dickensonian. And if you like such women you deserve to.

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For camera work, for uniformity, for tricks, for obvious sincerity of purpose, for lovely pictures, for Joan herself, this picture has never been surpassed. But all the hopelessness of her case is so much less hopeless than the one close up of the woman in *Mother* who simpering through lorgnettes at the trial of the boy, whispers relishingly to her neighbour "He's bound to be convicted." The whole film is told in the first five minutes.

KENNETH MACPHERSON.

AN INTERVIEW : A. ROOM

A. Room, who is noted among the Russian cinema directors for the independence and individuality of his ideas, is to be given charge of the direction of the first Russo-German film, for the *Derussa* society of Berlin.

The film in question will be *Boule de Suif* of Maupassant. This well known story of the French novelist will afford A. Room the chance to make the most of his incontestable talent as artist and director.

Room's special gifts were particularly evident in his film *Bed and Sofa*, which came after *The Death Boat* which had shown already great promise. He owes his mastery to a per-

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fect knowledge of the character of his actors as well as to a rare aptitude for seizing the psychological aspect of human situations, without over-dramatising them however, and faithfully keeping in them all their artistic drive.

Room is a man apart, altogether apart : his technique is derived from a new conception of cinematographic art in the sense that it accords a fundamental value to a certain serenity of rhythm and the frequent repetition of pauses.

I was able to see Mr Room personally and here is a summary of what he was kind enough to tell me.

“We have always appreciated in the Russian cinema world, the value and force of German films, which have unfailingly been our inspiration in the realm of technique ; as for that I am sure that Germany has been able during these last two or three years to realise the efforts that we have accomplished in Russia, which have been successful in spite of the precarious means at our disposal, and able to give our films a truly artistic form. It seems to me that the universal cause of films suffers actually from a sharp division, or shall we say from too accentuated a dispersal of the forces at our command.

We can reasonably expect that in two or three years things will change and that certain adjustments will help sensibly the actual situation. When two private companies have the chance to film together, the results obtained surpass all the most optimistic previsions.

I am very happy to have received the task, however burdened with responsibilities, of turning the first Russo-German film. For various reasons, and chiefly artistic ones, we deci-

ded to film the story *Boule de Suif* by Maupassant. Because of these considerations we have slightly re-worked some passages of the novel, in modernising it ever such a little.

As a quite simple director, however much they may have assigned to me a distinct and independant place in the world of Russian films, I will tell you also what are the opinions which prevail in my personal conception of the cinema, a conception in which I sincerely believe and which I shall put in practice during the realisation of the new film of which we are speaking.

I believe that the principal value of the film has been conferred on it by the diverse and complex character of human emotions.

Passion and feeling alone, have right of entry into films and I am not content myself with registering the completely superficial manifestations of emotion but to seize them entirely and show them in everyday life as they really are.

I want my camera to be like Roentgen, whose rays pierce through to the innermost of our being. I want to project on the screen the very foundation of man in order that the analysis of determinate sensations, of acts and thoughts, are translated into luminous images. The academic professor Bechserew, who died recently, taught me long ago the science of human reflexes.

I devoted several years to the study of determinism, of psychic states, of the theory of repressions, of Freud in particular, and of diverse manifestations of fear, anguish, sorrow and love. All that I learnt has actually been of great service to me in the preparation of my actors.

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A man who appears on the screen ought not to have a wax anatomy and we must feel that he is living intensely, that his heart beats and that warm blood courses through his veins. Human actions are not objective and are modified by the social influences of the social milieu to which the person belongs, whom we desire to represent. I have not neglected, either, this fact in working.

Besides this, I am convinced of the value of an ordered and calm rhythm in the play of the actors and in frequent pauses. I would even say that the pause has a very definite bearing on the action of a film.”

« Nous avons toujours apprécié, dans le monde des cinéastes russes, la valeur et la force de films allemands, dont nous nous sommes toujours inspirés dans le domaine technique... au reste, je suis certain que l'Allemagne a pu se rendre compte, dans le cours de ces 2 ou 3 dernières années, de l'effort accompli par nous autres, Russes, qui avons réussi, en dépit des moyens souvent précaires dont nous disposons, à donner à nos films une forme réellement artistique. Il me paraît que la cause universelle du film souffre actuellement d'un séparatisme aigu, ou mieux d'une dispersion trop accentuée des forces disponibles.

« Nous pouvons raisonnablement espérer que dans deux ou trois ans les choses changeront de tournure et que certaines dispositions amélioreront sensiblement la situation actuelle. Lorsque deux compagnies privées ont l'occasion de filmer en commun, les résultats atteints dépassent les prévisions les plus optimistes.

« J'ai reçu avec joie la tâche, lourde cependant de responsabilité, de tourner le premier film de collaboration russo-allemande. Pour des considérations diverses, artistiques au premier abord, nous avons décidé de filmer la nouvelle « Boule de Suif », de Maupassant. En vertu de ces considérations mêmes, nous avons légèrement remanié certains passages de cette nouvelle, en la modernisant quelque peu.

« En ma qualité de modeste régisseur, bien que l'on m'assigne une place distincte et indépendante dans les milieux du film russe, je vous dirais encore

quelles sont les opinions qui prévalent dans ma conception personnelle du cinéma conception en laquelle je crois sincèrement et que je mettrai en pratique dans la réalisation du nouveau film dont il est question ci-dessus.

« J'ESTIME QUE LA VALEUR PRINCIPALE DU FILM LUI EST CONFÉRÉE PAR LA DIVERSITÉ ET LA COMPLEXITÉ DU CARACTÈRE ET DES ÉMOTIONS HUMAINES.

« LA PASSION, LA SENSIBILITÉ, seules ont droit d'accès au film, et je ne me contente pas d'enregistrer la manifestation toute extérieure des sentiments, mais bien plutôt de les saisir et de les montrer tels qu'ils sont en réalité, dans la vie de tous les jours.

« Mon appareil de prise de vue, je veux le rendre semblable à celui de Roentgen, dont les rayons inquisiteurs percent notre nature intime. J'aspire à projeter sur la toile le fond même de l'homme afin que l'analyse des sensations déterminantes, des pensées et des actes se traduise en images lumineuses. Le Professeur académicien Bechserew, décédé actuellement, me familiarisa jadis avec la science des réflexes humains.

« J'ai consacré quelques années à l'étude du déterminisme des états psychiques, de la théorie des refoulements de Freud notamment, et des manifestations diverses de la peur, de l'angoisse, de la tristesse et de l'amour. Ce que j'en ai appris m'est très utile actuellement pour la préparation des acteurs.

« L'homme qui apparaît sur l'écran ne doit pas avoir une anatomie de cire et il faut que nous le sentions vivre intensément, qu'il nous prouve de suite que son cœur bat et projette un sang chaud dans ses veines. Les actions humaines ne sont évidemment pas objectives et subissent l'influence du milieu social auquel appartient le personnage que nous voulons représenter. Je n'ai garde, naturellement, de négliger ce fait en travaillant.

« D'autre part, je suis convaincu de la valeur d'un rythme ordonné et calme dans le jeu des acteurs, et des pauses fréquentes. Je dirai même sans hésitation que la pause dans l'action d'un film a une portée très définie.

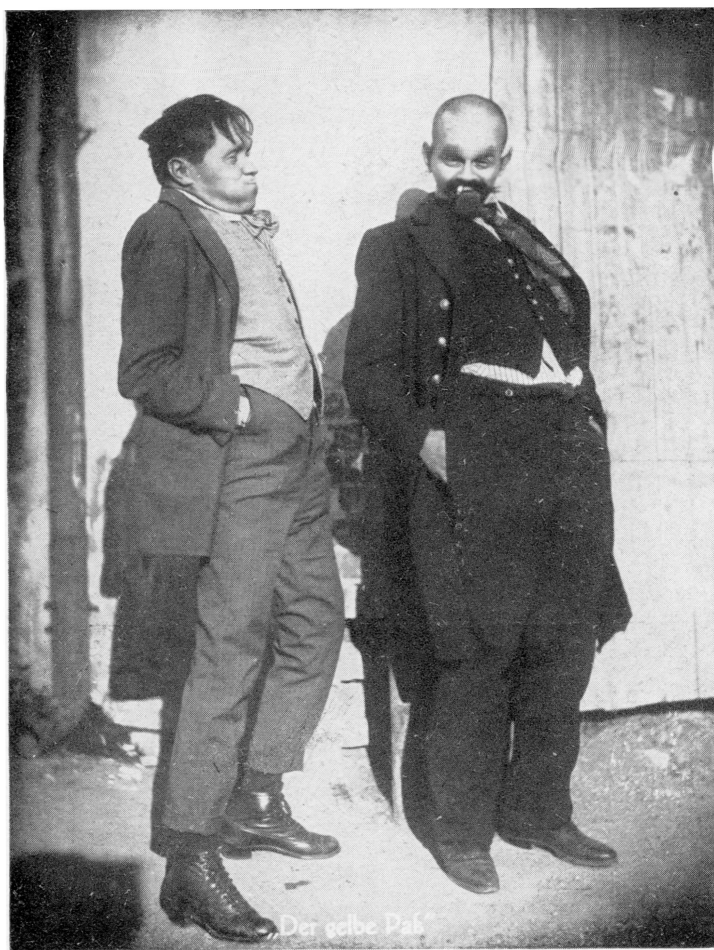
E. HELLMUND-WALDOW.

JOAN OF ARC

“The Passion and Death of a Saint” is a film that has caused me more unrest, more spiritual forebodings, more intellectual rackings, more emotional torment than any I have yet seen. We are presented with Jeanne d’Arc in a series of pictures, portraits burnt on copper, bronze if you will, anyhow obviously no aura of quattrocento gold and gold dust and fleurs-de-lys in staight hieratic pattern, none of your fresco that makes the cell of Savonarola make the legend of Savonarola bearable even to this day. Jeanne d’Arc is done in hard clear line, remorseless, poignant, bronze stations of the cross, carved upon mediæval cathedral doors, bronze of that particular sort of mediæval fanaticism that says no and again no to any such weakening incense as Fra Angelico gold and lilies of heavenly comfort. Why did and why didn’t this particular Jeanne d’Arc so touch us? Jeanne d’Arc takes us so incredibly far that having taken us so far, we are left wondering why didn’t this exquisite and superb piece of screen dramatisation take us further? Carl Dreyer, a Dane, one of the most superb of the magnificently growing list of directors, is responsible for this odd two-edged sort of feeling. His film, for that, is unique in the annals of film art. The passion of the Jeanne is superbly, almost mediumisti-

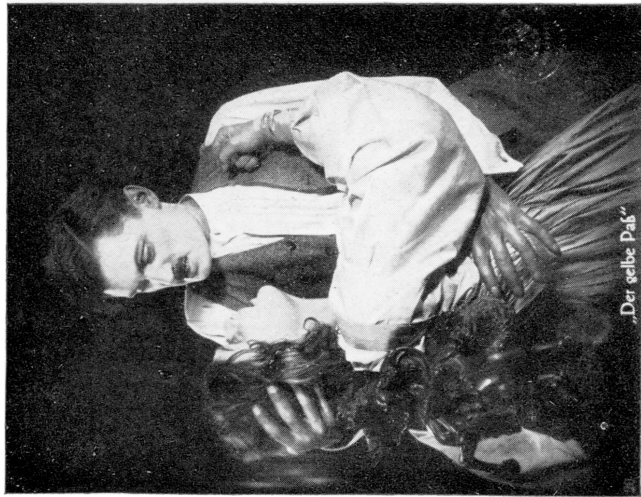
cally portrayed by M^{lle} Falconetti. Heart and head are given over to inevitable surrender. Heart broke, head bowed. But another set of curious nerve-reactions were brought into play here. Why is it that my hands inevitably clench at the memory of those pictures, at the casual poster that I pass daily in this lake-side small town? Is it necessary to be put on guard? *Must* I be made to feel on the defence this way and why? Also why must my very hands feel that they are numb and raw and bleeding, clenched fists tightened, bleeding as if beating at those very impregnable mediæval church doors?

For being let into the very heart, the very secret of the matter, we are left out of. . . something. I am shown Jeanne, she is indeed before me, the country child, the great lout of a hulking boy or girl, blubbering actually, great tears coursing down round sun-hardened, wind-hardened, oak-tree hardened face outline and outline of cheek hollow and the indomitable small chin. Jeanne is first represented to us, small as seen from above, the merest flash of sturdy boy figure, walking with chained ankles toward judges (too many) seated in slices above on ecclesiastical benches. Jeanne is seen as small, as intolerably sturdy and intolerably broken, the sort of inhuman showing up of Jeanne that from the first strikes some note of defiance in us. Now why should we be defiant? I think it is that we all have our Jeanne, each one of us in the secret great cavernous interior of the cathedral (if I may be fantastic) of the subconscious. Now another Jeanne strides in, an incomparable Jeanne, indubitably a more Jeanne-ish Jeanne than our Jeanne but it just isn't our Jeanne. Worse than that it is a



Der Gelbe Pass (The Yellow Ticket) one of the most sensational of the Derussa films, directed by F. Ozep for Meschrabpom-Russ-Film, with Anna Sten, A. Sudakewitsch, S. Jakowlewa, J. Kowal-Samborski, W. Fogel, and M. Narokoff.

Photo : Derussa

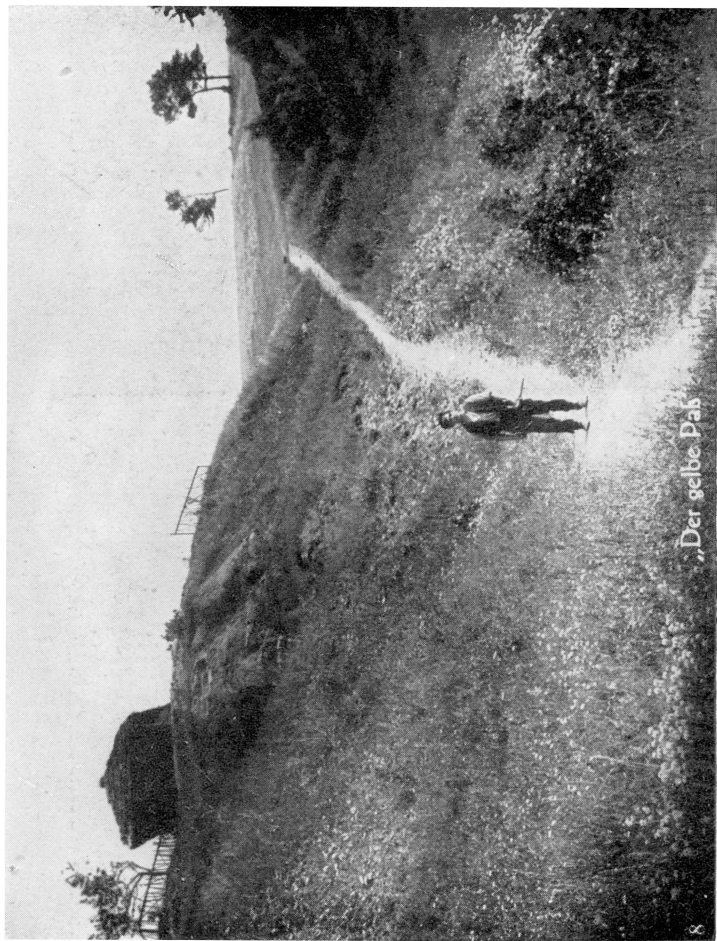


Der Gelbe Pass. On right, Anna Sten and W. Fogel, who played in *Bed and Sofa*.

Photos : Derrusså

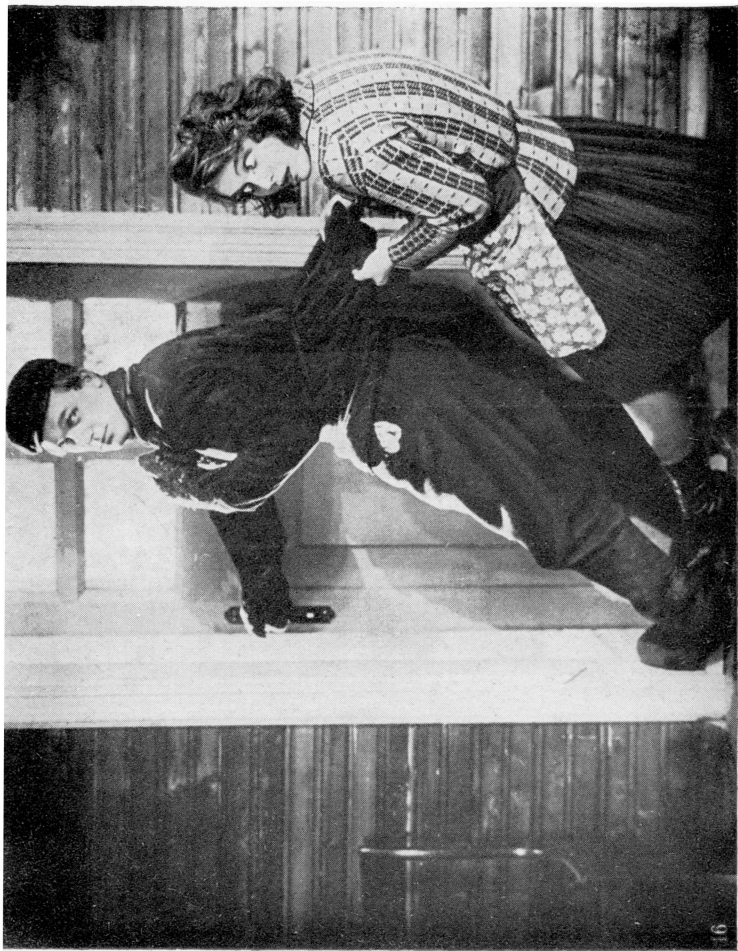


Der Gelbe Pass.
Photos : Derussa



Der Gelbe Pass.

Photo : Derussa

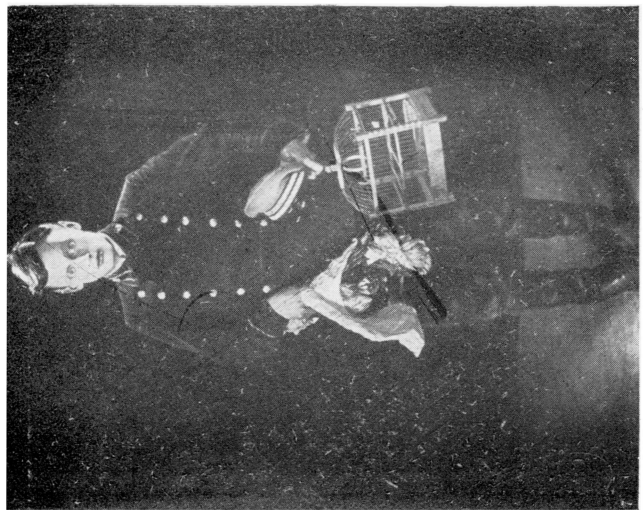


Moskau, wie es wient und lacht, (*Moscow that weeps and laughs*), another Meschrabpom-Russ-Film for Derussa. This film too has had a tremendous success in Germany. It was directed by Barnett and has Anna Sten, W. Fogel and J. Kowal-Samborski.

Photo : Derussa



Anna Sten.

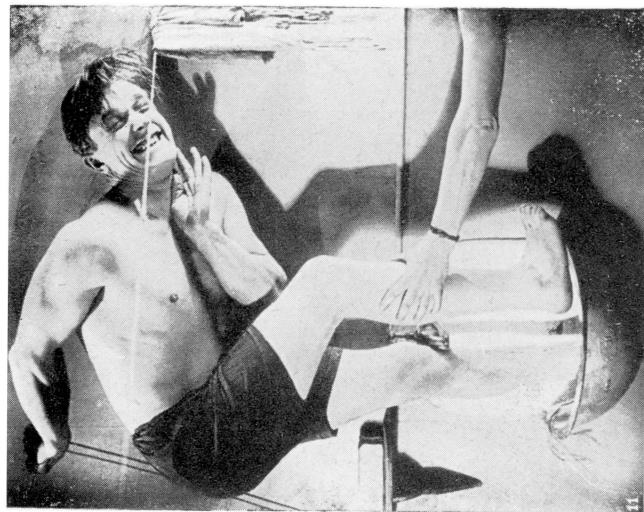


W. Fogel in Moskau wie es wient und licht.

Photos : Derussa

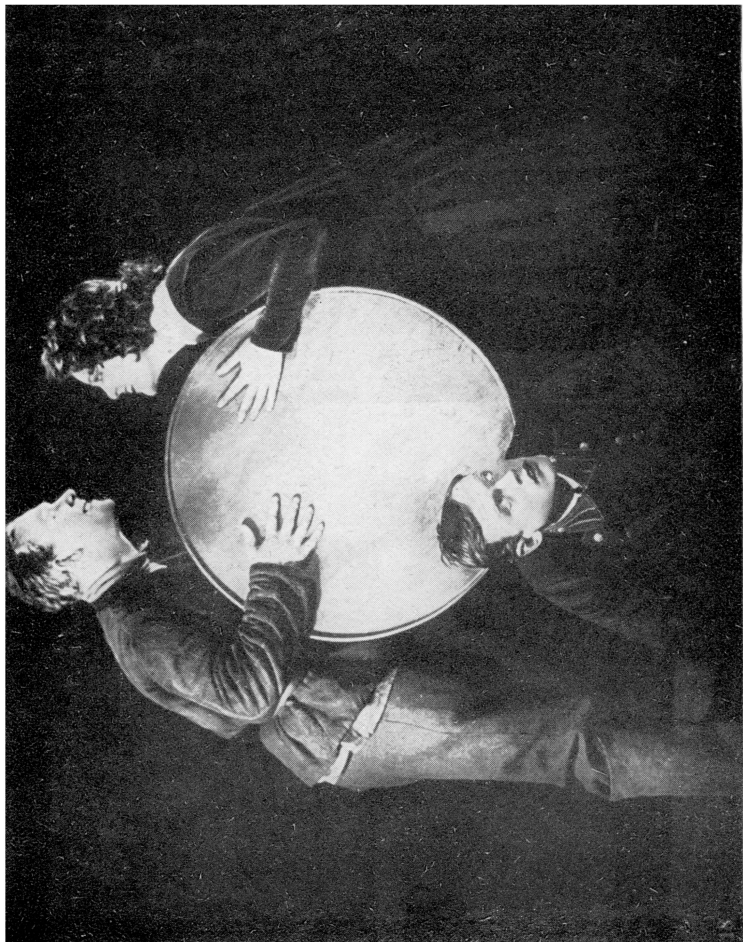


W. Fogel comes to grief, or rather grief comes to
W. Fogel



J. Kowal-Samborski enjoys a bath, aided by Anna
Sten.

Photos : Derussa



J. Kowal-Samborski, W. Fogel and Anna Sten.

Photo : Derussa



Die Todesbarke (*The Death Ship*) Alexander Room's film made for Prometheus-Film previously to his *Bed and Sofa*, and ranking as one of the few really best films. See in this issue an interview with A. Room.



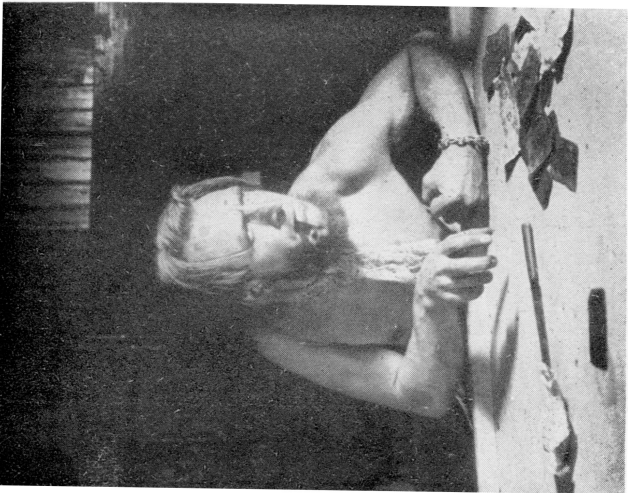
Die Todesbarke was written by Leonidow, and photographed by E. Slawinsky. The cast includes W. Jaroslawetz as the ship's engineer, A. Rawitsch as his wife. W. Ludwinskij and A. Matzewitsch as their sons. Other names below.



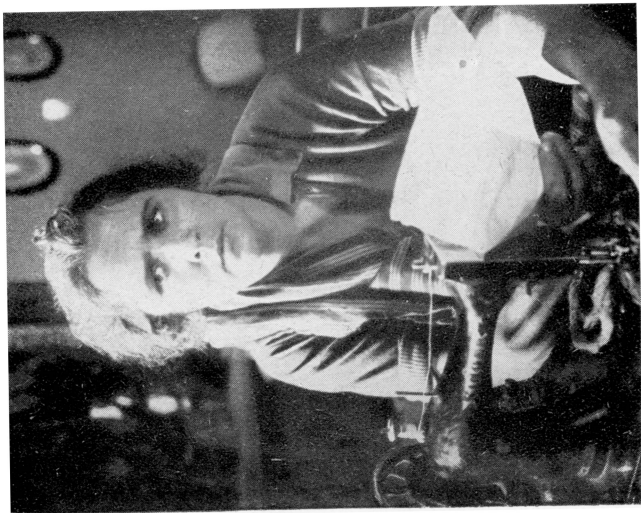
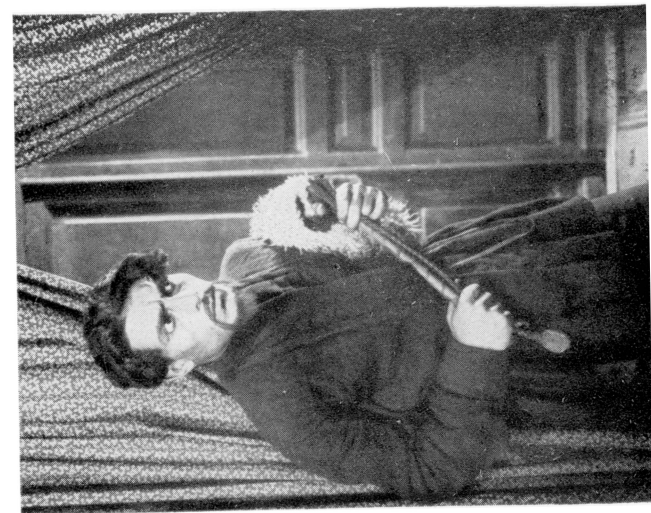
An old sentence, with a shot in the back to make sure of it. Further principals are Kartaschewa as Anna Kutzowa, N. Saltikoff B. Sagorski, L. Jurjenew, A. Charlamoff (the captain) and O. Gelnewa as a mother.



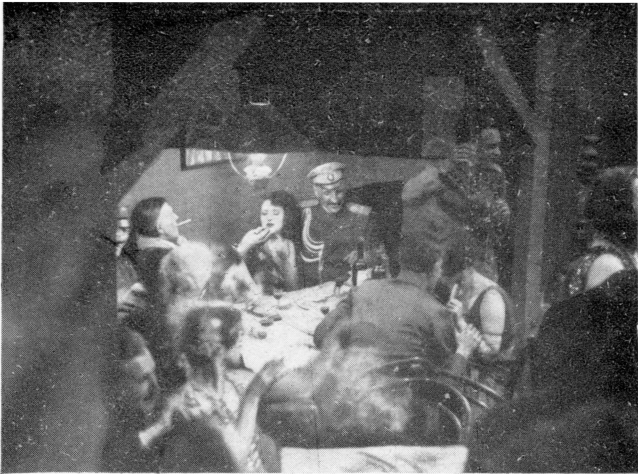
Die Todesbarke.



Die Todesbarke.



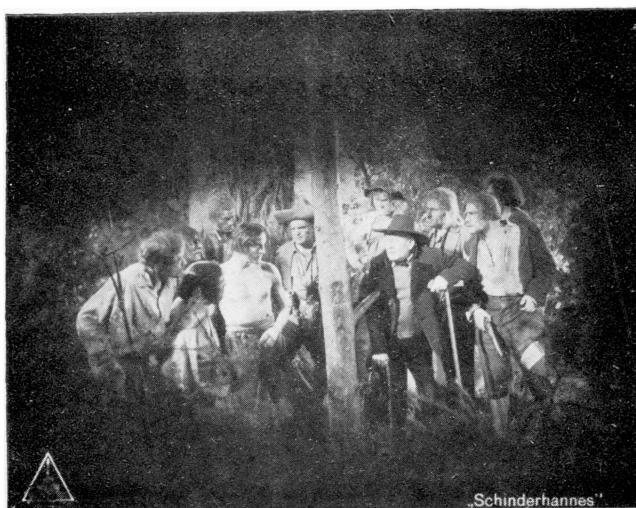
Die Todesbarke.



Two vivid impressions of the "orgy" in *Jeanne Ney* whose recent showing at the Avenue Pavilion in London was so great a success despite the remorseless clipping ordered by the censor.



Hans Stüwe in *Schinderhannes*, the Prometheus film made by Curt Bernhardt. A review and stills of this excellent film have already appeared in our pages.



Schinderhannes (stripped left) flogged and despairing, is found by a gang of thieves in the woods. On right (in black) Albert Steinrück.



Qualen der Nacht (*Torments of the Night*) another Curt Bernhardt film which has brought him much recognition. Wilhelm Dieterle plays lead.



Qualen der Nacht. Wilhelm Dieterle and Alexander Granach.

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better Jeanne, a much, much better, more authentic Jeanne than our Jeanne; scathing realism has gone one better than mere imaginative idealism. We know we are out-witted. This is a real, real, Jeanne (poor Jeanne) little mountain Newfoundland puppy, some staunch and true and incomparably loyal creature, something so much more wonderful than any greyhound outline or sleek wolf-hound is presented us, the very incarnation of loyalty and integrity. . . dwarfed, below us, as if about to be tramped or kicked into a corner by giant soldier iron-heeled great boots. Marching boots, marching boots, the heavy hulk of leather and thong-like fastenings and cruel nails. . . no hint of the wings on the heels of the legions that followed the lily-banner; the cry that sang toward Orleans is in no way ever so remotely indicated. We are allowed no comfort of mere beatific lilies, no hint of the memory of lover-comrade men's voices, the comrades that Jeanne must have loved loyally, the perfect staunch child friend, the hero, the small Spartan, the very Telisila upon the walls of that Argos, that is just it. This is *no* Telisila upon the walls of Argos, no Athene who for the moment has laid aside her helmet for other lesser matters than that of mere courage and fidelity. This is an Athene stripped of intellect, a Telisila robbed of poetry, it is a Jeanne d'Arc that not only pretends to be real, but that is real, a Jeanne that is going to rob us of our own Jeanne.

Is that the secret of this clenching of fists, this sort of spiritual antagonism I have to the shaved head, the stares, defiant bronze-statue, from the poster that I pass on my way to market? Is it another Jeanne in me (in each of us) that

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starts warily at the picture, the actual *portrait* of the mediæval girl warrior ? The Jeanne d'Arc of Carl Dreyer is so perfect that we feel somehow cheated. This must be right. This must be right. . .therefore by some odd equivocal twist of sub-conscious logic, *I* must be wrong. I am put in the wrong, therefore I clench my fists. Heaven is within you. . .therefore I stand staring guiltily at bronze figures cut upon a church door, at freizes upon the under-gables of a cathedral that I must stare up at, see in slices as that incomparable Danish artist made me see Jeanne in his perhaps over-done series of odd sliced portraits (making particularly striking his studies of the judges and the accusers of Jeanne, as if seen by Jeanne herself from below) owerwhelming bulk of ecclesiastical political accusation. I know in my mind that this is a great tour de force, perhaps one of the greatest. But I am left wary, a little defiant. Again why and why and why and just, just why ? Why am I defiant before one of the most exquisite and consistent works of screen art and perfected craft that it has been our immeasurable privilege to witness ?

One, I am defiant for this reason (and I have worked it out carefully and with agony I and you and the baker's boy beside me and Mrs. Captain Jones-Smith's second maid and our own old Nanna and somebody else's gardener and the honeymoon boy and girl and the old sporting colonel and the tennis teacher and the crocodile of young ladies from the second pension to the left as you turn to the right by the market road that branches off before the stall where the old lady sells gentians and single pinks and Alpenrosen each in their season (just

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now it is somewhat greenish valley-lilies) are in no need of such brutality. No one of us, not one of us is in need of this stressing and stressing, this poignant draining of hearts, this clarion call to pity. A sort of bugle note rises and with it our own defiance. I am asked to join an army of incorruptibles to which long and long since, I and the baker's boy and the tennis champion in the striped red sash have given our allegiance. This great Dane Carl Dreyer takes too damn much for granted. Do I *have* to be cut into slices by this inevitable pan-movement of the camera, these suave lines to left, up, to the right, back, all rythmical with the remorseless rhythm of a scimitar? Isn't this incomparable Dane Dreyer a very blue-beard, a Turk of an ogre for remorseless cruelty? Do we have to have the last twenty four hours' agony of Jeanne stressed and stressed and stressed, in just this way, not only by the camera but by every conceivable method of dramatic and scenic technique? Bare walls, the four scenes of the trial, the torture room, the cell and the outdcors about the pyre, are all calculated to drive in the pitiable truth like the very nails on the spread hands of the Christ. Do we need the Christ-nails driven in and pulled out and driven in and drawn out, while Jeanne already numb and dead, gazes dead and numb at accuser and fumbles in her dazed hypnotized manner towards some solution of her claustrophobia? I am shut in here, I want to get out. I want to get out. And instead of seeing in our minds the very ambrosial fields toward which that stricken soul is treading, foot by foot like the very agony toward skull-hill, we are left pinned like some senseless animal, impaled as she is impaled by

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agony. This is not *not* good enough. There is some slur on the whole of human consciousness, it is necessary to stress and stress and stress the brute side of mystic agony this way. Somehow, something is wrong here. An incomparable art, an incomparable artist, an actress for whom any but praise were blasphemy. . .and what happens ?

I do not mind crying (though I do mind crying) when I see a puppy kicked into a corner but I do mind standing aside and watching and watching *and* watching and being able to do nothing. That is something of the antagonism I think that crept in, that is something of the something that made me feel I ought to go again, to be fair, to be *sure* what it was that upset me, perhaps cowardice on my own part, some deep sub-conscious strata or layer of phobia that I myself, so un-Jeanne-like, was unwilling to face openly. I said to myself next morning I will get this right, I am numb and raw, I myself watched Jeanne d'Arc being burnt alive at Rouen last night. . .and I myself must go again. . .ah, that is just it. We do not go and see a thing that is real, that is real beyond realism, AGAIN. I said I will go again but I did not go again. I did not and I don't think I failed any inner "light", any focus of consciousness in so ceding to my own new lapse. I can NOT watch this thing impartially and it is the first film of the many that I have consistently followed that I have drawn away from. This is perhaps the last and greatest tribute to the sheer artistry and the devilish cunning of the method and the technique of Carl Dreyer. I pay him my greatest compliment. His is one film among all films, to be judged differently, to be approach-

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ed differently, to be viewed as a masterpiece, one of the absolute masterpieces of screen craft. Technically, artistically, dramatically, this is a masterpiece. But, but, but, but, but. . . there is a Jeanne sobbing before us, there is a small Jeanne about to be kicked by huge hob-nailed boots, there is a Jeanne whose sturdy child-wrist is being twisted by an ogre's paw because forsooth she wears a bit of old hard hammered unwieldy bulk of gold upon one finger, there is a numb hypnotized creature who stares with dog-like fidelity, toward the sly sophist who directs her by half-smile, by half-nod, by imperceptible lift of half an eye brow toward her defaming answers, there is a Jeanne or a Joan whose wide great grey eyes fill with round tears at the mention of her mother ("say your pater noster, you don't know your pater noster ? you do ? well who taught it to you ?") there is Jeanne or Joan or Johanna or Juana upon Jeanne or Jean or Johanna or Juana. They follow one another with precision, with click, with *monotony*. Isn't that a little just it ? There is another side to all this, there is another series of valuations that can not perhaps be hinted at consistently in this particular presentation of this one kicked little puppy of a Jeanne or a Joan or a Johanna. Isn't it just that ? Isn't the brute side of the flawless type, the Jeanne d'Arc of all peoples, of all nations, the world's Jeanne d'Arc (as the world's Christ) a little too defiantly stressed, a little too acutely projected ? I know after the first half of the second reel all that. I know all, all that. Just that round child face lifted "who taught you your pater noster ?" gives me all, all that. I do not mean to say that there could

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have been any outside sort of beatific screen craft of heavenly vision. I don't mean that. But Jeanne kicked almost, so to speak, to death, still had her indomitable vision. I mean Jeanne d'Arc talked openly with angels and in this square on square of Danish protestant interior, this trial room, this torture room, this cell, there was no hint of angels. The angels were there all the time and if Jeanne had reached the spiritual development that we must believe this chosen comrade of the warrior Michael must have reached, the half-hypnotized numb dreary physical state she was in, would have its inevitable psychic recompense. The Jeanne d'Arc of the incomparable Dreyer it seems to me, was kicked towards the angels. There were not there, nor anywhere, hint of the angelic wing tip, of the winged sandals and the two-edged sword of Michael or of the distillation of maternal pity of her "familiar" Margaret. Father, mother, the "be thou perfect" perfected in Jeanne d'Arc as in the boy of Nazareth, were in no way psychically manifest. Such psychic manifestation I need hardly say, need be in no way indicated by any outside innovation of cross lights or of superimposed shadows. It is something in something, something behind something. It is something one feels, that you feel, that the baker's boy, that the tennis champion, that the army colonel, that the crocodile of English and Dutch and mixed German-Swiss (come here to learn French) feels. We are numb and beaten. We won't go a second time. The voice behind me that says wistfully, taken unawares, "I wish it was one of those good American light things" even has its place in critical consciousness. For all our prepara-

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tion, we are unprepared. This Jeanne d'Arc is sprung on us and why should it be? There is a reason for most things. I think the reason is that it doesn't link up straight with human consciousness. There is a gap somewhere. We criticise many films, sometimes for crudity, sometimes for sheer vicious playing up to man's most febrile sentiment, sometimes for cruelty or insincerity. We criticise Jeanne d'Arc for none of these things.

The Jeanne d'Arc of the incomparable artist Carl Dreyer is in a class by itself. And that is the trouble with it. It shouldn't be.

H. D.

“CRASHING THE MOVIES”

This is an unvarnished account of how I stormed Hollywood, and of how I failed to “crash the Movies”. I write with the hope that other intelligent young men and women of my generation will come forward and declare their attitude towards the new art of the motion picture.

The genesis of my pilgrimage to Los Angeles is to be found in three slight happenings in the summer of 1927. No. 1. Ernest Vajda, Hungarian dramatist, author of *Fata Morgana*,

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was now writing original stories for Paramount. His *Service for Ladies*, starring Adolph Menjou, made one aware of the possibilities for the intelligent writer with the knack of the light-comedy touch. The film was not first-class, but it was excellent stuff. Two stories already suggested themselves to one's brain. No. 2. Paramount had taken a story by that curious high-brow bird from Chicago, Ben Hecht, and turned it into a box-office success: *Underworld*. Later on one discovered that much of the genius in this thriller was due to the marvellous direction of Josef von Sternberg. No. 3. Through one of those dreadful chatty magazines made for Movie fans one learned that Paramount was looking out for new talent among young, unknown writers, that an Authors Council, headed by Owen Davis, the dramatist, had been formed to deal with this end of the business. It was stated that Paramount were going to pick out unknown young writers, transplant them to Hollywood, pay them \$ 200 per week for six weeks, then, if they showed promise to take them into the company under contract.

Before taking any practical step in the matter I reviewed my position. What were my particular qualifications for this Movie business. Point I. I was not crazy to make money out of writing for the Movies. Naturally I did expect to make money if I got in, but this was not the guiding factor. Point 2. I had been vitally interested in films ever since about 1911-12, about which time I must have seen *The Miracle* and *Queen Elizabeth*. In 1920 I had actually adapted a novel into a scenario on my own initiative. I had seen films

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in many lands. I believed that the film is a new art medium. Point 3. I had travelled extensively : Asia, Europe, and the United States. I therefore felt that I knew a little about the various audiences. Point 4. I had done a certain amount of successful journalistic work, which is supposed to be the general path towards a screen career. Point 5. I knew that I possessed in an unusual degree a dramatic sense. My intense interest in the legitimate stage revealed that. I also believed that I possessed a great deal of visual imagination. I mention these several points to make it clear that my interest in films was not a sudden snobbish or hysterical interest, but a real growing interest. So far so good.

My first practical step, since I knew not a single soul in this "industry", was to go to the source of my inspiration, Paramount. In their New York office I attempted to see Mr. Owen Davis. Of course, he was too busy rehearsing a new play to see me. However, I was able to see a very charming young woman who listened to me sympathetically, and after eloquently pleading my case I went away with a letter of introduction to the head man in the Hollywood studio. This was all I carried in my port-folio to influence "these great men of the Movie Industry".

I will not write here of my trip to Los Angeles, of how I set out from New York with one hundred dollars in my pocket (over 3,000 miles), and a copy of "The Brothers Karamazov" in my hand. The slow trek across the United States, with odd visits to local Movie houses to see what the "Hicks" were really like (I saw *Metropolis* again in some small mid-American

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town) left me conscious of the kind of audiences to be found in America proper.

Arrived in Los Angeles my first visit was to some Russians I had met in Europe. The man I met was secretary to the "great" Russian, whom I will not mention by name, but who has as great a reputation in his own country as Reinhardt has in Germany. His first question was "Have you come here under contract?" When I told him I had arrived on spec, he was horrified, predicting death and desolation. He reinforced his attitude by relating their own adventures in Movie-land. It appeared that they had been specially imported because of their terrific reputation. But after the shouting was over they had been practically idle for thirteen months, doing nothing but drawing their salary envelopes. The company would not let them do anything at all, and even the one story which was so botched that the "great Russian" had to repudiate the authorship in print. They left for Moscow shortly afterwards.

My next move was a visit to Paramount armed with my precious letter. But already I had heard mutterings that letters of introduction in Hollywood were as thick as the leaves of Vallombrosa. However, it did get me into the inner sanctum. I might interrupt my narrative here to give my impression of these "front" offices of the studios. They are all alike, guarded by two or three zealous keepers who are supposed to keep out all those who have no real business behind the façade of the studio. Questions of an intimate nature are asked, and since all sorts of people are sitting about there

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in an air of embarrassment. "Who do you want to see?" "Does he know you?" "What's it about?" "You can speak to Mr. Brown on the 'phone..here he is". And one is compelled to bellow one's plea through that wretched medium. If you say you have a story for Pola Negri you will be told to send it in to Mr. So-and-So. Often it is the stenographer—generally called "his secretary"—who answers the telephone and assures you that the "great" man is much too busy to see any one at all. It took me two whole days before I saw Mr. Sheldon, head of the Editorial Department of Paramount. But although he received me cordially enough he was much too immersed in some story for Bebe Daniels to pay much attention to my ideas. "What have you got to offer in manuscript form" was the question. Also "Have you got any ideas suitable for Miss Negri?" To the first question I had to answer "Nothing", and to the second I had to answer "Not at present?" "Bring some stories in and I'll read them" was the parting cry. I left his office very depressed and gloomy (*). Upstairs, installed in Room 99 (or some such number) I found Ernest Vajda, who I had met casually in Budapest. I told him of my plans, and suggested that I place several ideas before him to work on. But he said that he only dealt in his own ideas, but he would be pleased to read anything I had to offer. Otherwise he had no power in the company; he was just a contract writer.

(*) It was, however, surely very optimistic of the author to expect results if he had nothing to show? Ed.

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That same week I wandered into the office of a lady of the press : a certain Miss Louella Parsons, Movie Chatter reporter for the Hearst chain of newspapers. I told her about a story I had for Greta Garbo, and two days later I found that I was an "ambitious writer with more courage than common-sense" in coming to Hollywood on "spec". She told me in great confidence that Pola Negri lived at the swagger Ambassador Hotel, a fact known to everyone in Los Angeles.

I next went down to Metro-Goldwyn at Culver City. There I got in without a letter. Perhaps my very English accent helped. Yes, they were looking for stories for Miss Garbo. Send something in.

Intermission for starvation act.

Then I sat down and wrote in about thirty pages a detailed story suitable for the talents of Greta Garbo before the duds of Hollywood got hold of her. (I had only seen her in one film : *Joyless Street*, and was completely ignorant of her artistic "ruin"). This time, at Metro-Goldwyn, I was shunted off on to a certain Mr. Harris. Before I had made two steps into his office he had decided that I was a useless "high-brow", and began telling me what was the trouble with such fellows as myself. Also, was my story a "costume" story, for, so said Mr. Harris, "the public doesn't want costume stories". As a matter of fact Metro was on the point of producing a Baroness Orczy story of the 16th. century. I informed him that my story was by no means a high-brow affair, that it was merely a modern re-hash of Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet", the most famous love story in the world. But this did

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not affect Mr. Harris, for a few days later I received back my manuscript with the painful news that it did not "fit in with our programme".

My next move was in the direction of the Fox people. One knew that Murnau was there, and Ludwig Berger had just arrived from Berlin. Both of these men, I knew, would know whether my story was worth while or not. But, alas, "try and get in", as the Americans say. Even when I had met the gifted children of Thomas Mann, who were both holidaying in Hollywood, and had tried to meet the great Murnau through them, it was all in vain. I was closeted with one of the younger editorial staff, who was very polite, but very dull. When I returned to get my story he rather wearily said that it was a "sordid story". This in spite of the fact that it was a completely romantic story without any sex in it at all. I then put the story away, and decided that it was a waste of time letting them read it. But this was not the end.

Paramount had asked me for Pola Negri. For days and days I dug deep into my mind for something suitable for her, and one night a whole clear idea appeared. It was so compelling that it kept me awake half the night. The following day (I think I had to borrow the car fare) I rushed out to Paramount full of my first-class idea which was going to bring the Negri back to public favour. But young men full of enthusiasm are not wanted at such places. The secretary of Mr. Sheldon assured me it was impossible to see him. I must see Mrs Stickinthmud. I groaned, shouted and argued, but this only made it the harder--"another crazy fellow trying to

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crash into the movies". So the wonderful idea is still imprisoned within my brain waiting until some person is willing to listen.

Let me record one more incident. Just before I was preparing to leave the City of Dreadful Blight (Money and Sunshine) some one in New York sent me a long, personal letter of introduction to one of the biggest executives in the Metro-Goldwyn firm. At last, I thought, I shall surely get in. But not more than his secretary's face did I see. I even went to his private house where I was practically pushed out of the house by his wife. This ended my attempt to get into the movies.

Owing to the fact that I was practically penniless most of the time my troubles were more complicated than the above bare chronicle can reveal. If I had arrived with resources enough to last out about one year, or if I had been able to get some outside position while I was attacking the central gates of the great movie studios I might have managed by about January 1929 to get a job in one of those many rooms adapting comedies for Mr. Reginald Denny.

Although my limited financial condition kept me from wide social intercourse I met two other young men in my position. The one was a Pole, the other a Russian Jew. Their problem was not how to become a writer for the movies, but how to become producers. Both of them had been in Los Angeles a long time without any real success. They were just waiting for something to turn up. Los Angeles is too full of dull people to make it a pleasant waiting room.

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Apparently there is only one way for the young, unknown writer of intelligence to get on to the writing staff of a movie studio. He must be able to "crash" his way into one of the large fiction magazines of America. This may take many years, for they specialise in "big" names. Otherwise, the situation seems pretty hopeless.

P. BEAUMONT WADSWORTH.

LA TRAGÉDIE DE LA RUE

Whose feet ? Where are they going ? That is not the kind of thing we shall know. We feel that. These are feet seeking to escape us, tripping and creeping (feet, feet, feet) close to that wall. But we know the wall, we know the mud and the cobbles, and the feet are treading through something we know.

The street, too. We know it, not only because it is photographed, a little over-luciously this time, by Guido Seeber. The walls and the angles that comes down here, so that there is a way going up there and a way going ever so slightly, but how differently, to the right. That second way is different from the first, one is hidden from the first, going there, one might be safe, or one might miss something. Which way did

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the feet take ? The light, the rather-too-much light, doesn't belong here. The light says there should be no light in this street. It is put there, by lamplighter or cameraman (I have to admit, more probably by cameraman) to show light does not belong here. The street knows it, and we know it.

So this street, feet and feet, is, besides being very vividly itself, something also we know. Something of us in terms of wall and mud and a girl in a too-short skirt (a French girl killed herself once because they wouldn't give her a licence, she was too young) made visible by light that doesn't belong.

The feet have been followed by other feet. Girl's feet followed by man's upstairs, into a room. Fight, rush to window scream. And here is another room, with Asta Nielsen. We know her, too. We know the kind of film this will be. We can sit back. Or rather, don't sit back, sit up. Asta Nielsen in a frightening tight bodice that catches the light as she raises her arms. Asta Nielsen making the light belong. She is raising her arms to do her hair, and that means to her pulling it apart at the roots, dipping a tooth-brush in dye. A room leading off, with a girl, fluffy and obvious, we know her too. The fight opposite goes on. The fluffy girl hears the scream, and flies in to Nielsen, who smiles one of those dreadful smiles, short and wise, with what shouldn't be known so absolutely. When you have lived here longer she says, dipping the tooth-brush, you will get used to that. The crowd is splitting, those early feet will only dangle now. Into the picture slides Homolka, giving the word of "police". He is Nielsen's man. She is a little bored with him. Why will he be proprietary ? If

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he wants to feel self-respect, he can stop being kept by her. Why will he fuss, the scarf would have been all right, if *she* had put it on that way. Now it isn't, and anyway, *on va descendre*. Come on, she says to the girl, *on va descendre*. Has there ever been a more frightening caption than that? But the girl has no need to *descendre* to-night. She is going to a supper, champagne and all. Nielsen gives her a shoulder-flower, she is helping this girl on her way. She herself is past being given champagne suppers. She goes down. This way and that, feet over the cobbles, feet, sway, a step or two, turn, the street, feet, feet, fade out.

The girl is going up-town. Up town, too, dinner is waiting. A son has not come home. The mother waits, and waits too, we can see, to intercept the storm. It is a pity to use the cliché of a key fumbling at the door. But the son comes in. "Again!" the mother says, "in this state again". Father. A scene. This is, on the whole, a bad scene, not lifted up, as the rest are. Too strongly lit. The son, sick of all this, and a little sick, too, with drink, or will be soon, flings out. Of course he hits the street. Hungry and giddy, he sits down. This after sometime, and they have all been expecting him home again. Here is a flaw, though you did not notice it the first time, and might not have the second had not Marc Allégret pointed it out. The son should be younger. That "again" of the mother spoilt it. If he drank often, he would know what to do, he would have friends to go to, other bar-companions. And Asta Nielsen, when she comes back, and finds him heaped on the cobbles, wouldn't have been the first woman he is to know.

Still, Asta Nielsen is here again, she can take everything up and make it not matter, in the bigger thing she makes.

She leads him up, turning the other man off. She lays the table, prepares food. And how wonderful when she talks, and is so eager, and forgets, the kettle boils, and she burns her fingers. And how good Pittschaw is, longing to eat the bread, waiting till her back is turned, hating to wait till her back is turned, eating hungrily, crying. How marvellous all this meal, Nielsen pouring coffee, the squat liqueur bottle, conversation softening from the early shyness, over the liqueur, Nielsen pouring it, to shyness brought on by this quick intimacy, as the night grows late, and night of course means sleep.

Pause now and think how well we were brought to this street. Steps, following feet to awful stairs. Not only eyes on edge, but ears made so too, as with the cry we flash down to the street, where the *filles* are, up to the room the other side, where they hear the noise. I have said a film ought to be choreographed, and here it is, unobtrusively ; more unobtrusively than *Jeanne d'Arc*.

Fluffy girl is returning, gay, confettied. She meets Homolka, lolling outside Lea's house. He whines that she has a new one. He has just been told to keep away, "it's over between us". The girl won't see what there is to see in his eyes and in his pose ; or she has, quickly, and jumps over it, for she says, never mind, we have to do this, to come back to men like you. Once again, the caption. You can't keep us, it implies (it says only about four words) so we have to go out,

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to come back to you. O, this street, our eyes cry, how we know it. How much a street and how more than a street it is. The girl wakes late next morning. Nielsen is getting breakfast ready. Her beetleish bodice is now a bright, white woolly. She has brightened the room. She is brighter herself, as she sets the tea-cosey that you feel she does not ordinarily use. This means something, at last. She is, as she tells the girl, *pincée*. Pittschaw comes out. He wishes to go, to pay in the ordinary manner. We know what Nielsen's eyes do to us, we are watching them, so we know what will happen. "There is no need. You can stay here as long as you like". She has collected her savings, wrapped up in stays, from which she took last night to pay off Homolka, to buy a confectioners' that is for sale. She goes out, persuading the girl not to enter her room while she is away. She knows this "each-for-her-self" too well.

Smartened, less sinister, she visits the shop. Over a cup of coffee, it is settled.

Over a cup of coffee in her room, Homolka has put things to Pittschaw. We share Lea. We. . . .the boy looks at Homolka. We. . . .What was he feeling for Lea before? We do not know. Lea is old. Much more my style, says Homolka. The fluffy girl is yours. So the boy does not know the girl? Lea has been careful! Homolka fetches the girl. She struts her stuff. Last night's streamers fly around, linking them both up, hang down from the lamp. Very fine acting here by Pittschaw. The door of her room closes on what she has taken from Lea's room.

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Lea closes the shop door, bright with a picture of her and the boy serving there. On the way home, she stops in on the floor below and engages an old pianist to play in her shop. And she tells him to go on playing now, so that she can hear him as she mounts. She is so happy.

Upstairs, her room is empty. There is only what she didn't leave there, a squat liqueur bottle and streamers over the lamp. She traces the streamers to the door. She listens with her eyes. You know the Nielsen eyes. She beats on the door. You know the Nielsen hands. That is why this old stuff is terrible to you. She even falls, taking to herself all the people that have ever fallen from doors in films before. She takes them, and gives to what they did just the truth that makes this the only time any one has fallen from a door before. Through the boards, the piano sounds. Beat, beat hands this, time beat.

It is old stuff. And one no longer reacts to the fact that harlots have hearts. And one must always react to Jeanne d'Arc. But Dryer's wonderful film has this ; it takes from us, it empties us, and this little street tragedy takes, and changes and gives back to us something we should not have had otherwise.

The boy, the other side of the door, is in ecstasy of calf-love. Fluffy is a sister of Lea in this, save that she does not understand why love should get mixed up in it ; this is attraction for her, a pleasant variation from routine, but part of routine nevertheless. Pittschaw comes out to face Lea. Haggard old helpless Lea. She will forget this, it can not be his fault.

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He sees only an old *fille*, trying to catch him, because no one else is fool enough to have her. But he, at the height of being let down by his youth, is wise. He quite understands, women like her would be expected to take boys in ; he is not going to be ruined because of a little sentimental kindness. And he, she might as well know, is in love. (Fluffy, behind the door thinks it as well to creep out.) He and the girl are going away. O yes, he who cannot see, let alone realise how impossible Lea's love is, that would be as tragic, but it would be a way out, he who scorns the love of *filles* is confident of Fluffy. Lea implores, begs, grovels. The young man will get his *affaires*.

Homolka comes in. Nielsen of course realises. We knew how terrible her knowledge was. She smiles brokenly at him. She takes a chair. Is she apologising ? Is she taking what she can get ? Well, it's a pity, but what else could you have ? She pours out from that bottle. Stop, stop, this is last night's table. She drinks, makes conversation. Stop, you can't do this, can't pour from that, of all bottles. Lea, you don't, after all, know. Lea smiles. It would be better if that girl went away, she has come between us. Again that smile, a little crooked, not quite easy. You understand. . . ? If she went away. Lea goes know, yes. Homolka, skilfully fuddled, recoils. Lea goes on, bottle goes on. And after all, where is Homolka to go ? He will do it, he goes out. Lea has an interview with the boy.

Feet, feet again, Fluffy's feet are treading the same way as those earlier feet. And Homolka lurches after her. Up-

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town; mother and father wait for their son, or for news. We want to cry out to those feet. You can't walk like that, HERE.

Lea has discovered that the boy loves. After his cruelty to her, she thought him incapable of it. But even then, she would have kept him, to have given her this chance. But he loves, he says he really does, this girl, Lea's friend. She had not simply caught him. It is incredible. Lea is aghast. If that is so, she must save her. It may be too late. She had only wanted to get her out of the way. One more or less is nothing in this street, and she and the boy could have been happy. But he loves the girl. . . rush downstairs. It may be too late. Past the pianist, which way? Homolka's feet close in on the girl. Shadows on the wall. Asta Nielsen is at her corner. Which way? A way going up there and a way going ever so slightly to the right. It may be too late. She goes the wrong way, Asta Nielsen's feet, feet go the wrong way.

She finds him in a wine-shop. Drunkenly hysterical in a clod's way. People all round. Impossible to ask. She sits down. Asks, in a lull. . . some one comes up. Now her beer is brought, now a girl talks. Will none of them go? She looks, He nods. It is good God. . . She sits, realising. This is terrible. The cumulative effect of so many fraying incidents is terrible. He is sick of her for this. Where will it lead. He leaves.

Shadows again, and two hands. The detectives he had warned others of in the beginning have got him.

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Uptown, the boy crying in his mother's lap. He should have avoided *that* disgrace. "Some one has been killed because of me." He thinks he knows. They stick a notice outside Lea's house. "Room to let." Lea's room, not only the girl's. One death more or less, what does it matter in this street? Lea is not a tragic figure? She should not have been so light about killing the girl?

The girl shouldn't have been so light in taking the boy. The boy shouldn't have taken to drink. The woman shouldn't have taken to the streets. It comes back to the street, the house-that-jack-built street, where motive and moral go round and round. Lea wanted to be "good" now. She was at a stage when this life she led held no more than the life she had exchanged or refused for it. And when the boy, who was her suddenly flowering ideal come real, broke up, she still sought her "good" by the same means she had sought, and got, everything else. And in this street, everything came back, to her and the boy came back to his family. Blame them, perhaps.

Any way, we are not academicians. You will either have seen that this is no piquant mummery, but a very real conflict or you won't, and then it is you who don't matter. What I write is only the instrument, and does not come into it. Lea was true to herself, so was the boy, and that was fatal. There is not much hope, but when that happens you don't need hope, because you have fulfilment.

Asta Nielsen has played many *filles*. None more forcibly than this. None more nobly, none more quietly, none more,

but here is a word that does not matter, we have seen something larger, none more beautifully. It does matter in a way. For the blending of this theme, the glimpse of happiness in a life used to doing without it, the sudden arrival of all she had turned her back against, to wake what was only dormant and not dead, has to be done beautifully, I mean cleanly, with nothing superfluous or wallowing, to make it anything but wearisome Yellow Book. And it is far from that. Three women beatingly alive, or all that makes a woman alive terribly, vibrantly, on a little sheet, this is the screen, *Mother*, *Jeanne d'Arc*, *La Tragédie*, not Talmadge, Garbo and Gish.

Directed by Bruno Rahn, the film has already run for fifteen weeks at the Ursulines as I write. It has been banned for England, where the cinema is supposed to be alive, they say.

Asta Nielsen has made a film, on cocaine this time, with Werner Krauss. It was called "C.O.C. 437." but it has been changed, I quote *Photo Ciné* "pour nous protéger contre quoi, grand Dieu", to a film on alcoholism, entitled *Les Égarés*. Another Nielsen is *L'Age Dangereux*, with Bernard Goetzke. *La Tragédie de la Rue* is held in Paris by M. B. Films.

ROBERT HERRING.

ON BEING BORED WITH FILMS

There is no boredom in the world to be compared with that of sitting through a thoroughly bad film, for a bad film is so exasperating that you cannot even go to sleep while it is being shown. As you blink and yawn through its tedium, the germ of indifference broadens out from this one masterpiece of boredom into a vast cloud of horrible apathy coiling into the final query : why do films exist at all, why do we put up with their petrifying stupidity at all and the immense apparatus of their manufacture ? We shall all be turned into idiots if we stand it much longer !

And at once an infinitude of questions is struck out of the main body of our complaint. One doubts the authenticity of one's boredom. One does not enquire into the causes of boredom at a tea-party or at the speeches made during a film-trade luncheon. Such functions are dead from the beginning and cannot be helped. You walk away from them to something else.

But films have a life and soul of their own and must be considered. The odd thing is that in films of unquestioned quality, such as "Sunrise" or "The Circus" there are passages which utterly fail in interest for all sorts of people, and you see them getting up and leaving the theatre and taking away with them valuable portions of one's own interest as they go.

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The stream of interest that just now was full and flowing, has been broken up and its quickness arrested.

I had been told that "Barbed Wire" was a good film and it was revived at my local theatre "by request". Sharing a not too substantial belief in the common sense of public taste, I went to see the picture and was bored to death, notwithstanding the efficiency—the tedious efficiency—of Pola Negri, who can be depended upon, like Gloria Swanson, never to be defeated by anything, never to be overcome or lost or lacking in the maximum percentage of American "sure-film" value.

There is a gentleman associated with the Turf who "never owes" anybody anything. I was reminded of him then. What a deplorable position to be in, what a killing sense of self-sufficiency! He doesn't owe a penny, he is above leaning on humanity for anything, like an archangel. He is complete, and not a cubit can be added to his stature. He resembles a girder in a house. You put it there and it stays there for ever and is utterly beyond assistance.

A great many films possess this irreclaimable status. They are "faultlessly tailored" and there is not a scrap of life beneath the cloth. And so you lose interest in them and spend a sleepless evening in the cinema looking at the pretty lights, cursing the Hope Wurlitzer and all its stops, marvelling at the majestic and exquisite command of the theatre girls, one of whom you would marry if she had brains, and utterly forgetting the screen in front of you.

Film values altogether, you reflect, are in need of some process of transubstantiation, of some illuminating violence done

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to their complacency. Either that, or must be ill and should cancel all engagements. The boredom arising from a bad film is due to the film world being far too certain of what it wants and too secure in its technique of accomplishment. I was told the other day by a successful British film director that in America the director stands on the floor with his watch in his hand timing each scene to the second. I registered a simple smile. A moving picture, if it is to move, has no business to live in a world of certainties. No artist can work in an atmosphere of complete stability, and the motion-picture is now in a condition in which all its values are too securely established, so that only a great artist, by incredible exertions, can knock them and get past them, and by that time he is himself a stretcher-case and is next seen (reading from left to right) basking in the sunshine at Cap d'Antibes, with a mask of total indifference to the row of film beauties about him.

Some of our critics—probably the most bored of all those who have to do with films—have been complaining of this staleness of invention even in the work of Charlie Chaplin. But I cannot be bored with Chaplin, for although he reproduces many of the stock situations of film comedy, his power and understanding of the film medium are unmatched and he gives to comedy all the beauty of its tragic inversion. His technique is so perfect that he does not have to think whether a moment or a sequence is cinematic or not. If it were not, he would not have thought of it. We are in danger of forgetting that the perfect film must conjure with movement so as to keep it constantly in the air and thus justify the root-

principle of all camera work, of films altogether—the imitation of life by action. Chaplin is supreme in this gift and charms us by the infinite variety of his movement, and the significance he gives to it.

But when the camera is used to show us all over again that if you drive one car into another at sixty miles an hour there will be an accident, (see—or rather, take for granted—*Moulin Rouge*) ; when it is used to present the banal excitements of a cabaret or a prize fight or a racecourse or the utterly threadbare seduction scene, in which the moving pageant of human nature is not considered for its motion-value, for what it can say with a gesture, but simply to force a sensation upon us, then I am intolerably bored. At once I am conscious of the goods being delivered for an order I never gave in a packing-case I do not acknowledge. Not I ! They are giving me just what I want, in the preposterous belief that I have not had it a thousand times before. On what other grounds shall we account for the periodical panic of the film magnates, who say that the public are tired of this and are tired of that and must be given something new ? But they give us nothing new or they give us “new” faces. That is the shortest cut to pleasing the congenitally witless public. One might just as well expect to feed a horse by giving it a new nosebag. How, I ask, can a face be new ? What man among us will give a new shape to Adam’s rib ? *Non est inventus.*

All this antique stuff and all this frenzy to cry up any sort of novelty to replace it, bores me to extinction. If the makers of films want us to have something new why don’t they look

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to the settings and backgrounds of their films ? We should be more entertained if most of them were scrapped. For a film never explores a thing thoroughly but goes on to the next thing before you have had time to see it. Even the shop-girl mind is beginning to be bored with the specious grandeur of the typical American interior and the acknowledged centres of movie romance—Paris, the Riviera, the South Seas, the Front, the Wild West, the desert, the Yukon ; and for interiors, the everlasting underworld the ballroom, thousands of restaurants, bar parlours, beauty parlours, board rooms, bedrooms, bathrooms, shacks, shops, ships, casinos and mining camps. There they are—sign-posts to the eligible localities of the film world. I am not surprised that the Pathé Gazette is more interesting than many a feature film. It doesn't go in for all this bookstall romance. It has some of the riches and inspiration of life itself.

I have never seen Soho on the screen, or Southend. I have seen Blackpool and found it highly entertaining. I have never seen Birmingham on the screen or the packed life of London's suburbia. I have never seen Chelsea or Bloomsbury or Hampstead Heath, but I can remember seeing a drunken reconstruction of the the Thames Embankment in an American film, carried out, apparently, by a smiling pavement artist. Yet our producers, politicians, critics and Empire-builders are all shouting out for England to be placed on the screen. England no doubt has a becoming modesty which yearns to be tricked out in this misfit raiment, but if we want to see England on the screen why don't we put it there ? What are we

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waiting for? So far as I can see, we are waiting for the Americans to come over and show us how to do it. And that is the whole trouble. We are afraid to depart from the massive but stultifying film values which they have already built up. Every film producer in the world is mortally afraid of losing that Hollywood complexion, ourselves most of all. It is a feeble and ludicrous state of affairs and we ought to be ashamed of it.

Finally, I am bored with the music to our films—painfully and insufferably bored. Not long ago when engaged in the bitter business of film criticism, I was given the task of finding out exactly what our directors of film music thought about its development and future. I now know that they thought nothing at all. As a result, films are being accompanied by exactly the same music to-day as they were five years ago. “Ramona”, shown at the New Gallery a short time ago, is an example of what I mean. I do not know what was written on the cue sheets, but I know that I had heard it all fifty times before. And I was bored. Contrary to professional practice, I nearly always pay for my boredom at pictures for the pleasure of saying afterwards that I *was* bored). We have not begun to take film music seriously yet, or to treat it as an organic part of picture production. We instal vast organs in our cinemas, capable of producing the most excruciating sounds imaginable, but these effects take one’s attention *away* from the film into a quite different world of noise. That they also produce music goes without saying, but none of it has any logical place in the score, and the construction of the score is

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still a thing apart from the construction of the film. It is all done afterwards by the musical director, who sits before the film with a little note-book while it is exhibited "cold", and as its story unfolds he wraps up the bits in their appropriate musical garment. He has done this so many times now that the innumerable strips torn from Massenet, Saint-Saens, Gounod, Sterndale Bennett, Elgar, Mendelssohn, Gershwin, Dariuszowski, Wagner and Lehar—yes, they are all side by side in a line and would stretch from St. Paul's to Knightsbridge—are recalled by heart and instantly applied to the alternating moods of the film. The music is held together by a theme, which the musical director will himself compose this afternoon if he has time, and if not he will look up some other theme. In this way, all our film music which does not come from America, is made to measure over here and sent carriage paid to exhibitors in the provinces.

I make no criticism just now of the technique employed, but I say that its conventions are much too plausible and its material utterly hackneyed, and that the whole thing is so uninspiring and antiquated that I am bored.

There are many other matters which make for boredom on the screen—the lack of character in British films for example, the myth about the shortage of stories, the nonsense about films for the Empire and so on. But I am beginning to lose my boredom now and developing an active rage, and this is beyond our terms of reference. Perhaps 1/2 at the local cinema will put matters right.

ERNEST BETTS.

SCENES D'EXTERIEURS AU STUDIO

J'ignore au juste quand la première scène d'extérieur fût tournée dans un atelier, mais ce jour-là me paraît devoir être signalé comme une sombre date dans les annales du cinéma. Je vais essayer de vous montrer les fautes que cette innovation engendra et, en particulier, celles que l'avenir ne manquera pas de révéler. (Ne croyez pas que je veuille me faire passer pour prophète dans le domaine encore si vague de l'esthétique cinématographique, mais cependant les exemples qui m'ont été fournis par diverses personnalités éminentes du film m'incitent à penser que ces prises de vue sont loin de vouloir cesser. Il est notoire, du reste, qu'on ne rencontre en aucun art autant d'imitateurs qu'au cinéma).

Un film ne peut cacher son âge à nos yeux car nous reconnaissons de suite son ancienneté à la quasi impossibilité du geste, à l'immobilité ennuyeuse et presque intolérable du camera, ainsi qu'à la pauvreté de la décoration et de l'éclairage. Mais les scènes d'extérieur rachetaient en partie, dans les premiers films, les défauts signalés. Toute proportion gardée, on peut dire que ces scènes étaient bonnes. (Nous voyons si souvent, de nos jours, des extérieurs qui ne sont guère meilleurs ni plus intéressants).

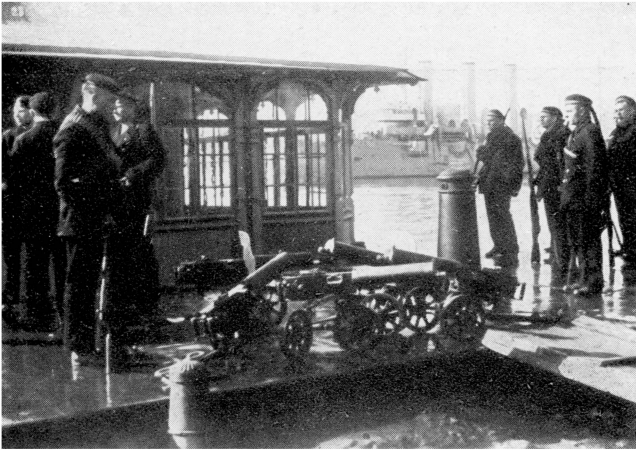
L'on perfectionna donc l'atelier ; l'éclairage devint par-



10 *Tage die die Welt Erschütterten* (*Ten Days that Shook the World*) Sovkino film by S. M. Eisenstein, distributed in Germany by Prometheus Film, G. m. b. H.



Ten Days that Shook the World



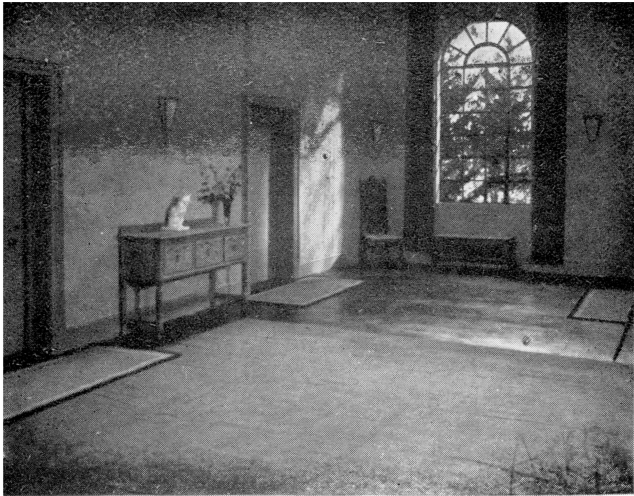
Ten Days that Shook the World



Ten Days that Shook the World.



Eye Francis in *l'Inondation* by Lucien Delluc. Simple and straight. . . one of the best French films. It was revived at the Ciné Latin this Spring.

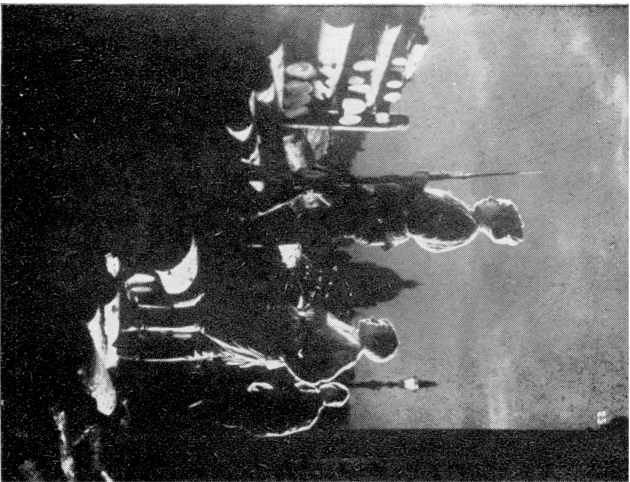
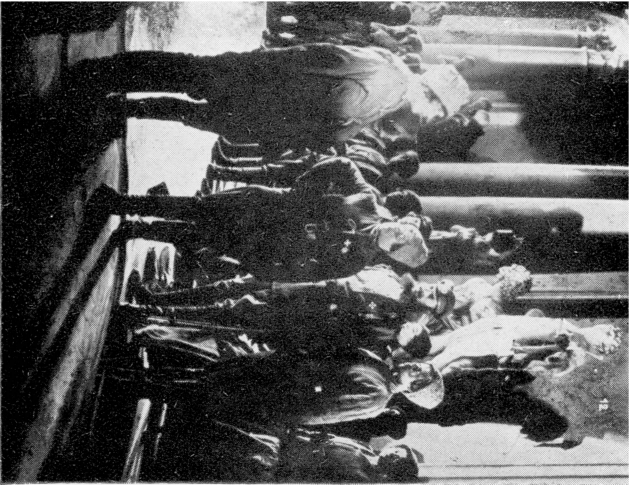


A new standard in British film production. The designs of Hugh Gee for *Tesha*, Burlington film, directed by V. Savile. Mr. Gee uses inverted lighting to bring out the angles of his otherwise plain walls.

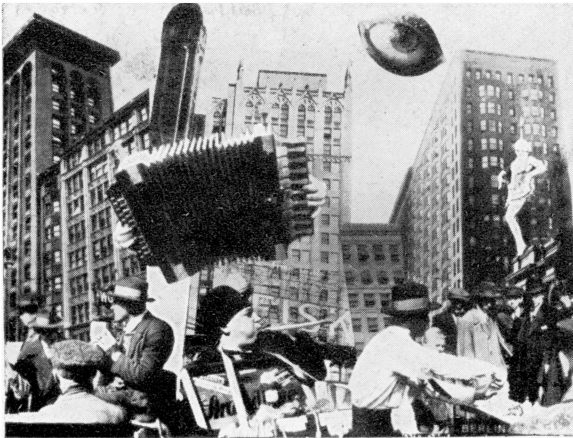
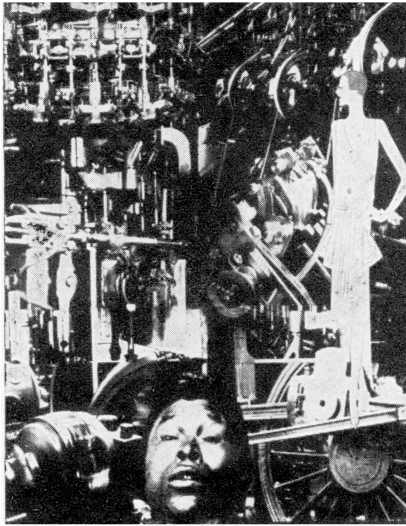
Photos : E. Cyril Stanborough



Mr. Gee in his designs, aims at unobtrusive spaciousness and a modernity in so far that he does not believe in repeating old formulæ. At the same time he avoids the "modernism" of the commercial French sets.



The woman's' army in Ten Days that Shook the World.



From Berlin (*The Symphony of a City*) Walter Ruttmann's film using neither actors nor sets.

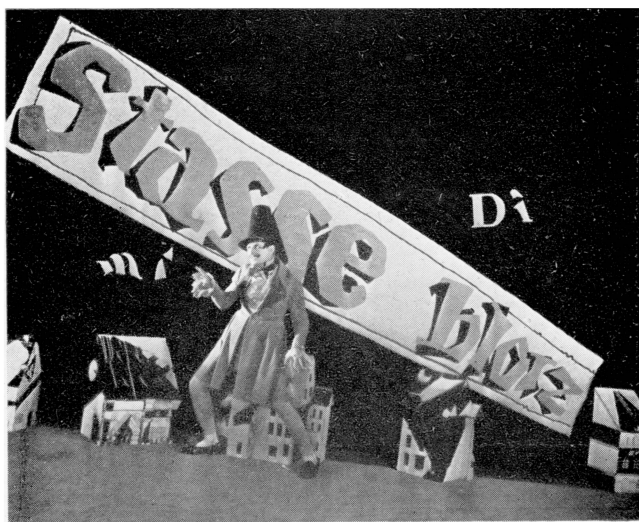
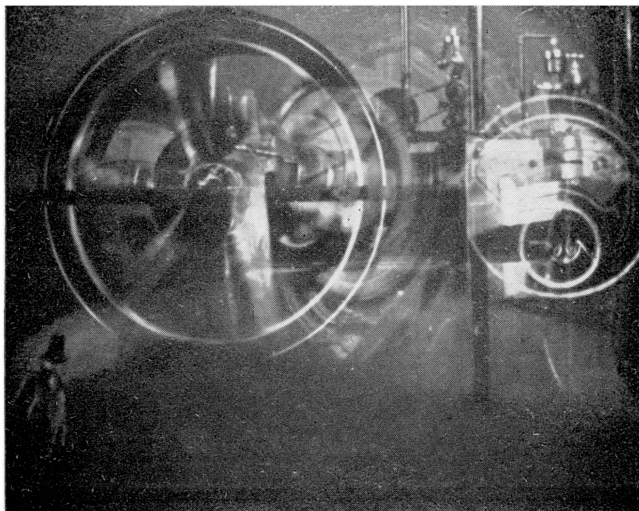


From *The Last Moment*, a film by Paul Fejos, made for Zakoro Film Corporation, the subject of which is the passing of a man's life before his eyes at the moment of death.



Two close-ups of Joseph Marievsky in Robert Florey's latest impressionistic production *The Love of Zero*, which cost two hundred dollars.

Photos exclusive to CLOSE UP



“Machine Street” and an impression of “The Street”, being scenes in Robert Florey’s *Love of Zero*, starring Joseph Marievsky.



The celebrated "rocket" car. Photographs taken at the first trial run in Berlin. From the left at top, Fritz Lang, Thea von Harbou, Fritz von Opel, who drove it, and Lilian Harvey. Below, the car with Lilian Harvey.

Photos : UFA

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tie intégrante de la technique du film, formule mathématique presque ; des découvertes comme le procédé Schueftan donnèrent aux régisseurs des possibilités de développement infinies. Cette évolution si heureuse autorisa de séduisantes perspectives et l'on pensa alors à monter au studio le paysage et la rue ; en un mot, à y tourner la nature toute entière.

Il est aisé de saisir les avantages de cette innovation. Tout d'abord, il ne sera plus nécessaire d'attendre que le soleil se montre puisqu'on peut le produire soi-même, mieux que nature, à grand renfort de lampes Jupiter (pensèrent les régisseurs et directeurs de compagnies). Et puis l'économie de temps et d'argent est appréciable au point de vue industriel. Les inconvénients multiples qu'entraîne une prise de vue en plein air : foule habituelle de curieux troublant le jeu des acteurs, autorisations qu'il faut obtenir des autorités, etc, sont en effet indéniables. Le nouveau procédé les supprime complètement et facilite de ce fait grandement la tâche du réalisateur. (A cet égard, je m'imagine sans peine que la scène des idiots du film « En Rade » de Cavalcanti, tourné dans les rues de Marseille, dût présenter d'innombrables difficultés au régisseur ainsi qu'aux deux acteurs Heriat et Nathalie Lissenko. Mais si l'on avait tourné cette scène au studio elle aurait certainement perdu les trois-quarts de sa valeur).

On pourrait également avancer qu'au point de vue purement esthétique, la tentative de créer, par des moyens artificiels, une nature plus artistique qu'elle n'est souvent en réalité, semble intéressante. Cette manière de penser peut séduire un cerveau d'artiste ; ce n'en est pas moins, malgré tout, un so-

phisme. On confond en raisonnant de la sorte, artistique avec artificiel et l'on oublie qu'un atelier si bien illuminé soit-il par des moyens techniques artificiels ne saurait jamais égaler un milieu en plein air, sous l'authentique lumière du soleil. L'atmosphère extérieure se fait sentir dans toute photographies de film et ces prises de vue au studio sentent le renfermé car il leur manque la pulsation propre de la nature.

Sans doute la stylisation trouve son excuse dans l'art. Ne perdons pas de vue cependant que le film, qui n'est pas à la vérité une pure forme de l'art, mais une manifestation essentiellement animée de vie (*vita ipsa*, dirait le célèbre prophète du cinéma, Pierre Alteberg), sinon aujourd'hui, du moins dans un avenir prochain, ne peut accorder trop de place à la stylisation s'il ne veut perdre sa chaleur et sa force naturelle. Les expériences nouvelles sont toujours les bienvenues car ce sont elles qui assurent le perfectionnement technique du film, seulement ce ne sont que des expériences, ne l'oublions pas.

Les films américains tournés récemment empruntent considérablement aux moyens techniques artificiels et nous montrent justement cette tendance d'extérieurs au studio sous son jour le plus alarment. « L'Aurore » de Murnau est bien le prototype de ce genre et il faut considérer cette bande uniquement comme un essai car en tant que film, c'est manqué. Si le spectateur y admire en effet la maîtrise technique du réalisateur, il n'est jamais ébranlé toutefois. L'atmosphère suffocante des extérieurs tournés en atelier tue irrésistiblement toute sensation délicate et ne peut créer cet accent de vérité humaine

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qui se saisit de nous comme la vie elle-même. Nous avons vu la grandiose exhibition du maître et sortons de la salle désappointés quand même.

Le même défaut se révèle, bien que dans une plus faible mesure, dans « Thérèse Raquin » de Jacques Feyder où la scène de la noyade en mer, si elle avait été tournée à la clarté naturelle aurait gagné en émotivité et puissance par le contraste saisissant offert par la nature inondée de lumière et de force vis à vis des autres plans plus sombres et définis.

Il ne s'ensuit pas de là que toute scène extérieure, sans exception, doive être tournée à la lumière naturelle. Ce qu'il faut éviter surtout c'est d'appliquer à tort les moyens techniques de l'atelier afin de ne pas enlever au film l'atmosphère qui lui est nécessaire et dont il ne saurait se passer. Nous pourrions interpréter comme un signe de décadence le fait de préférer à la banale vision de la nature simple et sans apprêt, qui n'éveille plus assez en nous le sentiment artistique, une représentation où se mêle volontairement l'influence d'un cerveau imaginaire. Ne négligeons pas cependant la merveilleuse énergie latente qui se dégage d'une image à laquelle le soleil et le vent confèrent fraîcheur et jeunesse et ne nous refusons pas la jouissance visuelle que seule peut nous donner une photographie animée fidèle au rythme de la vie.

Si le film n'est plus, à l'avenir, imprégné de cette authentique essence de vie et de mobilité naturelle, qu'il devient la création technique exclusive d'un esprit scientifique, nous courrons alors le risque d'une lente asphyxie qui, en diminuant sans cesse l'espace de l'action, conduira infailliblement à une

déchéance précoce et au suicide de l'art muet. Ce n'est pas là pourtant le but entrevu par ceux qui ont procédé aux essais dont nous venons de parler.

JEAN LENAUER.

CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE

XII

THE CINEMA IN ARCADY

Hedge-topped banks form a breezeless corridor upon whose floor, white with dust, the sun beats down. Dust films the edges and most of the flowering things that brought forgetfulness of the hidden distances have fled. We trudged averted from beauty defaced, hearing bird-song in the unspoiled hedges of fresh invisible fields and watching for the bend of the long lane and the reward : shelter or high trees that there begin their descending march and, for our shaded eyes, the view of the little grey harbour town at our feet screened by misty tree-tops of spring, the wide estuary beyond it, sapphire backed by golden sand-dunes, miniatures of the tors standing in distant amber light along the horizon. The bend came and the twin poplars that frame the prospect for which our wait-

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ing eyes were raised ; to see, fastened from trunk to trunk an obliterating sign-board : *Come to the Pictures.*

Jealously the year before we had resented the walls of the small palace rising in unearthly whiteness at the angle of a grey ramshackle by-street. And even while we knew that what we were resenting was the invasion of our retreat by any kind of culture and even while we were moved by the thought of the marvels about to appear before the astonished eyes of villagers and fisherfolk, we still had our doubts. And this placard defacing the lovellest view in the neighbourhood seemed symbolically to confirm them. We doubted because we had found in these people a curious completeness ; wisdom, and a strange sophisticated self-sufficiency. We told ourselves that they were an ancient aristocratic people and made romantic generalisations from every scrap of favourable evidence. And though it may perhaps fairly be claimed that these lively, life-educated people of the coast villages and fishing stations do not need, as do the relatively isolated people of crowded towns, the socialising influence of the cinema, we were obliged in the end to admit that our objections were indefensible.

There, at any rate, the cinema presently was. We ignored and succeeded in forgetting it until the placard appeared and in imagination we saw an epidemic of placards, in ancient hamlets, in meadows, on cliffsides and we went forth to battle. We battled for months for the restoration of the hillside landscape. In vain. Urban district councillors were sympathetic and dubious. The villagers were for living and letting live and the harbour towns-folk would not come out against a fel-

low townsman. Generally our wrathful sorrow provoked a mild amusement. The placard was regarded as a homely harmless affair as inoffensive as a neighbour's out hung washing; except by those few who were voluble in execration of the cinema and all its works. From these we collected evidence recalling the recorded depredations of strong drink amongst primitive peoples. Crediting all we heard we should see the entire youthful population of the parish, and many of the middle-aged, centred upon the pictures, living for them. We heard of youths and maidens once frugal, homely and dutiful, who now squander their earnings not only twice weekly when the picture is changed, but nightly. Of debt. Of tradesmen's bills that mount and mount unpaid as never before. The prize story is of a one-time solid matron now so demoralised that rather than miss a picture she will obtain groceries on credit and sell of them to her neighbours.

It is clear that down here amongst these full-living hard-working landspeople the enchatment has worked at least as potently as in the towns. And reflection suggests an explanation that would apply equally to almost any rural district where life is lived all the year round in the open or between transparent walls, lived from birth to death in the white light of a publicity for which towns can offer no parallel. Drama is continuous. No day passes without bringing to some group or member of the large scattered family a happening more or less shared by everyone else and fruitful of eloquence. Speech is relatively continuous. Solitude almost unknown. And these people have turned to the pictures as members of a

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family who know each other by heart will turn to the visitor who brings the breath of otherness. And whereas in the towns those who frequent the cinema may obtain together with its other gifts admission to a generalized social life, a thing unknown in slum and tenement, lodging-house and the smaller and poorer villadom, these people of village and hamlet, already socially educated and having always before their eyes the spectacle of life in the raw throughout its entire length, the assemblage of every kind of human felicity and tribulation, find in the cinema together with all else it has to offer them, their only escape from ceaseless association, their only solitude, the solitude that is said to be possible only in cities. They become for a while citizens of a world whose every face is that of a stranger. The mere sight of these unknown people is refreshment. And the central figures of romance are heaven-born, are the onlookers as they are to themselves, heroes and heroines unknown to their neighbours. To cease for a moment to be just John or Mary carrying about with you wherever you go your whole known record, to be oblivious of the scene upon which your life is lived and your future unalterably cast, is to enter into your own eternity.

It is not possible perfectly to disentangle from that of the wireless, the popular newspaper and the gramophone, the influence of the cinema in rural districts. Certain things however, emerge more or less clearly. There is for example no evidence, at any rate down here in the west, of any increased desire for town life. Rather the contrary, for the prestige of that life has suffered more than a little as a result of realistic represen-

tation and the strongest communicable impression whether of London, New York or other large city—all much of a muchness and equally remote, though not more so than Plymouth—is that of insecurity. Neither in railway station, hotel, or crowded street is either money or life for a single moment free from risk. And the undenied charm of the Far West is similarly overshadowed : you must be prepared either to shoot or to be shot. And although condemnation goes hand in hand with envy of the apparently limitless possibilities of acquisition and independence, the vote on the whole goes steadily for the civilisation and safety of rural conditions.

Melodrama and farcical comedy are prime favourites and an intensity of interest centres about the gazette, the pictures of what is actually going on in various parts of the world. That there is always something worth seeing and that the music is “lovely” is almost universal testimony. It is probable that the desire for perpetual cinema will presently abate. A year of constant film-seeing is not overmuch for those without theatre, music-hall or any kind of large scale public entertainment. Meantime one clearly visible incidental result of this intensive cultivation is to be noted : these people, and particularly the younger generation, have no longer quite the local quality they had even a year ago. They are amplified, aware of resources whose extent is unknown to them and have a joyful half-conscious preoccupation with this new world that has been brought into their midst, a preoccupation that on the whole, and if one excludes the weaklings who would in any case be the prey of desirable or undesirable external forces, serves to

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enhance the daily life. They no longer for one reason and another, amongst which the cinema is indisputably the foremost, it to their local lives as closely as of yore. Evidence of this change is to be found even in their bearing. The "yokel" is less of a lout than he was wont to be and the dairymaid even on workdays is indistinguishable from her urban counterpart. And though doubtless something is lost and the lyric poet is shedding many an unavailing tear, much undeniably is gained. These youths and maidens in becoming world citizens, in getting into communication with the unknown, become also recruits available, as their earth and-cottage-bound forbears never could have been for the world-wide conversations now increasingly upon us in which the cinema may play, amongst its numerous other rôles, so powerful a part.

DOROTHY M. RICHARDSON.

NOTES

Le Cinéma gobe-mouches crée les héros à forfait et punit inlassablement les méchants. Entre ces deux catégories il n'y a place pour personne. . . pas même pour les neutres que nous sommes tous.



Actrices capiteuses ! De l'Amour ! de la Beauté ! de l'Art !
Comment ne mordrais-tu pas à l'hameçon doré, mon frère !



Tel écrivain, pour s'exprimer de façon originale et trancher avec le reste des mortels, aura recours aux barbarismes, à la crudité des propos ou aux expressions ramassées en forme de bombes... aussi verrons-nous, et peut-être avons-nous vu déjà, des écrans barbouillés de visions saugrenues, symboles d'un art nouveau et d'un nouvel agent très actif d'hyperémie cérébrale.



La vie que crée le cinéma est certainement plus agréable que celle dont nous nous contentons. D'abord ne voyons-nous pas qu'elle commence à 18 ans et se termine à 30 presque invariablement, stabilisant chacun, de la sorte, à une époque avantageuse de l'existence. Une santé de fer pour tous. Jamais le moindre rhume, car nous n'apercevons pas trace de mouchoirs. Outre cela, une température constante et par là exemption générale de toute sensation extrême du froid ou du chaud. Mieux encore, personne n'est astreint à travailler, chacun a son petit home à soi, reçoit, sort et se promène à loisir, il n'est même plus besoin de sortir son gousset car les chèques remplacent la menue monnaie. Pour un rien, n'importe qui sortira son petit carnet à souches et vous tendra avec un sourire enchanté le petit billet que vous sollicitez.

Encore un privilège unique qui n'est pas le nôtre, hélas ; l'absence de ce fâcheux fabricant d'ennuis qui est le hasard. Bien

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mieux, tout est prévu, arrangé, calculé avec soin et dussiez-vous être tentés de vous jeter à l'eau ou de vous étendre sur la voie du chemin de fer, à n'importe quelle heure et n'importe où soyez certains que les choses s'arrangeront pour le mieux et qu'il se trouvera là, Mesdames, un chevalier errant qui vous auvera la vie en capturant du même coup votre cœur. Nous sommes bien loin, n'est-ce pas, des réalités brutales de notre monde terrestre !

Encore une petite particularité qui ne vous aura pas échappé les 24 heures cinématographiques comprennent deux phases bien distinctes : le jour, aveuglant, ensoleillé, et la nuit, opaque, d'un noir d'encre à copier. L'aube et le crépuscule sont deux stades de transition qui nous appartiennent en propre. Il en est de même du dimanche qui, chez nous, diffère sensiblement des autres jours. Là-haut il n'y a pas de dimanche, ou pour mieux dire, ce ne sont que journées endimanchées.

FREDDY CHEVALLEY.

III

BRITISH SCENARIOS IN PARTICULAR

Have you ever noticed them ? Soiled, creased, lumpy, threadbare, the carpets in British films. Smooth out the crea-

ses, nail down the carpet, and you may disguise the fact that it has just been dragged from the property department and unrolled on the studio floor. But why worry, it is only a British picture, a quota picture ! The quota, a drug which has lulled the executive staff into apathy—the exhibitor must buy ! As the carpets so the plots. Lifted from the dusty shelves of the scenario editor's office and bundled into the picture without any of the wrinkles smoothed or the stains removed.

The press are fond of calling these transpontine pictures, "machine-made" melodrama. "Machine-made", a favourite cliché which gives the whole secret of the British scenarist to the British public ; most of these stories are actually made with a machine—a plot machine ! No, I am not joking, and if you think of some recent British pictures you will be grateful that in some cases, at least, it is a machine, and not a man, which has fallen so low. (As examples of recent British pictures shown to the trade I might mention "Silver Lining", "Remembrance", and "Tommy Aktins"). Naturally the machine is not very ingenious but it is reverently placed on the desks of many highly paid British script manufacturers.

A plot machine is made by dismantling a calendar, one of the kind that are known as "perpetual calendars". You twiddle a knob and the day of the week revolves on a roller behind a slit in the cardboard front ; another knob gives the month ; while the date is printed on a strip of material which runs between to other rollers. A piece of clean paper is pasted round the existing rollers, and new rollers made ; also a fresh card-

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board front is cut out so that each roller will have a separate slit. Then each roller is devoted to some ingredient of the plot. Supposing one roller is given to "Incidents", instead of harmless months or days, it would be filled in with a list of cinematic happenings ; shipwreck, train collision, parachute descent, fire, flood, earthquake, tidal wave, (for such is the 'movie' mind). Another might be given to "Character" coward, thief, drug-taker, sex-maniac, murderer, red-headed momma. And so on throughout the weary list.

The gentleman, whose name features so prominently on the subtitles, takes the plot machine and turns its face to the wall, operates the knobs and trusts that resulting combination will inspire him to contribute to the great cause of bigger and better "movies". If he can construct no box-office patchwork from subtly suggestive groupings, such as "coward" and "fire", he tries again.

Maybe a gifted psycho-analyst could turn the simple toy into something quite sophisticated, but can you wonder at the childishness of British screen-plays when they are fashioned round such jejune scaffolding ?

The delight of the British scenarist knows no bounds when he does it on an idea of his own. In his childlike simplicity he hastens to tell us all about it. We see it in the long shot ; it is emphasized in an extra large close-up ; ringed round with irises, vignettes, and cut-offs. The poor chap is determined that we shall not miss the full import of his masterstroke, and we become so sickened that we repeat with the music-hall comedian ; "Even if that was good I wouldn't like it". Whereas

mediocre pictures like "The Trial of Donald Westhof" become interesting because good ideas are used in the long shots without fussy elaboration. The obvious conclusion is that the Continental scenarist is more fecund.

In England nothing must be left to the imagination of the public. After quick cutting a faint uncertainty as to what is happening is the more powerful factor in holding the attention of an audience. I would like to do a film in which there was only one set, the corridor in an hotel, and from the actions of my characters in the corridor suggest the dramas which were being enacted in the different rooms. Against it I am compelled to say that the subject is rather 'filmish'; I mean there would probably be a murder in one room, adultery in another; in fact it looks as if the idea was corrupted by too close an association with British Studios and plot machines. At any rate it would be an exercise in imagination to visualize the inner man behind the closed doors, from a glimpse of the outer man, conscious in the corridor of the possible scrutiny of others.

The first steps toward perceptual education is to abolish the splitting of long or medium shots. Let me give an example from a recent Continental film. A beautiful lady, of breeding and refinement, triumphs over her rival. We are shown a medium shot of her, too well-bred to laugh or betray the slightest exaltation; but her maid, in the background, cannot restrain a rapturous grin. Presented in one scene it is an idea. Spilt the scene into two close-ups and it is laboured.

All this is elementary compared with the dramatic significance of the size of some shots. As I have hinted, the Bri-

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tish scenarist sorts out his sizes for reasons of stress, if he has a bright idea of his own, or banal exploitation of some star's features. He cannot realize the importance of size or he would have evolved a more elaborate system for his script, as the ordinary British script of to-day contains but four classifications : long shot, medium long shot, medium close-up, and close-up. There should be the twice as many, arranged according to where they cut on the actors ; large head, knees upward, figure with floor, etc.

I feel that letters from indignant readers are imminent who will accuse me of being spiteful yet once again about the British film. Well let them endure "Silver Lining", "Remembrance", and "Tommy Atkins."

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

Mr. OGILVIE ; AN INTERVIEW

I have frequently said what I thought about London programmes, indeed I have never missed an opportunity to complain, so it is only fair I should be one of the first to put on record Mr. Ogilvie's efforts at the Avenue Pavilion in London.

Mr. Ogilvie is the manager of this cinema in Shaftesbury

Avenue and he is appointed by his firm, Gaumont-British ; he has therefore to earn his living, and make the cinema pay. He is not a free agent, he is not a rich man determined to put his money into showing as many good films as he can while the money lasts, and he has no financial backing. From first to last he is a business man, and he shows films because it is his job. But he has found that, even in London, it is just as possible to show good films as bad, and that good films pay, once censors and customs officials can be placated. He has decided to let London have something approaching the Ursulines, and the way he has set about it, because he is a business man, is interesting.

He did not say "Here is an Ursulines, come along and see exotic films", and make a gallant stand against the indifference such a statement would have caused among his patrons. He first showed his patrons several good films and saw how they liked them. They did like them, and so did others who heard there was a film one could enjoy at the Avenue Pavilion. He thus made sure of his regular audience, and added to it. Ivan Moskvín's *The Postmaster* was shown, so were *Impetuous Youth* and *Jeanne Ney*. *Jeanne Ney* was such a success that Mr. Ogilvie wishes to put it on again, but cannot until it has been generally released. *Vaudeville* was put on for a week. Although it had been on in the West End during the winter, it proved so popular that it was kept on for two. As I write, Grune's *The Street* is running, to be followed by *The Nibelungs*.

It is one of the great fallacies, encouraged by men of li-

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mitted outlook and by stunted artists themselves, that people don't like good pictures. They do, if not always for the same reasons that you or I do. They don't like dishonest pictures, or pretentious, "arty" ones. I have recently seen an audience restless before the trickeries of Gance's *Napoléon* when they took quietly, with appreciation, the real audacities of Dreyer in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, a film that, incidentally, has made a tremendous profit. People like good pictures, when they can get them, and it is not always the managers' fault that they can't. Mr. Ogilvie's greatest difficulty is not the public, but the man who looks after the public, the censor. This institute of inhibition has banned *La Tragédie de la Rue* and *Joyless Street* for public exhibition. The film Society gave this latter film once, but it was cut in such a way that when I saw it later in Brussels, I saw almost another film, neither version being the correct one of Pabst.

The duties, again, are extremely high, and so against a man bringing in foreign films of any but the most obvious general appeal. It cost altogether £150 when *Waxworks* was first brought into the country, Mr. Ogilvie told me. This is a lot for a manager to risk, as Mr. Ogilvie would have to risk it. Sixty pounds, he said, was all very well. One could show the film for a fortnight and lose nothing, but it would need a run of a month to pay for such a duty on a film. It is not that the public do not respond (while I was there, each time, the telephone rang constantly. . . . Six seats. . . . Four seats. . . what time does the film come on. . . .) but simply that these duties are

placed above the public's capacity to refund the manager.

Foreign firms, too, have got so used to the type of Aafa comedy that is wanted, to the "English versions" that have to be prepared, that they are chary of sending over their best or their better, work. But Mr. Ogilvie has plans, and he has confidence. There are people looking abroad for the films he wants, and there is the public waiting at home to see them. It is an interesting public. The Avenue Pavilion is in what used to be called theatreland, and it is also in Soho. Waiters and chauffeurs and factory-girls have long gone there, and they continue to. But cars begin to drive up, and people in dinner-jackets get out. The prices are not high, the theatre is comfortable, and it is easy to get to. There are all these auxiliary reasons for its success, and also it is not snobbish. The cinema has not been painted orange and black since the experiment was made, there is no air that you are assisting at something rather extraordinary in seeing good films. There is nothing to tell it from an ordinary London cinema, save that there are no prologues and that the pictures are worth seeing.

People are often writing to me and saying that they like good movies, but whenever they go in London, the atmosphere is so "precious", that they are put off. Well, here is the cinema for them, and for most other people. There is nothing of the Phoenix Society or Everyman about it.

Mr. Ogilvie himself is not one of those "enthusiasts" who talk about the blacks and whites. The whole time I talked to him, I never heard him use the word "art". He talked only

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of good films, and he seemed to know what a good film is. And also what a film is not, a photographed play, like *The Vortex* to use his own instance, with the story told by the subtitles and the actors suiting the action to the words. He is against talking films, too. In fact, there is quite a lot of hope about the Avenue Pavilion, a popular cinema in the heart of London, where one should soon be able to be sure there will be something on worth seeing. It deserves support, and the more continuous support it gets, the better movies it will be able to show. We hope it may flourish as it has begun, and that the censor will even see that there are a number of people in England who take their films seriously, and that their needs are served by a young manager doing his best, despite foolish rules.

Copies of *Kean* and of *Warning Shadows* have been found, but they are in such bad condition, that it is doubtful if they can be shown. Other films it is proposed to show are Stroheim's *Greed* and *Merry Widow*, *The Birth of a Nation*, *Trilby*, *The Marriage Circle* and also *Lady Windermere's Fan* of Lubitsch, *I Will Repay* with Asta Nielsen, *The Student of Prague*, *The Marriage of the Bear* and if possible *Voyage au Congo*. Not all these are of equal merit, but they accord with Mr. Ogilvie's policy of showing only films that would not be seen elsewhere. At present, the second features are the general releases; these afford an opportunity of contrast, but it is planned to replace these in time with old comics and with travel and "interest" films.

It would be trite to say that Mr. Ogilvie is doing good. One

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can see the effect he is having, even though most managers think him mad, by the fuss the trade papers are making over the banning of *Potemkin*, Cinema is enquiring how long the public are to be dependent for their films on "the artistic mediocrity of casual councillors" which is not bad for a trade paper. A monthly programme is issued by The Avenue, which can be obtained on demand, and Mr. Ogilvie earnestly asks for any suggestions anyone may have of films it would be interesting to get hold of.

R. H.

COMMENT AND REVIEW

Regrettably the stills from early films which we were trying to procure for this month's *Close Up* have not been forthcoming yet, and we are unable to give them in our supplement. We hope to be able to print them in the August issue.



A German-Spanish film.

A Spanish director, Benito Perojo together with Gustav Ucicky is now making for Emelka a film of the South, entitled

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Herzen ohne Ziel (Aimless Hearts) from the Spanish romance by Thilde Forster. Spring in Spain is the season, and lovers of this country are promised some lovely scenery. The cast includes Hanna Ralph, Betty Byrd, Livio Pavanelli, Imperio Argentina and Valentino Parera. Exteriors have already been begun in Madrid. Barcelona, Biarritz, San Sebastian and other places will feature. The cameraman is Franz Koch.



Max Glass Production is now making *Unfug der Liebe*, directed by Robert Wiene, and starring Maria Jacobini. The scenario is from the story by Alexander Ferenczy. Other members of the cast are Jack Trevor, Angelo Ferrari, Betty Astor, Ferry Sikla, Oreste Bilancia and Willy Forst.



Kurt Bernhardt (director of *Schinderhannes*) will direct a film for Terra entitled *Frühlingserwachen (Spring's Awakening)*. Production will begin in September.

Karl Grune will direct *Die Frau, nach der man sich sehnt (The Desired Woman)* also for Terra. From the romance of Max Brod.



Alfred Hugenberg, Ufa's great man, and Mussolini, Italy's great man have made an agreement to work hand in hand in the making of propagandistic films. Somehow they would! The actual agreement is between Ufa and the Istituto Nazionale Luce. Fullest facilities are to be exchanged, and it is

expected that Italian films will have a recrudescence. Remember *Messalina*? Ufa is to train Italian technicians and to exploit Italian films wherever it exploits its own. German nationalist picture making can in return more or less have the run of Italy. In the words of the popular song, "How d'you like it?"

Italian films, therefore, will be propagandistic on a wide scale. We take the liberty of quoting from the *Observer* of June 17. "As is well known, the policy of the Ufa Company in Germany is largely directed by the Nationalist magnate Alfred Hugenberg, whose influence in the topical news section is paramount. (Not exclusive however, as Emelka run pretty close with their Emelka Woche. Ed.) It is this news section which is regarded as more important in its general tendency than the big films whose story is so largely dependant upon "production values". These would seldom include as main theme the glorification of a Communist hero, or the happy home life of a Socialist family. But a resolute determination to boycott all topical films taken of strikes and demonstrations, parades, inspected by generals and expensive sporting contests in the cinemas controlled by those who believe Labour should be kept in its place is a powerful propagandist weapon."

The article goes on to point out that instructional films, which can contain no political bias, will also play an important part in the exchange.



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The End of St. Petersburg, Pudowkin's wonderful epic of the Russian Revolution, has had a great success in New York. It will be remembered that this film, together with *Mother* and *Ten Days that Shook the World* were taken back by Arthur Hammerstein. It is just as well to balance the sugar coated pro-Imperialist, "Russians are fiends" attitude with a statement of fact, no matter what the political feelings of the audience.

PRODUCTION LIST FOR TERRA FILM

DAS PRODUKTIONS — & VERLEIH — PROGRAMM DER TERRA
Saison 1928/29

Direktor Morawsky hat für die Saison 1928-29 ein umfangreiches Produktions-und Verleih-Programm ausgearbeitet, das 20 Filme umfasst. Es ist ein Programm der Namen, ein Programm der Qualität. Autoren von Weltruf, die erfolgreichsten Regisseure, und die beliebtesten Darsteller bilden ein Arbeits-Kollektiv so hohen Ranges, dass der Terra nicht nur eine Erfolg-Saison in *Deutschland* sicher ist, sondern auch ein starker Absatz der Terra-Filme im *Ausland* zu gewärtigen steht. Eine grosse Unterstützung wird hierbei die Auswahl der Sujets bieten, die dem Produktionsprogramm Zugkraft und Abwechslung verleihen.

Von den Themen, die im Programm der Terra erscheinen, sind besonders interessant:

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Revolutionshochzeit von *Sophus Michaelis* (Regiebuch Norbert Falk u. Robert Liebmann).

Wedekinds :

Frühlingserwachen

Stendhal mit seinem Roman

« *Rouge et noir* », der unter dem Titel ;

Der geheime Kurier von *Curt I. Braun* und *Walter Jonas* als Terra-Greenbaum-Film bearbeitet wird.

Von *Hans Müller*, dem Autor der « *Flamme* » zunächst ein Thema :

Das brennende Herz, das *Ludwig Berger* für *Mady Christians* inszeniert.

Alfred Capus bekanntes Lustspiel :

Leontines Ehemänner, und

Unfug der Liebe, nach dem Roman von *Alexander Castel*, die *Max Glass* für den Film bearbeitet hat.

Die bekannte Operette :

Eine Frau von Format

ein grosser Abenteurerfilm

Hotel Babylon, nach dem Roman von *Arnold Bennett* und von dem bekannten Autor *Max Brod*.

Die Frau, nach der man sich sehnt.

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LIST OF DIRECTORS

Die Regisseur — Liste weist stattliche Namen auf. Unter anderen seien besonders erwähnt :

LUDWIG BERGER, KURT BERNHARD, KARL GRUNE, LUPU PICK, GENNARO RIGHELLI, A. W. SANDBERG, ROBERT WIENE und FRITZ WENDHAUSEN.

Die Darsteller-Liste des Terra-Programms ist so zahlreich, dass nur einige Stars genannt werden können :

MADY CHRISTIANS und GRETE MOSHEIM
die *ausschliesslich für die Terra* arbeiten,
ferner

KARINA BELL, ANITA DORRIS, LILIAN HARVEY, MARIA JACOBINI
DIANA KARENNE, CLAIRE ROMMER und SUZY VERNON.

Von der Männern vor allem :

IWAN MOSJUKIN GÖSTA EKMANN
die ja beide Welstars sind, weiterhin

GEORG ALEXANDER, FRITZ KORTNER, PETER C. LESKA, WALTHER RILLA, HANS THIMING und JACK TREVOR.

Das *Terra-Programm* ist in einer Zusammenstellung ein einheitliches Ganzes, und dürfte nicht nur im Inlande, sondern auch im Auslande einen starken Widerhall finden.

A distinguished and gratifying list of directors, artists, and material. The results should be of the greatest interest, and our thanks are due to *Terra* for their brilliant choice.

HOLLYWOOD NOTES

Hollywood now has its little film theatre—Filmarte. Like the Cameo, of New-York, and the Studio des Ursulines, of Paris, Filmarte is dedicated to the showing of the exceptional, the artistic, the experimental in celluloid production, as well as the reviving of films of yesteryear.

The reception accorded its initial program augurs well for its success. The Swedish film, *The Golden Clown*, with Gösta Ekman, was its chief feature ; while Robert Florey's futuristic fantasy, *The Love of Zero*, notable alike for its economy in cost of production and its bizarre treatment, provided the special Hollywood novelty.

The promoter and presiding genius of Filmarte is a young woman, Miss Regge Doran, who brings to her position as director of the theatre an extensive managerial experience, in addition to lively enthusiasm and enterprise.

Filmarte is Hollywood's third attempt to establish an atheum of this character. Whether the previous attempts failed because of a then unappreciative provincialism or because of ultra-sophistication in matters cinematic, is a question difficult to determine. At all events, the present venture has got off to a good start and its future appears assured.



The various producing companies have completed their schedules for the coming twelve months, and the resulting fi-

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figures are of interest. A total of eight hundred pictures will be made in Hollywood during the 1928-29 fiscal year. These productions will involve a cost of one hundred and fifteen million dollars and will call for the employment of twenty-five thousand persons. The combined payroll will not be less than a million and a half, a week.

Together the different producing companies will spend close to seventy millions in advertising. All available mediums will be used for this purpose, including radio. For a number of years such advertising as was done in the magazines was confined to trade journals devoted to the interest of exhibitors; but now, in addition, the public is being directly reached by regular and extensive advertisements in the leading popular weeklies.

All in all, Hollywood looks forward to a busy year. With a now total investment in the picture industry of one billion one hundred and twenty-five million dollars, it cannot indeed afford to be other than busy if it is to pay dividends on this enormous capital.



Director Murnau will divide his summer work between Alaska and Kansas. Scenes in one of his forthcoming pictures call for arctic locations, while the harvest fields of the prairies are the required mise-en-scene of another—*Our Daily Bread*.

Going afield for locations is perhaps unavoidable in the case of these two prospective pictures; but studios, in their present

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efforts to economize, are becoming steadily less inclined to incur the expense entailed by these geographical excursions. With the use of stage built exteriors of miniature sets, painted backgrounds, double exposures, and trick photography, coupled with the unparalleled variety of landscape within a short radius of Hollywood, there are but few parts of the earth that cannot be readily and realistically duplicated for the screen. In *The King of Kings*, for example, all of the Palestinian exteriors were either natural California scenery or were built on the stages. The impressive Garden of Gethsemane and Calvary were both stage sets, designed by the de Mille art director.



A unique feature of Hollywood's amusement life is the film premiere—the first night's showing of some new picture of special note. It is a feature peculiarly and exclusively Hollywoodian; a spectacle without its counterpart in any other community of the world.

The prices charged on one of these "first nights" range from five to ten dollars a ticket, and the audience consists largely of members of the film colony. The interested public for the most part gets its enjoyment out of the affair by crowding about the brilliantly lighted theatre entrance and gazing upon the movie celebrities as they arrive. Many thousands who would avoid the jam on the streets, remain at home and tune in on the broadcast by the announcer who stands before a mi-

CLOSE UP

crophone at the theatre entrance and heralds by name each noted arrival, besides giving a brief description of the evening apparel of the feminine stars as they step from their limousines and pass thru the theatre courtyard. Frequently, too, these attending stars, as well as other prominent film folks, are induced to speak a few words of public greeting into the microphone. Within the theatre, under the direction of some Hollywood notable acting as master of ceremonies, the showing of the film is preceded by a special program of speeches or smiling bows from the personages connected with the picture. And altogether the affair is one to gladden the hearts of the publicity-loving film colonists and the hero-worshipping onlookers.

The recent premiere of *Drums of Love* was invested with special interest, in that it was made the occasion for celebrating the twentieth year of Griffith's work as a director, as well as extending a welcome to this his first picture made in Hollywood after an absence in New York of several years. Cecil de Mille, his oldest brother director, acted as master of ceremonies, seconded by Charlie Chaplin, and was applauded in his tributes to Griffith by a brilliant galaxy of Hollywood's first-magnitude stars.



The Hollywood Association of Foreign Correspondents is the latest of Hollywood's movie-born organizations. Only recently inaugurated, it already has a list of a hundred mem-

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bers—men and women serving as cinema correspondents for newspapers and periodicals outside of the United States. Its personnel represents more than a score of nationalities, and its coming into being serves tangibly to emphasise the world's interest in Hollywood.

C. H.

NOTES

To make room for the interview with Mr. Ogilvie, received as we were going to press, the list of films recommended by CLOSE UP, is held over until next month. We feel that readers of CLOSE UP will wish to have full information as to Mr. Ogilvie's endeavour to make the Avenue Pavilion, the Ursulines of London.

We have been delighted to receive several more letters with regard to the formation of film societies during the past month and at Mr. Marshall's desire, print the following notification.

Now being formed in London. AN AMATEUR FILM SOCIETY for private projection and production.

1. Projection of films not shown in England by the usual cinemas. Past films of interest, and NEW if, and when, funds permit. Formation of film Library.

2. Production, under technical direction, but as much original work by members as possible.

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3. Exchange of films and co-operation with other societies. And all as economically as possible.

Write Organising Secretary :

H.P.J. MARSHALL,
51 High Road, Ilford.
London.

ENGLISH RELEASES FOR JULY

Many interesting pictures are being put on at the Avenue Pavilion, an article on which will be found in this issue. For the rest, the most rewarding releases would seem to be these. It must be remembered that in many cases these films have not been seen, and are only recommended as those we should be most likely to take a chance on ourselves.

Out of the Mist.

Deia production, with Mady Christians and Werner Fuetterer Directed by Fritz Wendhausen, distributed by Butcher. See notice in *Close Up* for October. Warmly recommended.

The Crowd.

Directed by King Vidor. Good performances by Eleanor Boardman and James Murray, in a film that sets out to give the soul of middle class life in New York. Fine camera work. The story weakens at times, and this is not the masterpiece America thinks, but it *is* the American equivalent of *Berlin* and *Rien que les Heures*. Metro-Goldwyn.

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Love's Crucifixion.

German film, directed by Carmine Gallone, with Olga Tschechowa and Hans Stuewe. W. and F. Pre-release only.

The Living Image.

A French film that should interest because it is directed by Marcel L'Herbier. Western Import. Pre-release only.

40,000 Miles with Lindbergh.

American interest film. Some beautiful shots of New York with tape and paper streaming from skyscraper windows. The reactions of Lindbergh on his tour also interesting. Metro-Goldwyn.

Secrets of the Soul.

The commercial version of Pabst's analytic film is generally released, with Werner Krauss, Ruth Weyher and Jack Trevor. Wardour. Horribly cut, but worth seeing for many reasons.

The Chess Player.

The Chess Player, with Edith Jehanne, and *The Emden* were on at the end of June in Dorset, so these may be found during July in the country, where many people will be.

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