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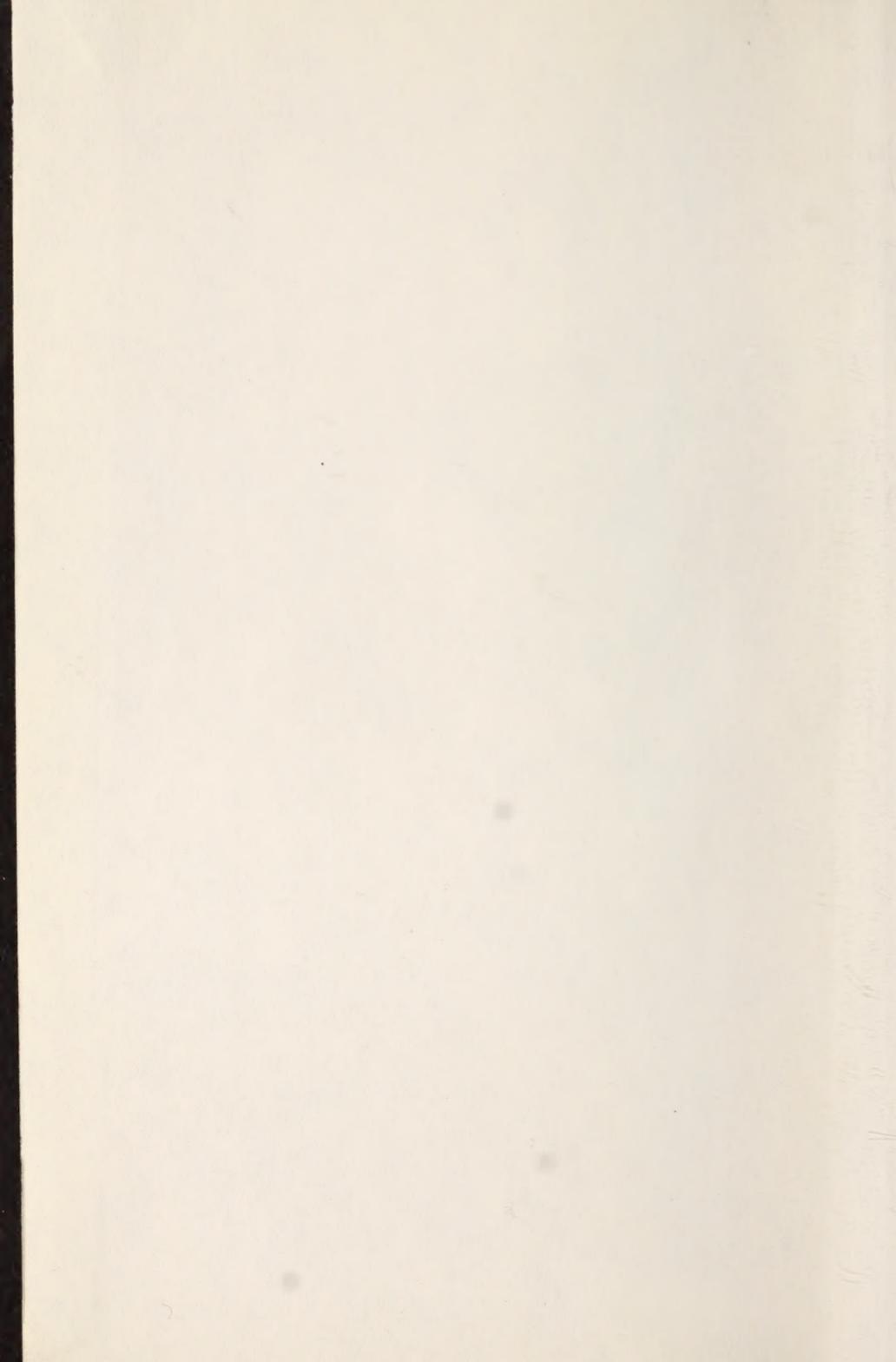


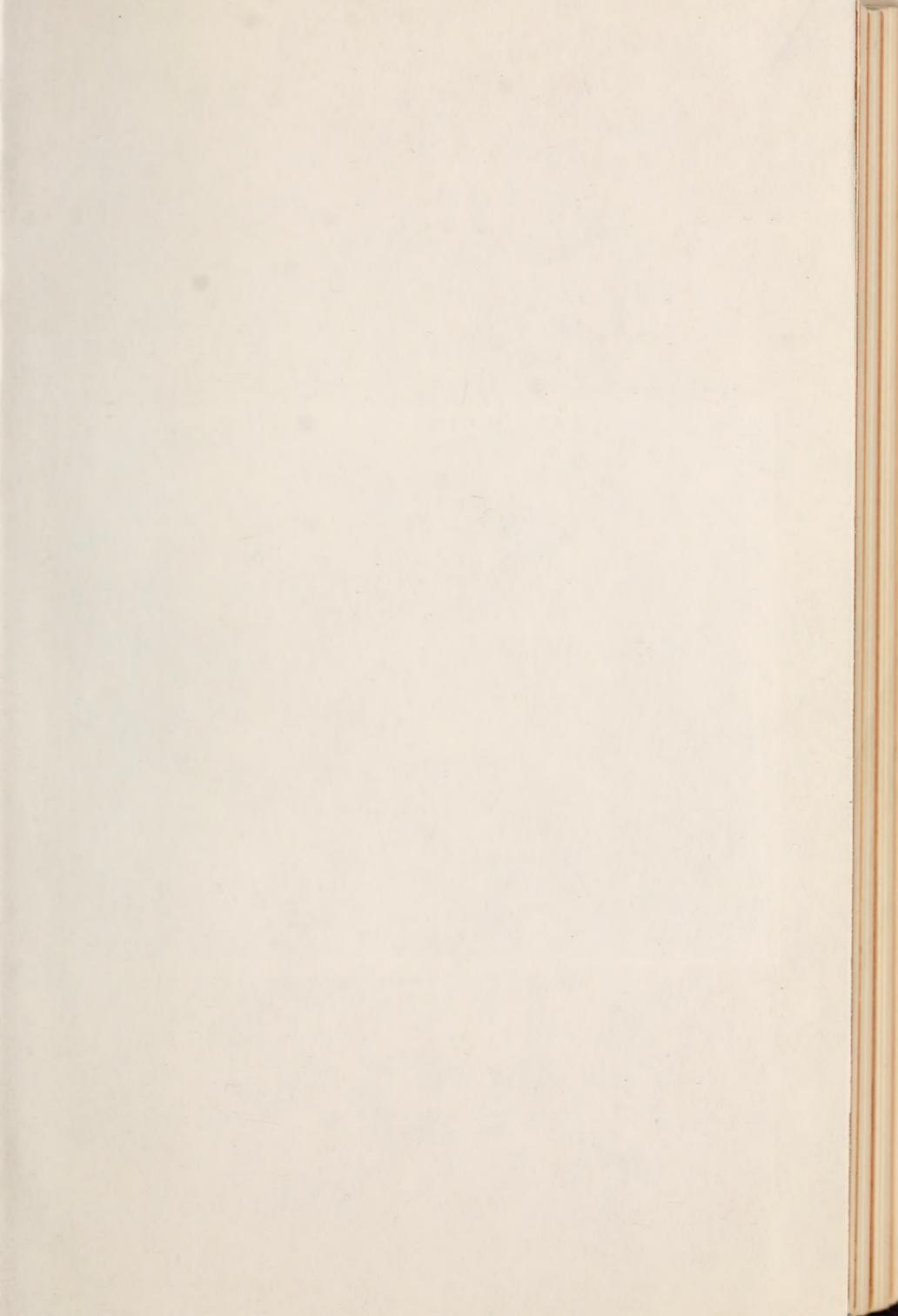
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CLOSE UP

*The Only Magazine Devoted to Films
as an Art*



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"WARRIORS"
The National Association of
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CLOSE UP

<p>1. The first part of the article discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records in a business enterprise. It emphasizes the need for a systematic approach to record-keeping, including the use of standardized forms and the regular updating of data.</p>	<p>2. The second part of the article focuses on the challenges of data collection and analysis. It highlights the difficulties of obtaining reliable information from various sources and the importance of using statistical methods to interpret the results.</p>
<p>3. The third part of the article discusses the role of the business manager in ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the records. It stresses the need for a clear policy on record-keeping and the importance of training staff in proper record-keeping procedures.</p>	<p>4. The fourth part of the article concludes by emphasizing the value of accurate records in decision-making. It notes that well-maintained records provide a clear picture of the business's performance and help managers identify areas for improvement.</p>

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BUSINESS MANAGERS

“ VARIÉTÉS ”

Revue Mensuelle Illustrée de L'esprit Contemporain

Directeur : P. G. VAN HECKE

DEUXIÈME ANNÉE

(A PARTIR DU 15 MAI 1929)

Dans chaque numéro :

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OF IMPORTANCE TO THE EPICURE
OF THE FILM

THE
LOVE OF JEANNE NEY

by

ILYA EHRENBURG

Translated from the Russian by

HELEN CHROUSCHOFF MATHESON

7/6 net

Ilya Ehrenburg, whose works are appearing in practically every European language, is one of the most conspicuous of the younger post-revolutionary school of Russian novelists. "The Love of Jeanne Ney"—of which the "pirated" and inaccurate film version caused something of a sensation last year—is a rapidly moving novel of Bolshevik intrigue, the action of which takes place in Russia and Paris.

PETER DAVIES LTD. 30 HENRIETTA ST.

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CLOSE UP

Vol. VI No. 1

January 1930

AS IS

BY THE EDITOR

January 1930. And already the turbulent events of 1929 out-dated, or demarcated. Set apart, at all events, by the arbitration of a new calendar, with an unfamiliar 30 instead of the 29 which no longer means the enclosing, the indefinitely existing, backwards to a ghostly, impossibly historical 1928, and forwards to nothing very real either. So here, at the beginning of 30 we are very much where we are with the beginning of the rumbling, precipitate revolutions of movie technique. The silent picture might be 1929. The sound-stereoscopic-colour-wide-film production is 1930. See and hear, however, takes us as far as January 1930. See and hear Clara Bow. The invitation does not possess its virgin attractiveness. See and hear is an old story now. Think of the day when we shall be invited to "feel and smell" her!

In 1929, and *Close Up*, all unwittingly, was in part to blame—I think we can safely say that in 1929 the world saw the spread of movieosophy. Yes, in a rather Besant-Krishnamurti (if that is the name) sense of world doctrine. Movieosophy took the wise men by—you cannot accurately say the horns, but by the horns, nevertheless. There is a

little point worth making for cinema, or for anything else you may choose. You never can say truth. In cinema specially, immediately you say such and such a thing IS, there are at once a hundred reasons why it is not. Truth is not accurate, and accuracy is not truth. You can, in fact, get nearest to truth by saying something quite different, and then having the wit to see the backward slant that relates in its right place. Vague, that. But so is movieosophy. So is truth.

What is movieosophy?

Movieosophy is a process of mental kowtowing indulged in by dreamy bores, the sandle-shod, the oyster-eyed, the jute-haired rinsings of the intellectuals—literati, I think is the more movieosophical expression. We had a lot of these pests. They made pronouncements. Never even offered them. Films were awrt for awrt's sake. They said " see *Close Up* ". They pared their fingernails with joy over what H. D. summarised immortally as translucent shoehorns and inverted sardine tins, and never, never, never would be slaves. Though they moved in flocks, and thought with one flock mind, they never would be slaves. And though the only persons, as we all know, who say they never will be slaves, *are* slaves.

Perhaps religion gets everybody somewhere or other. If it isn't Hosanna in the Highest, it's avant garde among the lowest, and if it isn't films it's mart and exchange, or politics or love of women. They all have the same root growth, and all lead to the same ungracious repudiations. That's why I say you cannot nail truth down to any but the most fleeting reference.

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The movieosophists want an equipment. They want their ritual. They want to be the most superior people of all people. And, as such, being subject to the endless antagonism of the unillumined, need their battery of stock phrases. *Close Up*, abhorring formulas, nevertheless, has not been able to check these people making them. That is the way of learning. Truth set in a formula becomes truism. Needless spite, Mr. Editor, needless spite! Why waste your time being catty about something that does not exist at all as people, but only as the emanation of people getting together? No doubt because people just will get together!

Why certain things become *dans le mouvement* is best explained by a line—a couple of lines, as a matter of fact—from a poem by one Norma Mahl in an earlier *Close Up*.

But why DO those whose programme is "Be Free"
Use the imperative always of "to be"?

Clever girl, Norma!

They simply won't show you anything but mediocre American films in the French specialist salles just now, just because they're *dans le mouvement*. What is this wretched movement? Any one sheep can do as much with a plain full of sheep in Patagonia. One possessed pig did it with a herd of possessed pigs on the tilting Gadarene cliffs. And yet men are proud of their movements. Ladies to-day are wearing dresses to the theatre with bits of stuff that slop and flop round the backs of their high-heels, acting neither as mudguards, nor (I think any honest-minded man would have to admit) as ornament. Yet hundreds of thousands of people

who are supposed to amount to something, wriggle nightly into these preposterous garments, and, what's more, go out in them with their noses in the air, for all the world as though you were expected to admire them.

I have a very dear friend—a black gorilla in the Berlin zoo. She has a blanket which she ties round her middle and makes a train of it. But she has the wit to use it also to swat flies. Catch a lady having the gumption to do that! Give me gorillas any day for common sense. Beauty too.

I think—to bring my editorial back to cinema—that this year is going to be rather an exciting one. Not that every year is not, in its way. But 1930 does promise so much that is new. Wide film, for instance. I don't like the shape it at present threatens to have. Perhaps that will be modified before it is put into general use. Its one advantage, perhaps, might be that it would make it extremely difficult, if not impossible for the cameraman to tilt his camera at forty-five degrees from the horizontal! In nearly every instance this camera tilting has proved abortive. Except in special circumstances, where it may be demanded by the nature of the image in relation to its intention. Otherwise—as we seem to be reaching the stage of Hints to Cameramen—if the subject you are photographing cannot yield sufficient interest in itself without being taken at a non-visual angle, it is not worth photographing at all. Nearly always it is the makeshift of an undeveloped perception. Any text book on architectural perspective will yield far richer suggestion for image structure. The occasions when a tilted camera is permissible are mostly connected with symbolism. But its purpose should first be strictly investigated. *Joan yielded*

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forceful impressions through use of the tilt, but part of the texture of the film was its effect of being seen *sidelong*. It maintained a tension of static unity that might have become mobile unity through judicious variation.

Second hint. Be careful about changing your angle of vision. There is no need for the camera to hop round like a feeding sparrow from shot to shot, viewing people from this side and that, without reason for doing so. This happens frequently in so-called smart cutting. If the position of the camera is changed—and remember, change is good to the eye—there must be a reason for it. Some directors choose the other extreme, and lose good opportunities by placing their groups to face or half-face the camera, so that camera analysis is dispensed with from the start. It was regrettable to see that Dupont, whose camera-sense was formerly astute, grouped all his artistes thus in his latest film, *Atlantic*—an evil ugly-duckling if ever there was one! There is nothing more riling to the trained perception than the face which is being held at an arch and ridiculous angle in order to be seen as fully as possible beside another face. People do not stand in rows and converse by leaning forward and looking out of the corners of their eyes. Even the theatre can hardly be excused for this. A good back can be as expressive as a face. Why not? At all events it suggests to us that we want to see the face, and there is your logical opportunity for a “cut”.

If you *must* shoot from below, be careful not to use any background of pronounced vertical planes, for the tapering effect will be abominable. Witness the awful warning of *L'Argent*, where rooms seemed conical. But faces seen from

below are perhaps more damned and dated than the iris.

Of all shots, however, perhaps the silliest is that which travels forward (usually with the inebriate sobriety of the guilty, comedy paterfamilias) toward a static object which can be seen quite well in the long shot, or if it cannot, should be! I don't mean the swoop. There are times when this is effective. But I do mean the camera that meanders forward to try to make a dull shot less dull.

The trouble with a travelling camera is that it so often does not travel. It moves, certainly, but how illogically! The eye will pick out its objects of interest and concentration with far surer mobility. Sense of movement is not imparted by a moving shot that is not composed in the context of image fluidity. Very often it holds up movement while you have to watch its silly rolling. If it moves it must wait for you to want to move with it. Its movement should be your movement. "Where are you off to, I don't want to go there" is a more usual feeling. When rightly used it can be one of the cardinal blessings of cinema. If it flows and enriches it will be right. If it lopes round like a lost soul, the only thing to be hoped for is that it can be destroyed in the cutting room.

* * *

Many people said that we had reached perfection in the silent film. What an untruth! There were endless unexplored possibilities. The technique was not mature. It was just struggling out of puberty. Gauche and innocent. Cinema will never be so static as to consummate its own perfection.

KENNETH MACPHERSON.

THE CENSORSHIP PETITION

Readers who were actively interested, will doubtless, for some time past, have been wondering what has happened to the Petition for the Revision of Film Censorship inaugurated by *Close Up* something over a year ago. But only those with no previous experience of the business of assembling and launching this kind of document will be surprised to learn that its outward and visible career, of which it is now possible to give a full account, ended only last week.

For the benefit of new readers it must be explained that the petition came into being as a result of the state of mind induced in the editors of *Close Up* when, fresh from seeing what was being done in some of the leading continental studios, they contemplated the impassable barriers erected between the English public and all foreign films of artistic, scientific and educational value. This state of mind must have been shared by many who had seen good foreign films and wished to give the half-starved English film-lovers the chance of seeing first-class work. But, apparently it did not occur to anyone to do anything beyond tantalising, by descriptions of what they themselves had seen, those who had no chance of seeing, and, from time to time, fulminating mildly in the press against censorship in general. Nobody did anything until these enterprising young people (who for a year and more, aided and abetted by a staff who shared their views, while still in England the cinema was a discredited resort

and love for the film and belief in its future were regarded as signs of infantilism, had been hard at work expounding, criticising, arousing and diffusing interest in the art of cinematography, and demonstrating its quality by the reproduction of stills from films by continental artists that help to make the volumes of their periodical such priceless possessions) launched their assault upon the main barriers.

These are two: the censorship, whose ambiguous, astonishing restrictions, set forth in the February, 1929, number of *Close Up*, account for the mutilation to the point of destruction of almost all foreign films shown in this country, and the customs duties whose rate is prohibitive for all but those films that are certain of a large commercial success. The petition appealed therefore, primarily for the creation, on behalf of films of artistic, scientific and educative value, of a special category; a category independent of the two already in existence into which all films whatsoever are dropped, after censorship and resultant cutting down to the measure of the rules—those considered unsuitable for children going into A (Adults) category, and all the rest into U (Universal). In the second place it was pleaded that the board of censors should include persons capable of judging artistic and scientific films on their intrinsic value rather than their commercial possibilities, and it was further suggested that such films, when released for limited showing, should be automatically entitled to a large rebate of customs duties and reduction of entertainment tax.

That *Close Up* readers should be willing to sign such a petition was of course to be expected and the immediate results of canvassing the general public showed that if time had

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allowed, the promoters would have been embarrassed by a list running into volumes. Time did not allow. A specially favourable moment for presentation had been indicated by a parliamentary sympathiser. It was therefore decided to call a halt and go hopefully into print with the signatures already to hand, amongst which were those of a number of members of the liberal professions sufficiently representative to indicate to any unprejudiced mind that trained intelligence is asking for intelligent handling of this important international concern. With three exceptions these solicited signatures came tumbling in by return of post. One only was withheld, that of a famous playwright, who, declaring that on no account would he sign, further advised the promoters not to waste their valuable time upon a demand for a censorship that would be worse than the one already in existence in proportion as its members were better. This response was ruefully accepted as hopelessly incorrigible naughtiness. Another, arriving late, was accompanied by the writer's confession, given lack of time to study the appeal in detail, of willingness to sign blindfold any document presented by *Close Up*. The third, that of a greatly gifted Briton, a man honoured all over the world, was at first refused on the ground of complete ignorance of the cinema and its doings, but since the writer went on to admit that he and his fraternity had been for some time, and quite in vain, practically on their knees to the authorities for permission to secure a showing in London of a valuable scientific German film, he was ultimately persuaded to sign for the honour of science.

By the time the petition was ready for presentation the favourable moment already alluded to was rendered un-

favourable by exciting rumours of the imminence of a general election. The rumours materialised. Parliamentary ranks were thinned. Members were busy in their constituencies. Then came the election and its attendant passions and when finally the petition was presented it was to a house more than usually tense and reverberating with dramatic political interests, with which quite naturally it failed to compete. Nothing remained to be done but to hope for possible results from a question addressed at a suitable moment to the Secretary of State for the Home Department. Some weeks ago, when it became necessary to appoint a new chairman for the board of film censors, a sympathetic member hopefully suggested that a favourable opportunity was now in being for an overhauling of the film censorship in general. The Home Secretary refused to consider the matter, contenting himself with stating his complete satisfaction with the censorship as at present constituted. A final effort was made last week when Colonel Wedgwood asked the Home Secretary whether he would set up on behalf of films of artistic, scientific and educative value a special category, in order to permit the presentation of such films under suitable restrictions in their original form. Mr. Clynes replied by reminding his right honourable and gallant friend that it rests with the local authority to decide the conditions under which cinematograph films may be exhibited and that, therefore, he had no authority to take action in the matter.

This quiet remark falls upon our effort with the effect of a dismissing smile. But though its outward and visible history ends here and apparently fruitlessly, the unseen

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results cannot be estimated. The strongholds have been battered and the invading army reinforced by the countless numbers who in relation to this attempted reformation learned for the first time exactly how matters stand. All these, and others enlightened by them, will be ready to add their weight to any further attempt that may be made.

DOROTHY M. RICHARDSON.

The editors of *Close Up* would like to take this opportunity of thanking Miss Dorothy M. Richardson for her very valuable work in connection with the censorship petition. No one worked more assiduously in collecting signatures and in seeking to ensure that the petition when ready was brought to the notice of the persons most likely to be in sympathy and to lend active aid to the movement.

IN THE LAND WHERE IMAGES MUTTER

Muttering images, not as yet uttering. The stutter would be more interesting. The most fascinating experience of audibility I have had in these couple of months since my return after an absence of fifteen good prodigal months was at a hearing of *The Broadway Melody* at a Loew neighbourhood theatre. The mechanism went wrong and suddenly the characters began to hiccough, stutter, blurt, much in the effect I produced in my childhood by shutting my mouth off and on with the palm of my hand while speaking.

Receptively, its effect was similar to the effect produced by shutting the ear off and on in an identical manner. That was an accident that occurs frequently, producing an effect which is suggestive of piecemeal utterance of oral, verbal sounds. Analytic sound.

That is exactly the necessity: analytic sound, instead of duplicate. To-day the talkie has two divisions: all-talkie and part-talkie. It is apparent to us all, including Gilbert Seldes, that this is a mistake. An all-talkie is not a movie. Silent sequences are determinants. Indeed, even the practitioners recognise this, and ultimately the dialogue-movie is doomed. Or, shall I put it this way: the innovations brought into the present optophonic substitute for the stage-melodrama and revue tend to mobilize the images increasingly, not so much because the producers want it, as because the enterprises attract these devices of movement. Never before has the American film used multiple exposure so much or so well; the revue attracts it as a novelty or "stunt." It is a little cloying because it simpers in the mood of the revue. In *Paris Bound*, the surimpressions had the accumulative effect of a vivacious mosaic. Entirely out of place in this stiff realistic play, but in themselves very successful. Totalities are not thought of in the present "audible film." It is very fragmentary and possesses little structural plausibility.

The present vogue is for the melodramatic play and the revue.¹ This is not simply for the reasons Seldes assigns:

¹The social drama has its vogue too, but this is out-and-out substitute "electrical" theatre, better, however, than a phonographic substitute for the music-hall.



Photo: Hans Casparius

A striking study of Gustav Diessl, the "Alleingänger" of Pabst's new, triumphal film, made with Dr. Arnold Fanck—*The White Hell of Piz Palü*. A Sokal-Film for Aafa-Sonderverleih.



Leni Riefenstahl in *The White Hell of Piz Palü*.



Tourists from Zurich in *The White Hell of Piz Palü*.



The Zurich tourists on a sugar-loaf slope.



The White Hell of Piz Palü. An Airplane probes the vast solitudes in search of the lost parties.



Battle of the Lower-Fifth (Kampf der Terra), a Bruckmann-Verleih film for Terra, made by M. Mack. See Comment and Review. A film made with schoolboys.



Kampf der Terra. Gustl Stark-Gstettenbauer is caught by the famous "standing sleeper"—the policeman of the town.



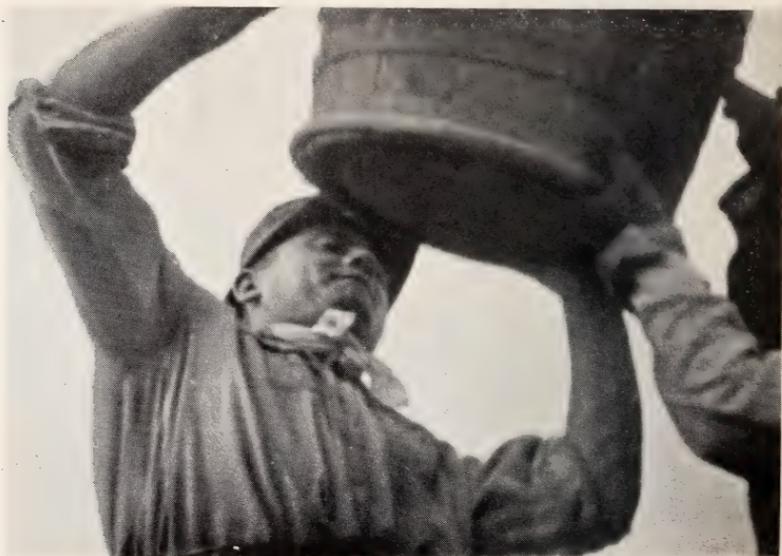
Kampf der Tertia. The town council meets to hear the plaint of the cat dealer that a mad cat has attacked him.



Kampf der Tertia. "Götz von Berlichingen!" Goethe's play of that name implies a particularly pungent phrase which the author himself deleted. It is used as an insult, and the Lower-Fifth is shouting it at the windows of the Town Hall.



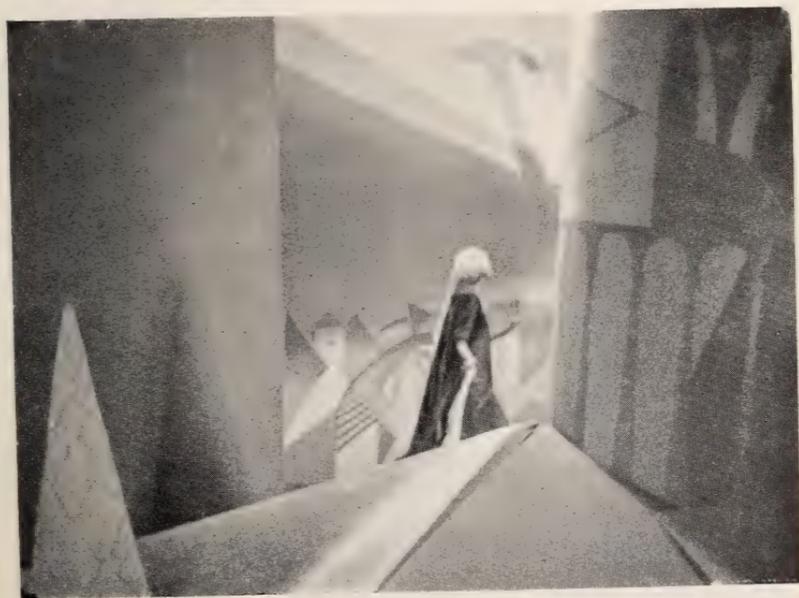
Vendange (Grape-Harvest) a film by G. Rouguier, pupil of Eugen Deslav, which will be seen at the Studio 28.



Vendange.



Vendange, a film by G. Rouguier.



A scene from the American amateur production of *The Fall of the House of Usher*, made by Watson and Webber, of the Rochester group.



Photographing a sound film on the streets of Moscow. Right : the inventor, Tager. At the camera : the operator, Kabalof, and standing : L. Oblensky, co-director with V. Pudovkin in the making of *Life is Good*, or *One Lives Very Well*, a Meschrabpom-Film.



Tager, the inventor, with his two assistants, making an experimental sound film in the garden V. E. I.

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that in the simplicity and broad structures they are easier movie stuff than a more intricate, and sophisticated material, but as the most general of folk affections, they naturally enter as the first materials to choose, particularly since the producer thinks of the talkie as the theatre's descendant. He may not be so wrong. It may be that there will be a form of the talkie that will continue the popular theatre.¹ For myself, I do not object, I do not find the popular talkie—the revue particularly—less attractive than the stage revue. Indeed, the former offers, even in the most banal of structures, a few combinations that the stage cannot achieve, for the stage has not the means for the concentrated bold image which alone permits the following treatment: in *Gold Diggers of Broadway*, while one performer sings, another goes through elastic dance movements, as if limbering up, behind the singer, to the theme of the song. Also, girls move regularly farther in the rear. This presents a three-distanced parallel, with the second image dimmer than the

¹Have not the tendencies in modern theatrical production been toward cinematization? Meierhold, Piscator, Granowsky, even Reinhardt, and even Gaston Baty. And to offer as a counterbalance to the sonorization of the mute, did not Gordon Craig favor the silencing of the "spoken drama." I am noting an early critic of the talkie. As far back as September, 1913, the dramatic critic, Walter Prichard Eaton wrote in *Leslie's American*: "A person is a person. A phonograph and a photograph are things. There is a certain fundamental difference which science has not yet succeeded in eliminating. Nor does putting two things together make a person. The result is still two things . . . the synchronization of phonograph and film will be less illusive than either film or phonograph by itself. . . ." But then Mr. Eaton was down on the films generally; they had no third dimension—not very prophetic—and without words intellectual appeal was slight, and words did not belong. Sounds a little like 1929-30 among the steadfasts.

fore-figure and the third dimmer than the middle image. This is a tinted film and, while it adds nothing but slight suspicions to motion picture art, is no worse than the usual spectacle revue. As I have said, I for one prefer it because movements banal in the theatre are frequently rendered attractive by the more perspicacious instrument, the camera, and its associated implements. Other devices becoming general in talkies are off-screen sounds, echoes which have rhythmic possibilities, fades in-and-out of sounds, etc. The development of the talkie will be two-wise: as a more thrilling substitute for the quotidian stage, and as an art in itself.

I do not find in the slickness of *Paris Bound* or the more active, equally competent, *Bulldog Drummond*, anything to get excited over. The reiteration of columned, distributed German studio-lighting I find tedious, despite its competence.¹ Competence! the old sufficiency, the death of art—job-competence in America, aesthetic competence in Europe sometimes, but art the experience?

Paul Fejos' *Broadway* is a director's show-off stunt. It is the instance of a director succumbing to a specious vaunting of instruments, cranes and cameras. I suspected as much when I saw the photos of Fejos on the job with a battery of cameras. The Hollywood L'Herbier. Jean Dreville's *Autour de l'Argent* was an advance give-away of *L'Argent*. Effect-minds both, the director of *L'Argent* and the director of *Broadway*. The effect, in the latter instance,

¹The designer of this lighting is W. Cameron Menzies, who seems to hold first place in Hollywood esteem.

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breaks into the impact of a movement built upon short blows. Instead of accepting the relevant structure offered by the play itself, not a singular structure but all it could support, Fejos broke into it with a spectacle, so that it follows in the "tradition" set by *The Broadway Melody*, a spectacle alternating with an intimate drama. The structures differ only in the proportions of the spectacle and drama, the viewpoint is the same, save that *Broadway's* is the more inflated. *Broadway*, further indicates the defeat of comedy by speech. Glenn Tryon was most inept. The only comedy that can endure verbal utterance is the animated cartoon, but here the entire structure simply follows the melody of a simple jingle, as in Walt Disney's *Mickey Mouse* cartoons, where the distortions of the linear images are timed elastically in the swing of the synchronized melody and sounds as basic as la-la-la are used, without rhythmic variation.

The revue mind persists even in a film purporting to unfold the life of a people: King Vidor's *Hallelujah!* It is formula, fabricated, unconvincingly illogic and the meritorious effects impress as effects only. It is more facile than other films but its facility does not vindicate its banality and purposelessness. The negro actors are frequently good and generally photographically interesting. Good things are to be found in the resilient and dramatic use of bold images, which I am sure were not thought of without some recourse to the Russians and Carl Dreyer. Particularly is the tilt of the boy's bold image in a corner of the screen reminiscent of *Joan*. There are occasional good sound combinations but they are rudimentary and irregular, so irregular as to evoke the suspicion that they are chances

only, since Mr. Vidor is of the school of spontaneous combustion in direction.

The momentary novelty of a new actor—the negro—the spiritual, the ritualistic frenzy, the crap-game, all the trappings of the legendary negro, as the white man likes to see him, amidst a set reminiscent of *Roxy's*—in a false reference (how like *The Crowd* in its stretching of a banality to become a significance) serve as a basis for a film which accepts this basis as the determining idea. Don't say that is literary! I am talking about a false conception which becomes the final form and experience. Vidor is always at the determination of the scenario. He does not determine it from the highest and profoundest reference of the potential material and theme, nor does he reconstruct its ideology that he may realize a superior form and higher level of experience. The film is not even a sound-sight picture. The sound does not appear to be irrevocable in the structure. The film might have been a simple literal (as it satisfies the uncritical mind) trivial but momentarily effective mute movie. Momentarily effective—that characterizes Vidor's work.

The Cockeyed World is not even that. It is uninterrupted lambast and its professed raciness is not even accurately stressed nor is it anything but ulterior. The acting is uncomfortable—if this isn't "overacting," what is?—and the lack of organization in the film crowds the verbal impacts until one can be beaten into deafness by them. How typical of Raoul Walsh, its director. *What Price Glory?* crowded every corner of space with pots, pans or people.

The confession of Mr. Monta Bell (see New York Notes) that he dislikes sound in films may be descriptive of other

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directorial attitudes. No good can come from submission because of expedience. That is a form of moral compromise which is a detriment to artistic achievement. I have felt such a confused mind in *The Great Gabbo*, directed by James Cruze and starring Erich von Stroheim. The film is listless and diffident in construction, the lighting is bad, and the full use of the ventriloquist-and-dummy opportunity for sound-sight counterpoint is never even suspected. The resultant is a simplism with very little of either intuitive or intelligent sense of the new medium. It is a conglomerate of various sources with no central structural intention. And after all Cruze is not one of our least. Perhaps Stroheim should have directed. I found his performance, as well as rôle, a bit painful. It made me a little ashamed to watch an adult and not inferior person taking the thing seriously. I remember Cruze as an actor—*The Million Dollar Mystery*—perhaps he should have been Gabbo. But then with Stroheim directing the result would have been a probable exaggeration of the importance of the material plus some Viennese commentary. So let us spare a bad thing and ask no more!

The best-planned talkie I have yet seen is Hitchcock's *Blackmail*. There was some sense of the necessity of the long silent interval, and of reiteration, even though the plan was elementary, obvious and the reiteration too "psychological." The English are inflating the importance of the film. It has no real meaning and is poor suspense-filming (as poor as *Bulldog Drummond* and *The Man with the Tree-Frog* in this respect). Its competence is only competence after all, for Hitchcock is not a singularly

inventive mentality. *Hallelujah!* is, being American, livelier, but the nature of its material makes its achievement more lamentable. The significance of *Blackmail* is its recognition of a first necessity, the plan. The doubling of Anny Ondra just to get her boudoir-eyes is faulty: the entire idea of the double will be dropped as soon as the film-world understands that there is no such thing as a film-voice. Perhaps I am too optimistic: the error of the camera test remains, and "photogenic"¹ has been used to refer to a particular cinematic quality present in every substance. There is nothing intrinsically "photogenic" (or is it "photogenetic?"), nothing intrinsically "phonogenic." The cinema and not the substance determines that.²

The necessity of the bold image in the sound film has brought out the Grandeur Movietone, a 72 m/m. stock with a proportionate screen. This is not the previous magnification, but a new screen, new negative, new projector. The result, with *Movietone Follies*, is as yet only partially pleasing. For long lines breadthwise on the screen it is splendid because the screen is unproportionately a wide-film and not a high-film. It is good for the movement of masses from left to right and right to left, good for synchronization, good for a figure reclining across the breadth of it, it offers the split screen a "grandeur" opportunity and Mr.

¹Historically the term "photogenic" goes back to the first production of a photograph in England, about 1802. A photograph was called a photogenic drawing.

²In the Gramophone, January, 1929, John Thorne writes on "The Fallacy of the Recording Voice," in which he says no such thing as a "recording voice" exists; all depends on sound vocal technique—and in the talkie, I add, to the directorial employment of the voice.

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Bakshy's frame-within-a-frame. The problem lies in its too panel-like form and in the occupation of the screen when, say, one lone image is upon it vertically. This may bring about more studious image-construction, which in uneducated hands can thwart the cinema, or the final recognition that a film need not be occupied all of the time. It may also evoke the knowledge that follows this, that the eye may move with the image. We have not done much with a procedure which I shall reduce to a simple movement. A figure enters minutely from the lower left of the screen and grows larger as it moves up the screen, passing and increasing in size rightward. In other words, a use still passive, but receptive, of the screen as a planted base for the movement of *an* image, where the image in a sense will be created on the blank area. I lament, however, that the magnification of the screen promises to desert its first form, offering such rhythmic opportunities, where it expanded and contracted, for a matter-of-fact, immobile enlargement.

H. A. POTAMKIN.

OLD MOORE'S FOURTH DIMENSION

Sing a song of talkie films, cabarets and things; four and twenty chorus girls, Ruritanian Kings. Robert Herring's poetry, and Brugiere's designs, Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights*, and Chelsea's Eisensteins.

The year in retrospect. Was it a year, anyway? Or just a series of quick cut, rapidly diminishing cinematic sensations, which prodded rude fingers in the mental plexus and struck terror in the hearts of the film magnates.

And what a year. Unequaled in sound. Though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not Western Electric, we are become as a sounding brass.

I remember, I remember, the house where sound was born, how little Jolson's lesser son made movie men forlorn. But chiefly I remember how I wanted to kick his pants.

Hard.

The dialogue cinema has had one Fool. He was a Singing One. The directors are excluded. And taken for granted.

Soon we shall have a Colour Fool. Then a Wide Film Fool. Then a Stereoscopic Fool. Can't you see the theme song? "You're just my third dimension, my little bit of depth." And I'm sincerely sorry I can't think of a decent rhyme to help the song-mongers.

After that we may even have a Smelling Fool.

By kind permission of the Northcliffe Press I am able, after referring to their files, to state that the year began on Jan. 1st, 1929.

Actually, it started at the Piccadilly Theatre, on that sorry afternoon some months before, when we first learnt what it meant to talk American.

It culminated, if that is the word, in the presentation of *Atlantic*, which, true to the British tradition, came in at the death and looked like it.

Atlantic is the apotheosis of 1929, the typical example of

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a year's striving to reproduce on the screen the very noises which people go to the cinema in order to forget.

Let it never be said that Elstree converted its studios into sound stages for nothing, let us never assert that they bought over all the B.B.C.'s wind machines and effects experts for no mean purpose.

On the contrary, they imported them for *Atlantic*. Much could be said about this film. It's cinematic vision, its subtle—very subtle—rhythms, its sound-cinema distortion, its stark realism.

And the way it showed the undying heroism and stoicism of the Englishman Facing Death.

It was unfortunate we saw it within a week of the Film Society's presentation of *Potemkin*. As it was, there was a tendency to compare Dupont and Eisenstein. But only a tendency. After *Atlantic* Dupont stands alone.

All the same, Britain produced *Blackmail*.

Take a mental fourth dimension. Twist it around the queues outside the Empire and bake gently for three hours. Stir with the plaintive wails of a sound track in pain, and add a flavouring of the Wall Street crash. Serve up hot on a warm plate and a cold dog.

The result is Mickey Mouse running around Anny Ondra's legs during the breakfast scene in *Blackmail*, with Stepin Fetchit chasing the vermin across vigorous infinity with a worn-out disc record. Spell it out in the billion colours of *The Show of Shows* and the umpteen-candle power lights of the *Hollywood Revue*, and you find Mary Pickford sitting down suddenly in the mud, on top of a chorus girl and a dying detective.

Delve quickly into the sticky backstage soup, trip lightly over the million lights of Broadway and prostrate carcasses of all the world's show girls, and you find the Prime Minister of *High Treason* carefully shaving the beard of Bernard Shaw, with Maurice Elvey chatting lightly to Pudovkin off stage while the *Show Goes On*.

Which all goes to show, as a movie magnate once told me when I said the 300,000 dollars he had spent buying his latest subject was a waste of money, that it takes all sorts to make a world.

It has been estimated that the weight of the dollar bills the movie chiefs have spent on the growlies this year would be sufficient to crush them.

It has further been estimated that the number of movie chiefs who are without dollar bills after the Wall Street rumpus are like the sands of the sea. Red from the wreck of the wolf that woke.

Which all goes to show, as I nearly said to the movie magnate, that there's hope for the cinema yet.

"What of the future?" as the platform orator asked, flinging his arms dramatically forward, conscious of a wrong to be righted, the ultimate triumph of virtue, the divinity which shapes our ends, and a burst trousers button.

I am able exclusively to announce that Carl Laemmle has bought the film rights of James Joyce's *Anna Livia Plurabella* for a million dollars. The picture will be directed by Cecil B. De Mille, King of Bedroom Farce, and kindly loaned by M-G-M for the purpose, and supervised by Carl Laemmle, Jnr.

In order not to hurt the susceptibilities of those patrons

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who might be intellectually offended by the mediocrity of the story values in what, according to Universal, must now be considered an important work, George Marrion, Jr., has been signed to re-write the book with emphasis on the comedy and homeliness of Dublin life.

Under the title, *The Dublin Dove, or The Jay Walkers of the Great White Way*, the picture will be released by Universal as a Super Special.

After innumerable conferences, Joe Schenck has scooped the talker rights of the Koran as a starring vehicle for Douglas Fairbanks.

A super production of the Khayyam is planned by Warner Brothers, with Rin Tin Tin in the rôle of the Persian philosopher.

It is authoratively stated that the cabaret set now being built for the tavern door sequence in this picture excels in magnificence and beauty anything previously seen on the screen.

The hope that Universal could sub-contract Lillian Gish from United Artists for the title rôle in *The Dublin Dove*, has been abandoned. Instead, Laura La Plante will impersonate Joyce's immortal heroine, playing the part of an innocent servant girl who, distraught by the advances of her employer, nearly wrecks a motor car and a microphone, only to return to her boy friend—who works at the local distillery—in the end.

Slithering down prismatic shafts of crystallised sound track, I learn that after baiting the scalps of the Wall Street wolves, William Fox has secured the dialogue rights of *Paradise Regained*, by the English writer, John Milton.

The poem will be produced as the sequel to the sequel to the sequel to the sequel to *What Price Glory?* with Victor MacLaglen and Edmund Lowe in the rôles of a couple of hard-bitten angel dough-boys, whose adventures with the cherubims provides a feast of low comedy.

Raoul Walsh is to direct. The tentative title is *Zephyr Zippers*.

Aime Macpherson is adapting the dialogue.

Twisting through spiral voids of ink-blue immensity I discover that Professor Einstein, who had long been interested in Westerns, has been signed by Sovkino to produce a propaganda picture, made under the auspices of the *Daily Express* entitled *In Outer Darkness*.

It deals with a poor peasant girl who falls out of time-space and alights in Soviet Russia. Mr. Bernard Shaw is writing the preface, which is expected to be four miles longer than the actual film.

Descending still further down the time-escalator we find a sea of innumerable tears, ready for an influx of mother pictures. The words of the Midwife's National Anthem—that thing about *Sunny Boy*—rush along celestial sound records.

The number of chorus girls who count the world and a Fifth Avenue apartment well lost for first love is on the upgrade, despite official protests from the Actors' Equity, who consider this sort of thing a libel on the intelligence of the profession.

Theme songs hem in a portion of the stellar firmament. Ten thousand saw I at a glance, losing their keys in Fulham dance. Nestled closely in a Sleepy Valley.

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Angels round the door; who could ask for more? But stay, oh stay, the poor maid said, and rest your weary head upon my A Certificate.

Multi-linguals will be our bane. Not content with giving us Pudovkin's sound distortion idea by letting us hear an illiterate American trying to talk English with a French accent, we are now to hear the inspired words of a leading man telling the heroine in feeble German what he would like to do with her in exotic Hindustani. Mr Potamkin cried for a source. Unnecessary.

These Americans have it.

Near the constellation of Leo we will find more stars than there are in Heaven.

A minor nebulae near the Milky Way, known as the Avant-Garde, will be a scene of great activity.

Mr. Epstein will produce an abstract film, *Oh, Rest in the Lord*, with titles by Henry Dobb and a theme song, *My Cutie's Cancer Cancelled Me*, by Oswell Blakeston.

Mr. Stuart Davies will not start an English season.

The London Film Guild will read papers on *montage* and add it to their last season's product.

A well-known film critic will make his first picture, entitled *The Great Entertainment*, a masterpiece in three columns, two old jokes and one new story, with verdicts by the trade papers, epigrams by arrangement, gags by a rival critic, and readers by luck.

A comet, Brittanica Filmicus, which has been attracting astronomical attention, will disappear in a blaze of colour. Meteorites shot off by its tail will periodically startle the earth.

Journalistically speaking, from what I saw when diving through a crooked sunbeam and landing in a sea of emulsion, stock markets will remain quiet.

Mickey Mouse will grab all the space and writers will reap the glory. Mr. Swaffer will discover moving pictures and Mr. Swaffer.

The most ingenious reviewers will find pictures which cover "a sweeping panorama of dramatic interest, a striking melange of emotion and pathos." This will happen every week.

True to tradition, coals will be hurled at Hugh Castle, as before. At the end of next December he will discover a new gag about the talkies, until that time contenting himself by using the one thought out in a thunderstorm last April.

"What-ho!" any Cambridge graduate. Also *Macbeth*, Act II, Sc. 2, 8.

"Cheer frightfully-bung, jolly old, amazingly-ho!" any Oxford graduate, and any play by Noel Coward.

"Blimey!" any London ditto, and any War book.

Sunrise, and *Luck Star*, and after that *The Nark*.

And may there be no moaning at the Bar.

Now I depart.

HUGH CASTLE.

THREE MORE RUSSIAN FILMS

It is difficult to go on living after seeing Russian films; I mean it is difficult to stop living, to go back to the existence demanded by censor-ridden England.

Russia is not discovering that Truth is beautiful, but is trying to make Beauty true.

J. Raismann directed *Prison*, for Gosvoyenkino, from a story by S. Ermolinsky. I am grateful to Raismann for his cry against the old haters of beauty; I am grateful to Léonid Moguilevsky who allowed me to see this film with two others.

Clouds. Thousands of pictures start with clouds, but this picture has not yet started. Not dramatic clouds; a curtain. Cloud curtain. The play, gentlemen, has not begun. Raismann is breaking it gently. So to a flag, looking like clouds; the whole sky for a banner. Russia in tsarist days; imperial buildings in slow mixes. Looking up at the buildings; their heads in the clouds.

Are you shocked by the introduction, by the Saturday-night-cleansed draperies? Here is the flying wind after the slow mixes; somebody waving the sky banner. Siberia; wind. In the prison house the rocking lanterns, and on the walls the rocking shadows of the bars. Shadows of bars on

the wall, image of the solid window from which there is no escape.

Already someone HAS escaped. Drama gallops. Horses, and wind, follow the fugitive. Wind tries to blow out the lights of the lantern; wind is friendly to rebels. A political prisoner has vanished, and the governor will be replaced.

How did the old governor manage to have such a young child? A cringing warder, one of the splendid types in the film, enters into the child's games. Suddenly he sees a telegram which tells him that a new boss is on the way; he pushes the child onto its face. He goes to inform the prisoners, to torture them with doubt. There is a dignity in the men, who are suffering for a belief, which, contrasted with the cochonneries of the gaoler, points the moral that iron bars do not make a prison but a lighting effect.

The little village chats about the big dodderer who is being replaced.

Bulbous retainer clicks his heels, sweat running down the back of his neck; leaky barrel. At the most dignified, and most sweaty, moment the child rides a bicycle between firmly planted feet. The rest of the new chief's reception, by the staff, is told in feet, not from a desire to be clever (which it happens to be) but because they are all anxious about un-toward incident, feet conscious.

The tunnel corridor is filled with shadows of men, and with men who are shadows; they wait for the arrival of the new chief. The political prisoners refuse a word of greeting. Actually, so far, the tightly-laced, crown-prince man has done nothing wrong, but they sense he can do no right. He clanks off, his egg-shaped head carried high. Of course

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one thinks of Stroheim, although it is not fair to the actor who has given such a magnificent performance.

At the pits the men are made to work. Superlative camera work keeps the guarding warders in the foreground. Heavy carts round incredible corners. Get up, get on; delivered with a twirl of the moustache, as if it were as easy as winking, or rather as twirling a moustache. Revolt. The spectator's mind has already revolted, so the upturned carts, at the bottom of the slope, do not tell of wasted labour, but gallant protest. An autumn landscape, quivering. No shots of the fight. An outline of the ringleader being punished, related through the faces of onlookers. Again not done because it is clever; it is simply effective.

Birds in a cage are a little trite, but the men in the cages are not exactly birds and there may be cynicism. The governor plays a guitar to the birds. Meanwhile the cringing warder leaves an anniversary present on the table—an empty frame. On the way out he pauses alarmed at the sight of a uniformed arm flung over a chair—an empty coat. Frame, coat—empty.

How ridiculous the governor is, doing his daily dozen, and how sensual as he chases the fat cook around the table!

The political prisoners are on hunger strike. Crossing himself (and thinking of the cook?) the governor orders that they shall be taken to church.

There is a shot of the choir master sounding his tuning-fork: this is a cue for the audience, a warning that the high spot is at hand. Is the audience fully aware of the richness of the ritual, of the church candles that are bars, shutting off the prisoners from the spiritual reserves? Of the ladies

looking soulfully at the governor? Of the people making crosses in unison, and the prisoners, who have mental liberty, anyhow?

Protest. Pure animal, the governor hides behind a candle, that which is giving light so that other things may be seen. Guards advance on the prisoners, the man comes from behind the candle-stick to become he-man, with the eyes of the ladies on his uniform. Cross cut with statues of the saints.

Sequence *formidable*. Smoke from the censer.

A party given by the governor, handled well the atmosphere. (Can one handle atmosphere?) The old flirt who will dance with the host, while feathers fall from her fan. A toast to the host. Fade out; fade in. Close up of a key in the lock; long shot the warder in the passage. (These interesting images permeate the film.) Plans to escape: knocking on the roof and passing revolvers from hand to hand. All the actions which fill the air with suspicion, till charged like a battery, the very air whispers secrets. Somebody says that somebody must sacrifice himself for the good of the others. Nobody speaks. Lots are drawn, and the young boy, who is chosen in this manner, passes on his task.

Pouring wine into an open mouth; conjuring trick to amuse the ladies who eat at great speed. Faded flowers in bowls. A message. The governor opens it to read to the rest of the company. A message of congratulation to the political prisoners from the Revolution. Stupor. . .

* * *

Attasheva has treated *The Stump of an Empire* graphically in *Close Up*; however, there are a few personal impressions

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left from a working copy with flash Russian titles. My vision was as changed by that which I did not see as by that which I did see; still it remains a grand film. Not, in my opinion, as grand as *Prison* but overwhelming, nevertheless.

I remember stretchers being carried in front of the lens, a crowded train, and Filimonoff pulling off boots from the feet of corpses. One man stirs, is alive. Instead of stealing boots from the dead Filimonoff gives legs to the living, carrying the man to his hut. Searchlights give depth to the picture, picking up plane after plane of soil.

The man is almost dying in the hut. A bitch, in the corner, feeds her puppies. The man is almost dying, is hungry. He tears away the puppies; himself he takes the milk. This scene is not forgotten with its boldness of telling. A monocled officer enters, watches, aims a rifle, the dog is shot through the eye to the brain. Filimonoff gives corn to the hungry man who eats like an animal. Cross cuts with the puppies and the dead mother.

Filimonoff, peasant, giant, shaggy beard, cinematic eyes. He blows a paper boat across a newly washed floor; he rings a little bell and laughs foolishly, lovably. He reacts spontaneously to everything; to a cigarette box, to a woman in the train, to the stranger he finds in his hair.

When he tries to think of the face of the woman in the train she appears so much more beautiful than in reality. The cigarette box distracts him; a cigarette box face. Turning the handle of a sewing-machine the pattern becomes closer as the handle turns faster; till the thread rolls across the floor and the train rolls back in his mind.

Battle memories are technically magnificent. The worship

of the dead crucified one, with the death mask; a worship which does not save god and man from the crushing tank. A decoration in his hand, a cross; thousands of crosses in a pile. Each cross a god.

In the frosty air the breath from the nostrils of the commanding officer turn him into a dragon image. Two white figures, in the emotional light of negative, advance. The man faces himself.

Questioned by his wife Filimonoff cannot explain his dream. Flashes up again the impotent god and the débris of crosses. Quick cutting brings the incidents into the room. One can well understand his sensations, for the spectator has felt that war was in the cinema. Filimonoff runs from the house, to find his new hopes, to lose his old memories. He jumps on a cattle train; he is a happy animal.

The town. A statue from every angle. How can a man, a man of stone, live without reactions? Poor fellow, he is to learn. His marvellous face moves through a thousand positions, as quickly as the streets which flash by him from the tram cars. An arch is almost a halo round his head. But the new architecture terrifies him; he runs away.

Swing glass doors, and comedy, even in Ermler's picture. Factory hands are instructed, by means of the microphone, during meals. Balalaikas are played. The rest of the film concerns the fitting in of the peasant with a life of showers and razors. A meeting in the factory between Filimonoff and the man whose life he saved.

School starts in the factory; the way to appreciate modern architecture. A few laugh at his clumsiness; he has an

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instinct to shatter. They point out to him that machines are not a new class, not robots; they are means to break a class. Galley slaves; the easy work of the machine. Vertoff cutting. So much more than possibly experienced by the speakers, because the new order embraces everything. Crowds, because the new order embraces all. Filimonoff listens, forgets his grudge, pawns his cross, checks the rage of a fellow-worker, cultivates his beard.

At number 13 the woman in the train fights with her husband. This stuff dragged in to prove that it is the influence of the revolution, not the influence of the dream woman, which has changed the lovely Eisenstein type to the proletarian Menjou.

Filimonoff arrives to deliver a letter. Picks up a vase. Sees himself as the man in the factory, as the officer with the dog, and conquers himself. Victory. A new man. Yes, but something else has died.

* * *

With Russian flash titles *The Revolt* is rather confusing. Flowers in a landscape where men fight. Camels. Man shot from a roof. Child (flowers in the landscape) urging on combatants. Telegraph wires. Sleeping town. The speed of electricity along the wires. And, with the aid of the title, one records that someone has revolted.

Soldiers learning. When will they stop learning? A less friendly mind might breathe "Salvation Army".

Follow the large heads cut off at odd places, cut for composition and not to give the public the whole of the face. The barracks full of smoke, the lazy men who will not obey, the type who sleeps through it all. Out in the open; the

giving out of arms, the interesting things done with wheels of gun-carriages, heads in furred caps. A shooting party, shots along rifles, a last minute rescue. Woman of the new order, revolutionary types. . .

Hardly the scenario, but notes, taken during the projection, are now as confused as the memory of the film.

The Stump of an Empire, *Prison*, and even *The Revolt* . . . how do the Russians manage it?

Ermler and Raismann are two new names for the cinéaste to play with.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

PRE-VIEW OF *THE GENERAL LINE*

It is impossible to write a criticism of *The General Line*, in a few pages, having seen it only once. It is possible merely to indicate the scope and outline of the picture. It is baffling because one does not know whether to appraise it from the sociological, the cinematographic or the purely Russian point of view. It is particularly difficult for the trained eye not to be aware of the immense technical thoughtfulness, not only of image and rhythm, but of symbolic import, and speaking personally, when I saw the film for the first time, this cut across judgment of the film as a whole.

The General Line was begun before *Ten Days*, when the

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question of the increase of food production in Russia was the vital question of the hour (as it still is), then the film was left while *Ten Days* was completed, and finally work was resumed when the "general line" had passed from agriculture to machinery, from cows to tractors.

The film contains one great innovation—the rhythmic use of sub-titles. No film has opened more powerfully. Ten, not ten, 100, not a hundred, one hundred million of cultureless, illiterate peasants is the legacy left to Russia by the pre-revolution regime. Beat of numbers and words increases to open upon fields black under shadow and fields sweeping clear of shadow. In a leaky hut, women, children, men, black with flies, lie on planks among their animals, only an inch or two above mud floors the rain dripping through the roof has made into a swamp. Russia is before the eyes, Siberia, vast continent of land space, the terrible problem that ought to be the world's, and is but Russia's, how to break down this ignorance, this apathy, this thing that is far less noble than the animals. The old and the poor have no means of ploughing the fields except by makeshift methods or by hand. An old man and woman are harnessed to a plough. Marfa Lapkina starts out to beg. A fat rich peasant sleeps on his porch and flies crawl over his ear. His wife, a statue to sadism, comb in hand, stares mockingly from the doorway. Marfa Lapkina is turned away. But life cannot go on—it is not possible to live further in this manner.

A meeting. This is perhaps the finest moment in the film. Lapkina demands a communal farm where each shall help the other. "A woman" an old peasant face sneers, "vulgar" laughs another, "Soviet tricks" a third whispers.

And this is universal. This is the community faced with progress in any part of the world. To watch this scene in *The General Line* is to see, not a desolate Russian village, but the world faced with the first application of anaesthetics, the world faced with birth control or with any demand for freedom to live from those it has been accustomed to treat as slaves.

The very old, the hopeless, the very young, these form the community farm. And its first success comes when they are given a separator and are able to make butter.

Up to this point there has been unity. But from this moment it is not easy to decide exactly what was Eisenstein's design. For the series of sequences that follow repeat this central idea, misery, revolt, opposition to progress, the beginning of success. Each section is beautiful, both in conception and photography, but actually it is repetition rather than the drive forward of an idea.

By communal labour the workers are able to save enough money to buy a pedigree bull. Finally, however, they decide to share the money amongst themselves, which is opposed by Lapkina. She is beaten to the ground, but the delegate of the Soviet arrives at the critical moment and the workers are persuaded to purchase instead the bull they need so badly. Views follow of a model farm and of the purchase and removal to the village of Fomka, a pedigree bull.

Labourers come from the city for a holiday and help the villagers to rebuild their village. There is talk of tractors, which is met with derision as usual. A shot of pigs plunging into the water follows. This is cross cut with pigs going through various processes in the slaughter house and

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pig factory and this again is cross cut with a china pig, with emphatic head, revolving.

After much opposition a tractor is ordered. The harvest is too plentiful to be gathered by hand or by primitive means. But the tractor does not come. Finally, Marfa and some villagers travel to the city to obtain it.

During their absence the rich peasants poison Fomka.

Marfa arrives in the city to find the Russian offices in a state peculiar to bureaucracy, many clerks, much bustle but no organisation. She makes so much stir that with the help of the city workers who had spent their holidays in the village, she obtains the order for immediate delivery of a tractor. The scenes in the office are conventionalised into almost static types. (Marfa's energy against this registers so acutely one becomes almost sorry for the officials!) She returns to the village waving two balloons. She meets a friend, but the friend drops the head. Not, not Fomka? Yes. Fomka is dead. The performance is repeated, but with head unbowed and balloons flying Marfa walks on to her own yard. There she falls grieving, face downwards. But Fomka's calf trots up to lick her face. Fomka is dead, but the commune lives.

The village band in a hay wagon assembles to greet the tractor. This, again, is one of the finest moments of the film. Amid speeches, cheers, and excitement the tractor plunges down the hill, sticks, refuses to move. There is gradual consternation, laughter, and the villagers drift away. Only Marfa remains faithful, and watches beside the mechanic who throws off his holiday apparel and finds oil in the wrong place in the machinery. He uses up his own

collar and handkerchief and stretches his hand out for the red flag stuck in the tractor bonnet. Fingers restrain him. Marfa lifts her apron and lets him tear strips off one of her many petticoats and puts the red flag carefully away in her dress. Finally, the tractor marches forward triumphantly, dragging all the carts of the village behind it, up hill and down hill, overthrowing all the fences, while the villagers cheer. This changes to a vision of Russia covered with tractors and to a final close up of Marfa herself driving one, and falling into the arms of the male leader of the village in the best "happy end" tradition.

Perhaps it is the attempt to be at once popular (to appeal to the villagers) to treat Russia in a statistical manner, and yet at the same time to have a story, that has broken *The General Line* into sequences. I, certainly, have no quarrel with the sociological import of the film. From a limited experience of village life, no people are so hostile to progress as a rule, as the farmers. But I should have preferred to see *The General Line* done in a more impersonal manner; not Lapkina, not Fomka, but village after village in mud and waste and superstition, the jeering as the tractor arrived, as it stuck in the swamp, as it triumphantly gathered the harvest. Or else more personal, with concentration on Lapkina, making her not a symbol at one moment and a woman at another, as she tends to be actually, but putting the matter more from her point of view and less, therefore, from the statistical. As it is, it is never quite a story nor quite a document.

Its very greatness makes it easy to criticise. There are parts of it as sentimental as Dickens. Which is not to say

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Eisenstein is sentimental. Where sentimentality is used, it is used deliberately, consciously. And it may be the only means of bringing to the mind of the Russian peasant realisation of progress. It is a film created like an alphabet to fulfil a definite purpose, and for this reason alone it is impossible for west European peoples to judge it. It is the finest educational film ever made, but viewed as pure cinema it has not quite the rhythm and power of *Potemkin* and *Ten Days*.

BRYHER.

“NOT YET TO BE SEEN”

1. *Arsenal*, by Dovjenko.

Dovjenko's craft has made wide advances since the time of his earlier *Zvenigora*. *Arsenal*, a classic of the Civil War in the Ukraine, retains connection with earlier tentatives; and remains tentative. Old, tried experiment can be, and is, consolidated here in assurance, in metallic precision. Dovjenko, however, has no static perception, and he has been eager, even a little too eager, to make new experiment again. His is a strangely illuminated perception. Erratic,

clairvoyant almost, and not sustained. Unquestionably he has a fine cinematic consciousness. He might go farther than anybody, given time and opportunity. He fails and attains together through apprehension that is more spontaneously psychic than intellectual. Because of it he sees farther, because of it he is profligate in his method, hurried and driven. On the other hand the discipline that would unify, would also leash rare freedom.

He builds in *Arsenal* his atmosphere of woe and sullen doom through use of *suspended action*. Not through use of stillness. Suspended action. People have entered rooms, and suddenly they have stood still, stricken with some monstrosity of the war. People in the streets have suddenly ceased from moving, standing bent and ghostly, while the wind makes lovely sculpture of their clothes. In a vast, empty field, furrowed for grain, an old stumbling woman falls and does not get up. Each image is sustained, dreamy and desperate with repression. This breaks finally in a senseless rebellion of despair. A man kicks his helpless, starved horse, a woman beats her hungry child. His foot, her arm become one—symbols. The kind woman, the gentle man, punishing the docile and inoffensive, because of doom. And at the end of it, nothing except to go on as before, the man leading his horse, the woman standing in the room.

The same method taken to the Front. Soldiers, dark against a sky of heavy, unvigorous cloud, advance in silhouette. A soldier pulls away his gasmask, and laughing gas convulses him in shocking merriment while the hand of a buried man clutches up toward him. Advancing, a soldier on a hill stops and his rifle falls from his hands. His

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silhouette against cloud with hands upturned, in the attitude of any quattrocento pitying saint, is cut from several angles, each emphasising the beautiful gesture. An officer's figure, black also against the sky, asserts authority with pointed revolver. The figure is heedless. And next the officer's heels are spurning the hill, and the quattrocento saint is a blotchy heap on the ground.

Arsenal would deserve a longer analysis and fuller comment than space will permit. It brings innovation. The paradox. A little man lights a candle for his ikon. The face of the "saint" grows disdainful. He leans forward from his picture and blows it out. . . . Soldiers hurrying to the front bear a coffin on a sledge. The widow waits by the open grave. The soldiers urge their horses "faster, faster!" At length one exasperated horse turns round and snaps "we're going as fast as we can!"

They arrive at the grave. The widow bows. The coffin is dropped in the grave and the sledge sweeps on.

Dovjenko's film, like *Zvenigora*, has too unknitted a scenario. The connecting thread is not yet evident enough. It is also too involved in its conception. But nobody can deny that it contains some of the finest work of any Russian film, and *Close Up* readers will know what *that* implies! Its greatness is its restraint, its subjectivity, the innovations of technique, its distinguished and poetic horizons. Those passages which are not symbolical in treatment are stamped by an acrid irony in what will be known as the traditional manner.

K. M.

2. *Kayn and Artem*, by Petroff-Bitoff.

A film from the book of Gorki. What *has* Mr. Petroff-Bitoff been up to? Squalor he wants, and squalor he gets. From the dying cods, fretted with fly swarms, and the refuse-heavy market to the death-throes of the hero under the playful trickle of a sewer-pipe, nothing has been left to the imagination. Quite a nice girl with a surly face is raped behind her fish stall. Quite a nice little man, Kayn, the Marxian idealist who looks and acts like a neurasthenic muskrat, is made to dance till he drops by unkempt sadists, who prod him whenever he flags, with knives. Quite an attractive bully, Artem, is turned into a somewhat wishy-washy citizen by his little satellite, the adoring musk-rat. There is a tug-of-war between Artem and a butcher across two roofs, with a road between, and a nice, friendly plough, with upturned prongs waiting to impale the loser. The girl abandons religion and life. The bully is beaten, mobbed and flung in the river by his enemies. The musk-rat saves him. Luscious shots of his tormented, tortured, and blood-soaked body.

What *has* Mr. Bitoff been up to? I enjoyed it, though everything looked overcrowded for days afterwards. It's a joke film, but if you let it be a joke, it's even a good one. There is a good sequence in a church. Adoration of nuns before an altar becomes nuns left-turning, right-turning, about-turning—a squad of die-hards, their faces drawn in the implacable lines of ill-temper usually most marked in the faces of company sergeant majors.

Kayn and Artem, or *Lust's Labour Lost*. I wish you could all see it!

K. M.

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3. *The Last Attraction.*

The Last Attraction directed by O. Preobrashenskaya, is somewhat of a disappointment after the same director's *Peasant Women of Reazan*. The film which begins as a pleasant comedy, turns suddenly into tragedy without preparation or unity of idea. Yet the theme might have been excellent. For it is the story of an over-zealous revolutionary student, a kind of Russian Harold Lloyd, in big horn-rimmed glasses with a hidden revolver, who finds the villagers slow to respond to the new ideas. So he commandeers a broken down caravan, and its occupants, a kind of tiny travelling circus, who are very uncertain as to what a revolution can be. He repaints the caravan and the scenery, writes new songs. Then leaves with it and a box full of propagandist booklets which he distributes in the villages after the performances. At first the circus people resist him, but the revolver is persuasive. Then the girl (R. Pushnaya the Anna, from the *Women of Reazan*) falls in love with him and his path is smoother. But her former friend, the acrobat, becomes jealous.

At a village performance they are all arrested by the opposing troops, but, thanks to the apparent stupidity of the circus people, they are released with blows and a promise to give a "counter-revolutionary" performance to the troops. The jealous acrobat threatens, however, to denounce the student to the commander but does not do so, at the final moment. Meanwhile, the student is seen hiding papers and a revolver, is captured and shot.

The acrobat rushes over the hills to summon the revolutionary troops. The commander of the opposing forces

transforms the caravan into a tank. The circus alternately performs on the roof, and indulges in a wild west struggle below stairs with the villain, the commander. The acrobat leads the troops forward in the most approved cowboy manner. The student's death is avenged, and while the circus resumes its normal life, the girl and the acrobat ride away with the revolutionary soldiers towards the re-building of Russia.

The story is given in some detail as *The Last Attraction* has not yet been shown publicly outside Russia. It is disappointing because the transition from the Harold Lloyd beginning to a wild west drama with the wrong (from the Hollywood point of view) ending, is too abrupt and not worked out from the psychological point of view. Treated as a comedy, the earnest endeavours of the student which always go wrong at the last moment, might have furnished splendid material for a slightly satirical film. As it is, it becomes merely melodrama of a rather naive description. It could have been made a psychological document of the man who expects so much more of humanity than can possibly be fulfilled, but then the whole action and treatment would have had to be on a deeper, more powerful level. There remain the landscapes, and the feeling of air and space which Preobrashenskaya indicated so wonderfully in her former film. Perhaps the picture is a concession to "entertainment value" in the Russian countryside. But it cannot rank with *The Peasant Women* either in treatment or conception. It will be interesting to see Preobrashenskaya's next film. She is said to be making *The Peaceful Don* with Pravov with Zessarskaya in the chief part.

W. B.



Turkmenia. A boy Turkmen with a talisman pinned to his back.
Directed and filmed by B. Bash.



The Gate of the Caucasus. A Sovkino travel film. Director :
Lebedev. Khevsur in ancient costume.



Night in Berlin. One of the "filmic" studies of Hans Casparius, an article on whose work in photography and films appears in this issue.



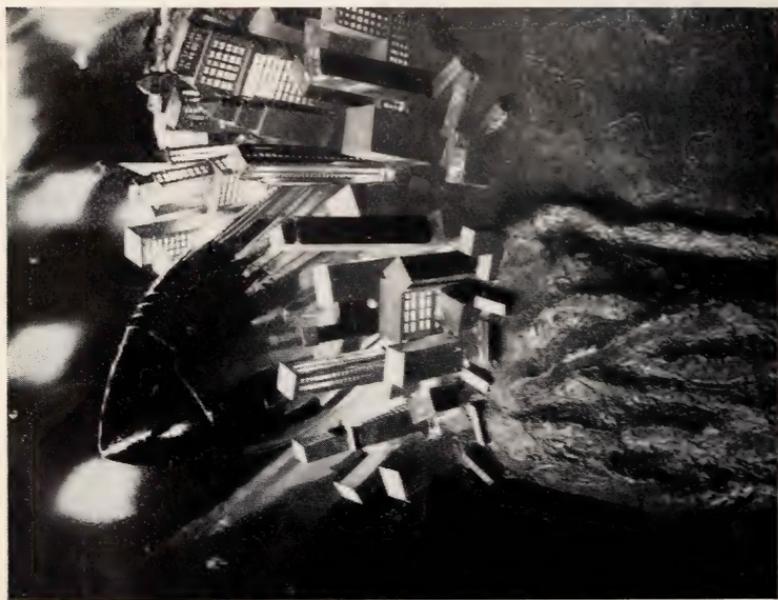
Preserved in eternal ice. The beautiful corpse of *Piz Padii*. A photograph by Hans Casparius from the film by Dr. Arnold Fanck and G. W. Pabst.



Vigor of light and movement is the outstanding characteristic of the "film photos" of Casparius. His studies suggest what films *might* be.



His portraiture often gives more of life and movement than the films for which they are taken. Louise Brooks would have been a better *Lulu*, a better "Lost One" had her cameraman been able to make her "real" as does this study.



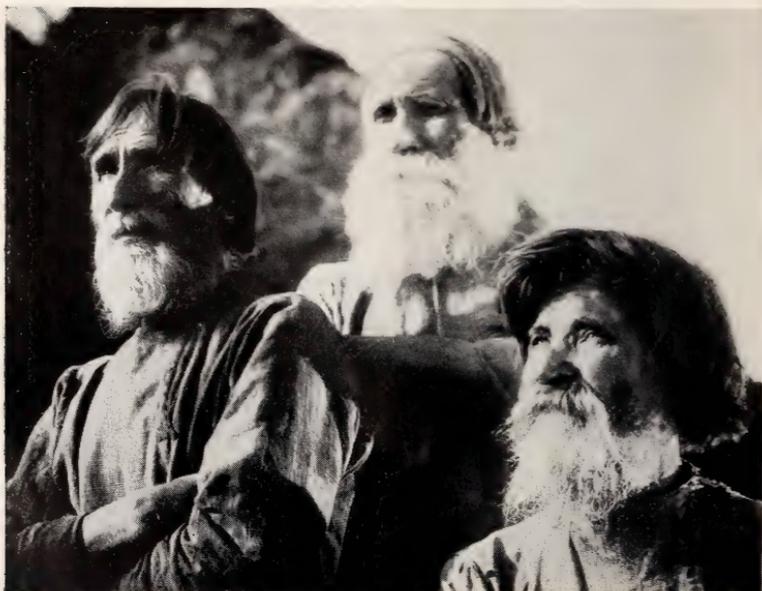
A publicity photo for *The Girl in the Moon*, the Fritz Lang super, in which Casparius offers an effect the film might have achieved.



A "still" that gives immediate mental sense of movement. Mr. Casparius offers these suggestions to the regisseur in search of cinema---movement. Even a still need not be static.



Martha Lapkina, the heroine of *The General Line (Old and New)*, reviewed in this issue by Bryher. A Sovkino film, directed by Eisenstein.



Peasant types in *The General Line (Old and New)*.



Photo: Ufa

A charming moment in the first Ufatone-Super, Erich Pommer Production, *Heart's Melody*, directed by Hanns Schwarz.



Photo: Ufa

Hungarian peasant women in *Heart's Melody*.



Photo: Ufa

The soldier (Willy Fritsch) with his bride and parents. From the first Ufatone-Super Erich Pommer Production, *Heart's Melody*, directed by Hanns Schwarz.



Photo: Ufa

Heart's Melody is a folk film, founded on old Hungarian folk songs. It contains some excellent sound innovations.

PRE-SCRIPT FOR *THE LONDON REVUE*

Under the stress of four "new" back-stage talkies here in one week, I had forgotten that I had ever written on film-revues of my own accord. But when someone reminded me and asked if I was going to follow up what I hinted at last September, I looked it up and saw I had said "an abstract is a revue, and you can go much further with a talkie abstract." Had I any ideas to show what I meant? I thought. I am still thinking. Here you are. But, let me add, this is already being used as a plan. Revue must have a focus. I suggest a London revue, and being a series of short films, I suggest a space-centre from which the various films can radiate in varying degrees. In this way they will touch, break, sweep on again.

Trafalgar Square.

Stand by Admiralty Arch and look at Trafalgar Square. Go back next day and look again. Let your business take you there and each time stand and look until you forget you are trying to get anything from it and just assimilate. You will find you have felt traffic circling round that square, round and round. And Whitehall traffic diagonals up

across, touches for a little, and curves off into Pall Mall. Strand traffic joins it, and traffic from Charing Cross Road comes down the far side to go into Whitehall, which you have seen comes up diagonally, goes into Piccadilly, which feeds the circling traffic round the square. Here is your movement and here, when you come to camera angles and to cutting, in fact when you write your scenario, here is your design; movement in circle round a static square.

You will have realised that Trafalgar Square has a life to itself (which you never suspected). Being where it is, it gets the fringe of the city, fringe of Whitehall, edge of the parks through the arch, edge of theatres and cabarets via Haymarket, and the fringe of all that second-under-hand world of bookshops, rehearsal rooms, little sub-arty tea shops, queer pubs from Charing Cross Road. It has all this, whirling round it, and all of it has to whirl because it, the square, is there. Some of it stops to have its lunch on Mr. Lansbury's seats, and some of it stops to watch the pigeons. Very well, then.

1. *A short film told entirely in electric light signs.* This is a good way to begin, eliminating sudden white leaping out from the screen as soon as the lights in the movie go down. You know that the signs in Trafalgar Square are getting more snapped up? In fact, outside the sacred circle of Piccadilly, there are a lot of new sky signs which are too little known, and there is nothing to prevent you using them. You begin with the signs that have to do with night. This is not an abstract I am making, but a story told in sky-signs. I haven't seen Deslaw's one, but

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I don't think he did this. I'm careful not to make the first an abstract, because this is to be a good popular film, and there is no need to put off the lovers at the outset. You tell the story of a man dressing for dinner, dining, seeing a play, film, cabaret, dancing, drinking, going to bed. To begin with and to show what I mean, the "Gordon's gin is the heart of a good cocktail" followed by the Scot on the Embankment having his drink, and his kilt blowing about with joy as he has it, and then the Piccadilly glass of port (though it would be better to keep this to the part where he dines at the Café de Paris or the Grosvenor, which has a very useful thin red sign. Again, for his toilet when he goes out, you follow the Kolynos sign from the river with the Rolls razor sign from the Grand Hotel buildings. You can use any kind of illuminated sign, I think. Tube, flood, lit-up pictures, moving and stationary, flicker and plain, in and out ones. There are some very good matches by the Palace; an excellent train, and a boat, and a picture of Cannes or one of those places for the spectacular scene in the show after dinner. You cut to some pleasant rhythm which suits the lights, and you ought to have great fun. It is making electric lights tell a story and getting onto the screen your enjoyment, if you feel that way.

2. *Pit queue turns.* As this first film ends at the break of morning, you follow with a shot of Covent Garden, with a porter doing balancing feats with baskets. From this you switch to the many good turns to be found among street entertainers. Your firm might perhaps see this as a good chance to put in Gracie Fields, or Robey, but apart from the

fact that these stars wouldn't like it to be insinuated that they had come down to entertaining pit crowds, I think it better to use some of the unrecognised, really Cockney material in these turns. There is a man who locks himself up in every kind of hand and bodycuff and then gets free. He usually performs on that blank space of asphalt between the National Portrait Gallery and the rather sinister " hotel for Gentlemen " at the corner of Green Street. There is, naturally, a man with a hat which becomes any famous hat, there is a man who stands on his head and a jam jar in the middle of the road among buses; there is a man painted as a Negro with oyster shells and carrots all over his coat; and several excellent imitators can be found. There are gentlemen who explain why the world will end in rather less than a week, and others who have some innocent who has been in prison for ten years, with several children aged two and three at home. You might draw from COLLINS'. You might get down the fire-eater from Caledonian Market, and the Italian organ-grinder with the monkey whose teeth, when he came round Bayswater to-day, were coming out to-morrow. Lastly, the man who tears paper into fir trees might mix into a Brugieran absolute paper design film.

3. *Maisie Gay in a talkie turn.* It is essential this be the " Bus Rush " from *This Year of Gracc*. That is all. It has to be.

4. *A Traffic Abstract.* On principles already suggested. Remarking also, beside the rhythm, the different kinds of vehicle, and the meaning latent. Shiny or not shiny leather,

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wide or narrow wings, type of tyre, lamp, Lalique mascot, and so on. As this is purposely to bring out the rhythms of traffic which its noise, dulling our ears, blinds us to, I would not have this a sound picture. I accepted sound from the start, but as an extension. Sound is a short cut. It lets us do what otherwise we took longer to do less well. But here we are not out to give traffic, but simply traffic rhythms. Sound would here detract. There is a music about unheard movement seen. It is not better, but different. Here I want gasoline ghosts, that is all. This film gives scope for ingenious angles and permission-gaining from authority. As Nelson sees it, as the pigeons see it. From the top of the revolving Coliseum ball, from the National Gallery pillars, and since I started there, from Admiralty Arch; but all the time continuing.

5. *Roadmending*. Rebla in Charlot's otherwise dull revue at the Vaudeville last year had an excellent roadmending turn with an automatic drill. He has, being a clown, a charming and ludicrous grace of movement, etching out firm, fluid patterns in the most wicked way, and all of it makes him eminently cinematic. This would be talkie, because he had also in this turn a song, "Life for me has only just begun".

6. *Bus Conversation*. The traffic abstract would end because Rebla was holding up the traffic, and while he held it up there would be light or low, I should like low, comedy conversation in a waiting bus. This is where you have a unity of space, though you are absolutely free; but you will observe all of these three turns link. As to the dialogue; it

might be between Lilian Braithwaite and Athene Seyler, discussing their afternoon's shopping; two Jew boys from a jazz band ("it was quite a good suit, the lining a little gone, that was all, so I bought it"), or an arty actress, reduced to playing in studio theatres, meeting a friend who trained at the same school and has gone ahead since in musical comedy. Played by Francwgn Davis and Gertrude Lawrence, with much cattishness, affection and patronage on both sides, as only these know how. Or almost anything else.

7. *Pigeon patterns.* The bus jerks forward, leaving us to stare at a few pigeons on the stone. More pigeons settle, scatter, strut; fly off, camera panning, to fountain. Up jet to follow pigeon and across corner of square to the crowd with crumbs and the photographer. What I want is a ballet of pigeons flying round under the sidewings the fountains make in this square, shut in by alarming traffic. Solid walls of bus and building all round, and in the middle, fluttering fountain wings and spraying birds. For this reason, sound. Certain sounds would cause the birds to rise up in panic, collecting again as grain is flung across the screen. The sounds would add to the softness of the bird-flight, and the audible blundering of congested cars in the background would sharpen the silent, sharp decision of bird-flight.

8. *Celebrity turn.* One of the people feeding the pigeons *might* be a celebrity there on a publicity visit. This might be either a normal singing turn, if you have a prima donna on hand, or it might be Anna May Wong giving a mock

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“ What I think of London ” interview. But perhaps her place in the film is to hold up the traffic whenever traffic is shown by getting out of loaned limousine for photographic purposes. A recurring theme. Perhaps, also, this turn might go.

9. *Pavement artist.* A man chalking on the pavement, as they do by St. Martin's, and the picture coming to life as a sound cartoon, like Mickey Mouse. It might be straight animated drawing, or it might escape from the drawing like the Inkwell Imp and get involved in the square. This turn is *not* deletable. A good showman knows what sound cartoons are worth.

10. *The Making of a Box of Matches.* Not a pseudo-dance scena, but an “ interest ” film, really dealing with life and the struggle to live. Showing how a tree is turned into matches, from all its stages, to being sold by a man in the Strand. This to be serious and made as well as possible, with clear conception, cutting and camera-work. A Grierson film. It flashes back, after the making of matches to a last, upward panning shot of the tree, and panning down, dissolves to Nelson's column, with Nellie Wallace atop. This giving your mind the chance to think of the view to be had up there, a slight documentary follows her modishness.

11. *Documentary.* Juxtaposition the chief thing here. Mr. Shepherd preaching, Labour demonstration at foot of column; sailors arriving at the station, to be greeted inevitably by the sailors' “ best friends,” and a social wedding going on in another, rather smarter corner of the square. The Queen, accompanied by the King, driving

forth to a theatre, while crowds of débutantes wait to be presented. This is so manifestly impossible that it might just be allowed. In any case, the "buds" would be fun, sitting in hired cars, playing cards inside their bouquets, telling each others' fortunes, drinking champagne out of slippers and doing all the other things that the evening papers never fail to get excited about each year. These to cut in with chorus girls waiting to have an audition. And so on; a documentary, cut wittily to give a sidelight on phases of London. They would all be rather absurd things, which are only worth our passing attention because of the way they crop up among perfectly serious things.

12. *Satire or Talk.* Either continuing the note of satire, in which case have a demonstration of Holding the Reins by Lord Beaverbrook, a talk on Limelight by the Prime Minister, or My Life as a Politician by Mr. Selfridge, or else, leaving Whitehall, and taking a leaf from the B.B.C., have a decent, brisk talk on his daily work by a bus conductor, a hawker, a Whitehall lifeguard, a flower seller or what, quite seriously, a woman policeman thinks she is doing. She might explain whether the military police have any jurisdiction over drunk sailors; I never know, and always hurry by wide-bottomed trousers in the Strand, feeling unprotected. If so (meaning, if she did); there could be—

13. *A Dance Turn,* either by two of aforesaid sailors, by Snowball, that little black boy, or by some of those odd men who go round, accompanied by a barrel organ, to which they dance, dressed up as women? But if not, those toys the hawkers on the steps of the church sell, could come to

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life and do a marionette turn. A short film of marionettes before that grim *Lucky Star* trade show revealed unsuspected possibilities, with a burlesque of Al Jolson and the three Eddies. Sound suits Marionettes, I think.

14. Then, *Song by the Four Lions*. Either a Revellers' quartet, or yodelling. In any case, not "lion" noises. This would be an opportunity for some quite interesting sound experiments. I should know how right or wrong the contrapuntalists are. Lions treated, of course, in the manner of Eisenstein.

15. *Trafalgar Square as seen by Maurice Elvey*. A brief but let us hope neat burlesque of *High Treason*. Mr. Elvey, inspired by the garlands which periodically make us wonder what it was Nelson did, thinks of the Column in 1949, when it is used by the B.B.C. All traffic control is done by the four lions, who are robotised. At the same time, there is no traffic, all being done by air. The National Gallery is a public Television Exchange. Whitehall becomes what it always has been, the home of musical comedy (Mr. Elvey is always up-to-date, and he has seen that a theatre is being built at the edge of Whitehall). The Cenotaph is undermined by hysteria, which causes great indignation throughout the whole English-speaking world, which now includes all the globe but the Midlands, and Mars as well. The contest for a new design is nearly won by an Englishman, but Germany and Italy threaten to break off business connections if this happens, and a prominent newspaper man saves the situation by running a Save Old England Campaign, and making the need for a new

Cenotaph vain by using all the money available for it to pick up the fragments of the old; whereupon Mr. Shaw sells all his letters in order to buy up the B.B.C. for the express purpose of saying "I said this fifty years ago" for the rest of his life. . . .

16. After which, *Another Abstract*. This time of architectural shots. Closing in again on to the Square, ending the revue.

Whatever firm made it and since Metro-Goldwyn once ordered *Greed*, from which they have been suffering ever since, miracles do happen nevertheless, whatever firm did let this be made when they wanted a revue, might take advantage of the proximity of steamship offices in Cockspur Street to say "now, seeing that we have no spectacular colour scenes in this, old man, what about a big number showing some of the places they visit? You know, 'winter in Jamacia', and then a plantation setting, or a bit of Mediterranean, we can manage a very good blue?" They would suggest this, but one would do one's best to refuse. But what must at all costs be refused is cut-ins of turns at music-halls or cabarets. It must be a composed series of films, not a lot of short made-up ones. I don't really like having actor-stars in, the talent of the streets in the widest sense is entertainment enough, but there might be a need for box-office names, and if Nellie Wallace or Gracie Fields is going to bring people in, it wouldn't hurt. So have the twenty-five stars if you like, and show you can do more with them than Hollywood. But be firm about singers in Spanish shawls against black-velvet curtains, and

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do not allow anything like the pictures in the Nat. Gall. coming to life or a guide taking people round or anything of that sort.

Now, these are just ideas that came into my head while people said "have you any idea of what you want done", and these may not be the best ideas. But I think I have given a scheme for a revue which IS a film-revue. Fifteen short films, some of which could be linked with sequences of traffic at the various times of the day; market vans, then noon rush traffic, and homeward going traffic at six, and long cars with women in white furs later. I think these films go out in space and time, but all have something in common, and link on Trafalgar Square. And you will notice there is a theme, as there is a design. You throw against the men trying to earn their life (match-sellers, street entertainers, their Royal Majesties), the pigeons trying to get their food in this one bit of traffic-ringed square. And this gets the design. Pigeons in the square, and the men circling and diagonalling all round. Now the lights which begin the film are static, though they go in and out, and movement is given to the screen; whereas the architectural short which ends the revue is made up of buildings which are panningly seen, though they do not move themselves, and yet are open. I mean, the impression of lights in darkness is that of closing in, and that has its effect of locating the film, and fixing it round the column; whereas buildings from different angles and collected from all sides of the square, and being those visible from the square, lead the mind outwards. Between the two occur these turns and films.

I think the film would have variety and unity. It lacks music, perhaps, but it has light and movement. It is not important, of course. It's just street revue. I have carefully made it neither a smart, cocktailish film, nor an intellectual film; I wanted it to be a simple good film in which all could take pleasure after their different ways. You could have more of this, and less of that. I have not used the underground, nor the Corner House, nor prosties. There is plenty more. That is the point, there always is. But my point has been, as I said elsewhere, that after seeing *The Hollywood Revue*, I "felt far more that the real revue of the screen lies in a succession of short films each contrasting and each complementary". And where it does not lie is in turning loose twenty-five silent stars to do a charade, or one good vaudeville artist to make a film of male mother-love auto-liography.

ROBERT HERRING.

CASPARIUS—A NAME IN FILM AND PHOTO

Not more than a year ago, Hans Casparius launched himself upon a world surfeited with portraiture, good bad and indifferent. His first efforts marked an epoch. He

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would serve very well to answer those who said that the technique of silent films could go no further. He started with portraits that showed that still photography was almost an unexploited adventure.

Familiar faces, taken by him, became characteristic moments in time—moods impaled, as it were, and kept for ever. One eye would peep round a black, scythe-like coil of hair. A nose and an eye would look forward across a blank darkness. Each of his heads would seem to be living, would convey something of vitality and impermanence.

His method has been called cinematic. To cinema it belongs. In cinema, as a matter of fact, it was born. He played a small part in *Uberfall*, the now famous, though still unseen film of Erno Metzner. Not only did he play a part, but realising a former ambition, he brought with him a still camera, and began his photographic career by making the stills for that film.

I have not seen him at work making films, though I have had the pleasure of seeing his new, short fantasy starring Sigfried Arno, but when I went to see him, he made a portrait of me, so I can tell you about that.

A large, comfortable studio, invitingly nooked, and divanned, with an English fire as somewhat welcome change from the porcelain stoves of the Berlin best-parlours.

Tea is served, cigarettes. You want to see some of his photos? Lights are turned on. 2,000 watt, I think. Cigarettes, please. A portfolio of thrilling pictures is put in your hand. Suddenly Mr. Casparius is standing on a chair or kneeling behind you, and something that has poked over your shoulder and disappeared, has been a camera—a

very small camera, I forget the size, though it must have been for a plate not bigger than three-and-a-half inches by two-and-a-half. All his pictures are enlargements.

“ What have you done? ”

“ I have just made a little picture. Please do not take any notice. . . . This is a picture I made in the Netherlands.”

Presently the lights are turned off. Mr. Casparius will show me a film he made during the turning of *Piz Palü*. There are the peaks of Piz Palü. And there is an avalanche, silver chuting against the sun. “ If the film is as lovely as that. . . . ” But here is Peterson, roped, a prisoner, and men are unceremoniously throwing spadeful of snow at him. A lovely little work-film, but how it destroys the sense of danger and calamity so carefully contrived in the Fanck-Pabst master-film! Not that it was meant to, indeed, but it is well known that the most tragic scenes on the screen are those which have occasioned greatest laughter in the making. Who could remain serious with cocoa dribbling from his bandages? The prisoners of the *White Hell* are the merriest of victims between the scenes! But the camera work! “ My camera is an Ica.” Why buy Debries and Bell-and-Howells?

The work of Casparius is well known throughout Germany. In the twelve months during which he has practised it, he has made several thousand studies. Advertising studies, stills for various films, portrait studies, experimental studies, landscape and seascape studies.

The main characteristic of his work is its quality of movement, of *change*. He does not stress durability, but captures the transient. He seeks this deliberately in a choice that emphasises this quality, either directly or by suggestion.

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His film work is interesting. He played in the now forbidden *Diary of a Lost One*, and in the Bob Stoll film directed by Metzner *Where's Love There's Danger*. But, perhaps most significant of all, is his short fantastic comedy, just completed, in which Sigfried Arno as an insouciant bridegroom, expresses so aptly his director's intention of fantasy—something between the simplism of a mid-period Chaplin, and the grotesqueness of Rene Clair's *Entr'Acte*. This, too, was made entirely with an Ica, and with only one two-inch lens. Partly in the Streets of Berlin and partly in Hans Casparius' own studio.

Casparius has a great gift for seeing things at their most significant moment. He does not strain after effect, his work is never freakish. That would be a denial of his primary intention, which is not to *be* effective, but to *make* effective.

K. M.

THE MENACE AROUND THE CORNER

The talkie was a life-saver to Hollywood. For two or three years preceding its advent many anxious prayers had been offered up for some means of salvation. Not from the housetops, to be sure—for the elders of the cinema synagogue

dared not publicly reveal their fears and forebodings—but from the inner chambers of a consciousness that all was not well with the celluloid world.

The public had been sated with films. It was growing peevish and disgruntled; tired of its diet; dissatisfied; seeking elsewhere for change and novelty. Every possible variety of screen fare had been dished up, and its monotony had been camouflaged to the limit with garnishings and gravies and with ingeniously seasoned dressings and sauces. The Hollywood chefs had reached the end of their resources; and the Crowd—the sustentative movie patron—was turning away, its stomach surfeited and its appetite jaded and querulous.

“Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.” The Hollywood movie proprietor, more than lavish in the feeding of his exacting patron, had every cause thus to echo the wail of the Psalmist. He had exhausted every effort to please, and his quondam friend and supporter was lifting up his heel against him! He was in despair.

And out of his despair, and out of the dire necessity of the situation, was born the invention of the talkie.

True, like many another saviour, it was not at first recognised. Hollywood not only refused to welcome it, but also there were those of the fold who profanely scorned it or treated it with lofty disdain. Now, however, after a short period of trial and probation, it has been accepted—unanimously and enthusiastically accepted. Its true character is acknowledged, and the Hollywood altars are a-smoke with fat thank offerings and votive incense.

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There is a time for everything. Audible pictures were possible fifteen years ago. That far gone Thomas Edison had perfected a device for synchronizing sound and motion on the screen. But the time was not ripe for it. The necessity had not yet arisen to call it into being.

Silent pictures were then still completely satisfying. Moreover, they were pregnant with stimulating promises. They were growing, expanding, flowering. There appeared to be no limit to their powers of entertainment and the possibilities inherent in them. Who cared if the sense of hearing was ignored if the eye could be feasted with pictures of a world in motion?—with animated portraits of heroic men in thrilling action, and lovely women parting their lips in enchanting smiles or shedding tears that actually trickled before our sympathetic gaze or dropped into the soup to tickle our primitive sense of humour? Why add a perfume to the nodding violet or a rumble to the rushing locomotive? Enough was enough.

But now the talkies—born of the necessity for satisfaction after the eventual failure of the mute screen longer to entertain and amuse. Gone now the glamour and the glory of the dummies. They have had their day. They are fading into history; as meagre now in their appeal as a white cotton stocking. Time moves; conditions change; novelty evolves into the commonplace and the boresome.

There is a limit to all things. And there's the rub. Already it is realized that the talkies are but a stop-gap. Time to-day does more than merely move. It gallops; it flies; it has taken to itself the wings of the morning. In its onrush it is harrying the world with restlessness; with

expectation; with an impatient demand for the morrow. We are no longer assured of the stability of anything.

And nowhere is there greater sensitivity to this restlessness, this uncertainty, this evanescent quality of conditions, than in Hollywood, California. For the nonce it is labouring day and night to advantage itself of the momentary clamour for audible films. Each day sees more theatres equipped for the showing of this novelty, while the multitude of them still eagerly waiting to fall into line offer the prospect of a rich and an abundant market.

So far, so good. Making hay while the sun shines is second nature to Hollywood. And the sun certainly is now shining on the Hollywood cinema fields, and a veritable plethora of hay is in the making. Paramount-Lasky alone has no less than two-hundred talking and musical productions scheduled for release during the coming twelve months. Sixty-eight feature-length films—dramas, operas, musical revues. Eighty-one two-reel comedies and speciality acts. Fifty-two issues of talking pictorial news.

Fox has over fifty big features planned. M-G-M, forty or more, in addition to a hundred-and-ninety other releases. Warner Brothers, First National, United Artists, Inspiration, Pathé, RKO, Universal, Columbia—all are correspondingly lavish in their preparations and promises for the ensuing year. Hollywood has never been more busy or more prodigal.

In its feverish desire to improve the shining hour—to garner the shekels while the garnering is good—it has combed the world for talent and novelty and famous names. Celebrities in the realms of music, of the theatre, of literature, of drama, of art are flocking to the film capital, to

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contribute their gifts and their personalities to the rejuvenated screen—prompted both by the adventure of it and the lure of much gold.

But for all of the rich promise inherent in these spectacular preparations and glittering names, and for all of the popularity of the talkies and their present big profits, Hollywood is uneasy. Beneath its smiling front of assurance and voluble ballyhoo is a gnawing fear—a fear of the morrow. Its canny eye is fixed warily on the corner ahead. The shadow of a lurking menace lies athwart an otherwise bright and rosy path. Any moment the thing around the corner may stalk forth and work confusion and disaster.

For the same spirit of desperate necessity that conceived and gave birth to the talkie has engendered other inventions. Its fertility was not reckoned on. Its progeny now promises to be a litter. Had its offspring been limited to the vocal film, Hollywood could have settled down undistractedly to its upbringing and development. The impetus of time need not have proved immediately disturbing. It would merely have hurried the maturing of the talkie.

But this is not to be. The menace around the corner is the imminence of other offspring, other inventions, that will demand the recognition and support of Hollywood as their parent. Hollywood has scarcely yet recovered from the unsettling shock of the birth of the talkie—its disrupting effect upon the movie industry; its call for the scrapping of established methods, routine, materials on hand, plans for the future, and the installing in their place of a new order, a new business, a new equipment, a distinctly different, untried and complicated form of production. And now it

is momentarily threatened with a repetition of like disturbance; a compulsion to accept and accommodate a brood of equally insistent and disorganizing cinema innovations.

Already the natural-colour film is here. The popular response to its first public presentation, in the Warner Brothers' *On With the Show*, has been no less enthusiastic than that which followed the showing of the pioneer vitaphone picture, *The Jazz Singer*. A few more like it, and the Crowd will demand that all pictures be in colour. The present black-and-whites will be as declass  as the dummies.

And on the heels of this comes the authoritative announcement of the perfecting of stereoscopic projection. Two quite dissimilar devices for obtaining the same result have almost simultaneously come into being.

One of them, the invention of Lorenzo de Riccio, head of the Paramount experimental laboratories, has for its basic feature a new form of screen, presenting a convex surface in place of the present flat one, and a screen that is changeable in size and dimensions, instead of being fixed within a definite, limited frame.

The other comes out of the laboratories of the Radio Corporation of America. The result obtained by this invention is described as "natural-vision mammoth pictures." Characters and scenes are presented in life-like detail, depth, and perspective on a vast panoramic screen occupying the full width and height of any theatre proscenium space. And the visual effect is such, that the need of different camera shifts—long shots, close-ups, etc.—is entirely eliminated. The invention enlarges both film and camera lens to such an extent that enormously distant

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shots can be taken and still bring the actors and background distinctly before the audience, without the necessity for any emphasizing detail views.

Furthermore, television is now so imminent that one of the largest Hollywood producing companies—Paramount-Lasky—taking time by the forelock, has acquired a half interest in a national radio broadcasting company in preparation for the approaching day when a picture will be projected simultaneously on a thousand screens throughout the country from a focal studio in Hollywood, Chicago, or New York.

And only now comes news from Europe of an invention there that will replace the celluloid strip with one of paper capable of recording and projecting both pictures and sound.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in the midst of its new prosperity Hollywood is nervous and unsettled. The insistent and increasing demand for talking films does not allow the marking of time to await the developments of to-morrow. Production must proceed, and plans laid, under the existing conditions of the moment. Yet every picture at present turned out, and every investment in service and equipment, is freighted with the uncertainty of chance. Even within the specific limits of the talking film, developments are so rapid that a yesterday's production is primitive and crude in comparison with the latest one of to-day, in its improved technique and mechanical betterment.

The crowd is not interested in the problems of its amusement purveyors, nor sympathetic with their troubles. Moreover, the producers are themselves responsible for having cultivated an exacting taste, as well as a desire for novelty, on the part of their patrons, and if their patrons

now turn thumbs down on a dummy or a last year's noisy, and in the next six months refuse to accept an uncoloured or a flat-figured talkie, there is no appeal from their heartless decision.

The menace around the corner is truly very real to Hollywood at the present moment. It is in a sorry plight. It cannot turn back, it dare not stand still, and it fears the shadows of coming events.

CLIFFORD HOWARD.

FIRST STEPS TOWARDS A WORKERS' FILM MOVEMENT

The organisation of a Workers' Film Movement in Britain is an event of some importance; the fact that the movement is meeting with the most encouraging response, and achieving positive results, is of even greater importance.

In matters of this kind Britain—as in so many other things connected with the Cinema—has been very backward. In Germany the proletarian film movement is firmly established, and has intimate contact with hundreds of Trade Unions and other mass working class organisations. In France and Austria, in the Scandinavian countries, and in America, similar movements have been undertaken with varying degrees of success.

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But in Britain, up to a month or two ago, nothing practical had been accomplished. In November of last year, however, a group of enthusiasts got together, and laid the foundations for an organisation which, within a very short space of time, got things done.

A Federation of Workers' Film Societies was launched, with the object of encouraging the formation of local Workers' Film Societies on a private membership basis, arranging to supply films and apparatus to the local societies, and encouraging the production in Britain of films of value to the working class.

The Federation is governed by a large and representative Council, with a working Executive which includes John Grierson, Henry Dobb, Oswald Blakeston, Ivor Montagu, Ben Davies and the present writer.

London, naturally, was the first centre upon which the Federation concentrated its activities, and a London Workers' Film Society was formed. This Society has for its object, the private exhibition of films of outstanding technical, artistic, educational and other merit which are not easily accessible to workers. The lowest practicable subscription was fixed (13/- per season), and in order that workers should not be debarred through economic reasons from joining, provision was made for the subscription to be paid in monthly instalments.

The response was magnificent. Several hundred members were secured in the first few weeks. The initial performance was arranged for a Sunday afternoon in November, but a week before the date arranged the London County Council stepped in and refused permission for the Cinema to be

opened on a Sunday afternoon! Hurried alternative arrangements had to be made and the performance was held in a Co-operative Hall on a week-night. Five hundred members and guests gave an enthusiastic reception to a programme which included Stabavoi's *Two Days*, Florey's *Skyscraper Symphony*, and *Garbage (La Zone)* by Lacombe.

Both before and after London's first performance, the Federation had been receiving letters from enthusiasts in many provincial towns, and from workers in the mining areas of South Wales and other coalfield districts. The Federation is now busily engaged in assisting these workers to organise local societies on a similar basis to the London Society. Early results are anticipated from Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh and other centres.

One of the first problems that had to be tackled by the Federation was a supply of suitable films. Some of the Russian productions were available, but a wider range was desired. Negotiations with the German workers' film movement produced gratifying results, and the Federation has now at its disposal several films from this quarter, including *Shanghai Document*, *Shadows of the Machine*, and *Hunger in Waldenburg*. This latter film, re-edited, and re-named *The Shadow of the Mine* was shown with great success at the second performance of the London Society.

But the greatest difficulty of all was the Censorship (O Blessed Word!) and the licensing conditions. It cannot too often be said that the regulations governing private film performances are ridiculous and barbaric. Nearly all the local licensing authorities stand by the decisions of the British Board of Film Censors, *both for public and private*

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performances. If a private Society in London wants to show an uncensored film to its own members in an ordinary licensed Cinema or Hall, it must obtain the sanction of the London County Council. If the film were to be exhibited without or against this sanction the license of the Cinema would be endangered. If a private film Society in London wants to show a programme of *censored* films in a Cinema on a Sunday afternoon (which is invariably the only time available) it cannot do so without the sanction of the L.C.C.!

The London Society duly made application to the L.C.C. for the necessary permit, and was met with a refusal! No reasons were given. The existing Film Society has a permit to exhibit uncensored films and to give Sunday afternoon performances, but apparently a workers' society must not have the same privileges.

The Federation urgently needs finance to develop its work. In the early stages some assistance must be given by the Federation to the local Societies, particularly in many of the industrial areas where economic standards are low. The offices of the Federation at 5, Denmark Street, London, W.C.2 will gladly welcome donations from friends anxious to help in its work.

While, for the time being, the work of the Federation and its affiliated Societies will be mainly in the field of exhibition, it is firmly intended to undertake the production of suitable films in Britain at a later stage. The possibilities, and the material, for production work by a workers' film movement are immense.

R. BOND.

MICKEY VIRTUOSE—LA MELODIE DU MONDE

L'on peut tirer à boulets rouges sur les talkies de l'oncle Sam, ce qui ne les empêchera pas, du reste, de débarquer sur le continent et de nous inonder de chansons nègres, de girls clamant leur détresse. L'on peut jeter feu et flamme contre le premier film parlant français *Les Trois Masques* qui sent à plein nez le théâtre et dont le pathétique vous poursuit jusqu'à la rue, où se répandent en vagues d'assaut, pour mourir sur la place voisine, les dialogues de quelques titans de la parole. L'un de mes amis m'avouait avoir bien dormi durant la projection de *La Bague Imperiale*, je n'en pouvais croire mes oreilles, Ivan Petrovitch et ses valets faisaient pourtant un tel tapage !

Mais il est impossible de faire grise mine à *Mickey Virtuose*, sous peine de passer pour un particulier anormal et décidément indésirable. Qui n'a applaudi aux facéties de son ancêtre *Félix Le Chat*, à cette intarissable verve humoristique d'un crayon génialement inspiré. Le cinéma a trouvé dans les dessins animés un champ illimité de fantaisie ; c'est là et là seulement qu'il se libère de toutes les contingences, qu'il moque la création et crée une vie

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originale. Mickey a hérité l'incroyable souplesse de Félix the Cat, comme ce dernier, il se joue des lois terrestres, prolonge à l'infini les ressources du réel. Il faut voir et entendre l'orchestre de saltimbanques quadrupèdes, le spectateur gonflé d'air qui, sur une rosse flexible, accourt, mais qui ne peut entrer dans la baraque foraine qu'après un lâchez-tout de son contenu gazeux. Il faut assister à cette désopilante danse du ventre, à cette parodie du charmeur de serpent . . . et last but not least, au récital de piano, qui est à lui seul une merveille. Seule une imagination anglo-saxonne est capable d'enfanter de telles oeuvres, où l'on retrouve ce jet continu d'humour et d'invention qui distingue déjà les croquis de Fleischer. Quand à ces motifs visuels s'ajoute un commentaire musical approprié, l'on devine instinctivement la portée d'une semblable association et déjà l'on concède à l'expression sono-visuelle un domaine déterminé, celui du comique extravagant, de la charge. Et là, indéniablement, il y aura de beaux filons à exploiter, de superbes gags à trouver.

L'on ne peut guère refuser non plus quelque attention à cette *Melodie Du Monde* signée Ruttmann, et par laquelle, avec un louable zèle, l'auteur se fait la main aux procédés sonores. A en croire certaines opinions, il s'agirait là d'un chef-d'oeuvre philosophique d'une portée immense ! C'est, me semble-t-il, forcer un peu la note que d'assimiler à un travail de profonde inspiration, un découpage savant, certes, mais qui ne requiert pas à proprement parler une faculté d'intuition supérieure. Photographier au cours d'un voyage les scènes, monuments, aspects révélateurs des contrées effleurées, puis, au laboratoire, classer par chapitres et

rapprochements les instantanés obtenus, de manière à réunir les phénomènes se rapportant au même objet, ce n'est pas, que je sache, faire oeuvre de philosophe, mais plutôt composer une manière de compendium visuel de l'activité humaine, qui a son charme, son utilité géographique aussi, mais qui n'est autre chose qu'un instructif divertissement. Ce qui demeure, malgré tout, en faveur d'une telle exposition, c'est la fraîcheur, l'inédit des vision obtenues de première main, l'accent précieux d'une réalité saisie sur le vif et qui constitue une garantie d'absolue valeur documentaire. Ruttmann s'est sans doute limité aux traits principaux, a volontairement ignoré une multitude de signes secondaires ; il ne pouvait agir autrement dans la nécessité où il se trouvait de grouper sur un métrage de pellicule relativement court, une matière aussi considérable. Mais à mon sens il eut mieux valu ne traiter que l'un ou l'autre ses sujets présentés : monuments—rues—travail—religions—bruits guerriers—enfants—habitants de la campagne et de la mer—duels, sports-courses, en l'approfondissant quelque peu. Telle qu'elle a été composée, *La Melodie Du Monde* n'apparaît que comme un travail hâtivement préparé, brillant sans doute, mais dépourvu de réelle philosophie, je dirais même de réel intérêt scientifique. On n'escamote pas l'univers en quarante minutes, si pressé que l'on soit actuellement.

La musique composée exclusivement pour l'accompagnement du film est presque toujours satisfaisante, en ce sens qu'elle souligne, renforce, complète assez bien les diverses phases du mouvement cinégraphique. Il serait au reste facile de varier à l'infini ce complément musical sans que l'on puisse, avec quelque autorité, juger de l'une ou l'autre

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version. Mais où, décidément, le hautparleur sert à merveille la cause du réalisme à l'écran, c'est lorsqu'il retentit du cri des sirènes, du son des cloches, du tumulte des machines, car, pour la première fois, la reproduction des bruits ne laisse aucun doute sur leur origine. Mais cette appréhension sono-visuelle directe du monde matériel est par malheur intermittente, ici, Ruttman s'étant borné à ne capter que les bruits perceptibles à bord du navire qui le transportait. Un essai, une tentative intéressante, évidemment, riche en enseignements, mais non pas encore la "symphonie" d'ondes lumineuses et sonores que rêve de réaliser Ruttman lui-même.

FREDDY CHEVALLEY.

COMMENT AND REVIEW

PLASTIC ENTERTAINMENT AND PLASTIC BOREDOM.

La Nuit Electrique, filmé par Eugene Deslaw, has been running at the Shaftesbury Avenue Pavilion. The Japanese press, we have been informed, has been warm; Japanese critics would be reminded of their own processions of lanterns. At the Film Society (London) the music helped.

Some of the images helped, too. Presented carefully it is the most effective of Deslaw's three shorts.

Another presentation by the Film Society (London) was *Nuri, the Elephant*, made by Henry Stuart on an expedition of Bob Stoll. After *Potemkin*, we believe, the council considered that it would be well to put on a film which could not possibly enter into competition; so that it would be useless to say "technically bad" as that is obvious. Indulgences were; the ordinary life of the Indians and their ceremonies at death and marriage. Instead of a film about rajahs, an old man lusting after a girl of twelve, and a nice elephant who is treated like a good dog. As our brow is low we did not have to search for excuses for enjoying so simple an offering.

Robert Florey's *Skyscraper Symphony*, screened first by the *Workers' Film Guild*, looks at New York; it does not show New York for all the feeling has been left out. One must photograph feeling as well as image.

Len Lye's *Tusalava* has at last been shown. It is dynamic drawing. To our mind it has always been pleasant to think how many things the camera has given us besides cinema. The picture, by the Australian artist, begins with diagrams representing life cells. "The climax develops into an attacking element which annihilates a 'self' shape but in so doing is itself annihilated." Some people may think that the seeing of *Tusalava* is scarcely the believing associated, in the popular phrase, with vision.

O. B.

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AN EXHIBITION.

An exhibition of radiography at the Royal Photographic Society.

We never saw any of the radio pictures screened by The Film Society. The catalogue for the exhibition reads like a poem of William Closson Emory: *Extra Oral Dental Study, Shot in Buttocks*. The radiographs, themselves, look very *pensées*: the patterns have their place on the plate very definitely. Apart from the fact that they would give Len Lye themes for a new picture, they must be of great medical value.

Everybody is so certain to compare Man Ray to X-Rays that the job can safely be left to them.

O. B.

A MODERN FARCE.

Viscount Brentford (alias Jix), under the title: "Do we need a Censor" has uttered a drivelling apologia for some of the minor indiscretions committed by him during his period of office. The pamphlet (published by Messrs. Faber & Faber) consists of only twenty-four pages, well printed, but manages to contain more illogical argument and stupid statement than can ever have been squeezed into any publication outside a Sunday newspaper.

The learned author believes that "the trend of public opinion is toward a more stern enforcement of the law in regard to cinemas". The grounds for this preposterous belief are not stated. In point of fact there could be none, and the author has scarcely the fertility of imagination to invent any.

To catalogue and comment on all the imbecilities to be found in those twenty-four well printed pages would take up far too much valuable space: besides, what would be the point? Here are one or two specimens which can give a fair, if inadequate idea of the whole.

For example, there is a "daring" parallel between the publication of an indecent work, and the commission of an indecent act. "Which, I wonder, does more harm—a book read by the million, or an act seen by the few?" There must be some really artistic acts of exhibitionism which get done in the eye by the ferocious attitude of the law. But then, artistic merit has nothing to do with it.

There is a bold expression of an ideal: it is: "That by the spread of education and the extension of religion in the hearts of the people they will themselves learn to reject all forms of unpleasant conduct, literature, art—and beyond all of personal thought". Unpleasant, that is, according to the gospel of Jix. A more concise way of putting it would be to say that he envisages a state populated by psychological eunuchs.

There is much interesting information. Jix is not a "cinema fan". Lovers driven from Hyde Park, which (we are reminded) is paid for "by Churchmen, Nonconformists and Roman Catholics, by decent minded men and

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women in all classes of society ", may find refuge here. No prying hand of Jix will disturb their embraces.

There is much that will intrigue film-goers. Discussing the question of film censorship, (with the present position of which he is not " absolutely satisfied "), he writes: " One side of this question, and one of terrible and far-reaching importance, is the effect of films produced either in America or in this country, and exhibited in India or in the East, showing the white woman as an object of degradation. It is undoubtedly essential that all nations which rule in Eastern countries should see to it that the pride and character of their womanhood is maintained unimpaired." This piece of bombast I regard as the best thing literature has yet given us.

The author is to be congratulated on acquainting the world with some of the sayings of the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. The Cardinal Archbishop has said, it appears, that " no silly prating about the necessity of elucidating problems, or that ' to the pure all things are pure ', or that the claims of art must be satisfied, which we frequently hear, can change the moral law, or alter the fundamental facts of human nature ". I very much doubt if even the Cardinal Archbishop could say what he meant by this. It is about as unintelligible as Stein is to newspapermen.

That such bloody rubbish, should represent authority, poses a riddle, the solution of which will be found upside down in the dark places of big cities.

H. A. M.

PARISIAN CINEMAS.

It is proverbial that Paris is the best city in the world for seeing interesting films, new and old. These are not all to be found in the *salles specialistes*. Here is a list of cinemas where you will very seldom find a bad program.

Ciné Latin, Rue Thouin, behind the Panthéon. Magnificently cheap and uncomfortable. Their claim of '*Films classiques et d'avant garde*' is justified. Generally a good *comique*. Program changed weekly.

Les Ursulines, Rue des Ursulines. Always the latest short abstracts. Strong *Quartier* atmosphere.

Les Agriculteurs, near Gare St. Lazare. Directed by the Myrga family from Les Ursulines. Program different every evening, mostly tried favourites with a document of 'camp' life in the wilds. For half-a-crown you can sit in an arm-chair.

Vieux Colombier, off the lower end of Boulevard Raspail. M. Tedesco keeps an admirable repertory of films. You are fairly certain to see a Charles Chaplin 'short.'

Salle Adyar, Square Rapp, underneath '*la reigne de la rive gauche*', the Eiffel Tower. Functions irregularly on one evening a fortnight, and has nothing not worth while.

Studio Diamant, Place Augustin. Has a bar in the modern style and is (comparatively) expensive. Uncomfortable, but worth while, if slick American films are out of fashion.

Studio 28, Rue Tholozé in the centre of Montmartre. The last word for *les jeunes cineastes*. Same remark as above applies here.

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L'Oeil de Paris, near the Arc de Triomphe. Smart, new, comfortable and has a good orchestra.

Max Linder, Boulevard des Italiens. Large and pleasant. You will generally find the latest French super-film, for what it is worth.

Corso Opera, opposite the last. Generally a revival of a success, like *The Circus* or *Joyless Street*.

Colisée, lower end of Champs Elysées. A policy of showing Russian films.

Naturally, there are a lot more cinemas in Paris, 'Ciné Pour Vous,' which appears weekly has a complete list of programs on the back page, and the French edition of 'La Semaine à Paris' lists of cinemas, stars, and producers.

ANDREW WORDSWORTH.

HOLLYWOOD NOTES.

The gloomy-minded who foresaw the collapse of Hollywood with the advent of talking pictures should find good cheer in Will Hays' recent summary of cinema conditions in America. From this official summary it appears that there are now ten million more tickets sold to movie theatres than there were a year ago, while the export of positive film during 1929 exceeded that of 1928 by more than forty-one million feet. Incidentally, we also learn, that, according to estimates of the United States Department of

Commerce, every foot of American picture film that goes abroad brings a dollar back in stimulated trade.

During the past two years Hollywood has invested five hundred million dollars in the scrapping of old equipment and the installing of new, and its now total invested capital aggregates two-and-a-half billion dollars. Altogether, therefore, judged by financial symptoms, Hollywood is enjoying excellent health.

* * *

During the filming in Ireland of the initial scenes of Fox's musical picture starring John McCormack, Frank Borzage, the director, selected two native Irish players for inclusion in the cast. These are Maureen O'Sullivan, a girl of eighteen, and Tommy Clifford, a lad of eleven; both of whom, together with McCormack himself, are now in Hollywood for the completing of the picture.

* * *

The opera *Carmen* is being filmed by Fine Arts Pictures at the Metropolitan studios, with Titta Rufo in the title rôle. Guiseppe Bamboschek, of the New York Metropolitan Opera Company, is conducting and directing the production, which is scheduled for release during the spring.

* * *

After its preliminary fiasco, costing some three hundred and fifty thousand dollars, Universal's "super-production," *The King of Jazz*, starring Paul Whiteman and his famous band, is now definitely launched under the enlarged title of *The King of Jazz Revue*. As an insurance against any further failure, Universal has enlisted the aid of a perfect host of super-talent. Carl Laemmle himself is taking a

CLOSE UP

personal hand in it as head engineer of the enterprise, assisted by two nationally known theatrical producers, two equally well-known librettists, four top-notch song writers, an internationally recognised dance impresario, three French costumiers, four of the most expert camera-men, and a nucleus of sixteen of "the most beautiful girls in the world," according to Universal's own expert estimate.

* * *

The Dollar Princess is the announced title of Alexander Korda's first talking picture for Fox. Korda, who transferred his allegiance to Hollywood from UFA three years ago, made his debut here as a director with *The Private Life of Helen of Troy*.

* * *

M-G-M are the latest of the producers to undertake the making of foreign-language versions of their pictures. The first of these will be Victor Seastrom's *Sunkissed*, starring Vilma Banky. After the completion of the English film, it will be done over in German, with Seastrom again directing. Miss Banky, who speaks the language, will be retained in the leading rôle, while such other members of the original cast who are not thus gifted will be replaced by German actors. This will be followed by a French version, to be directed by Jaques Feyder and with such further changes in the personnel as may be necessary.

* * *

Mme. Schumann-Heink, nothing daunted by her nearly seventy years, will shortly make her debut in a musical film. Since her abandonment of public recitals she has recently several times sung over the radio, and now, with true

progressive spirit, will record for posterity both her voice and dramatic personality.

* * *

Rudolph Schildkraut, whose impressive characterization of Caiaphas in *The King of Kings* will always be remembered, has recently completed for Pathé his first cinema talking rôle in the German audible version of William K. Howard's silent picture, *His Country*. He is now with the RKO Company and will shortly be seen and heard in their forthcoming film version of Arnold Zweig's novel, *The Case of Sergeant Grischa*.

* * *

The Fox Company, having now acquired some fifteen hundred cinema theatres throughout the country, is preparing to equip them for the showing of its Grandeur stereoscopic pictures. This innovation, which is destined to effect almost as great a revolution as the talking film, calls for a screen approximately thirty by forty feet in size and the employment of 70 mm. film. The changes in studio and theatre equipment necessitated by this new departure will involve no little time as well as no little money. However, with characteristic Hollywood enterprise, these changes are already actively under way; and within the year the novelty-loving public will have another something to gratify their emotional appetites, while the already bewildered critics will no doubt be plunged into yet greater perturbation by this further intrusion upon their sacred canons of tradition.

C. H.

HEART'S MELODY.

The first Ufatone Erich-Pommer production, directed by Hans Schwarz. Starring Dita Parlo and Willy Fritsch.

There are some very refreshing aspects about this film. The director has been extremely skilful in adding out-door noises afterwards. Most of the sounds are counterpointed, so that the camera has free scope. The story is futile—naturally. Theme is borrowed from folk songs. And no folk song could ever stand up to realism.

The salient features are fluidity, luscious but dignified photography, and many scenes made with real Hungarian peasants on the plains and in the villages. That the real peasant shows up the star masquerading as peasant is an old story. Dita Parlo wears the traditional dresses, multi-petticoated, with facility, and at times is very good, but she remains a star. There are, of course, tzigane melodies, gay and dreamy, and Willy Fritsch makes use of a sensitive lyric tenor voice to full—rather over full advantage. Most critics will say this film is "drenched with beauty". That should convey something to the cinophile. It is strongly fashioned. Buda Pesth is a city of steps, dreams and Danube. Sometimes something real is touched in a deft, quiet way. There are fleeting moments of beauty (when it is not "drenched with beauty") that hold surprising vision. The richness of Hungary is hinted at, though the means of showing it is with a too ornamental pattern. Such a film could not but be an immense success.

Dear Mr. Macpherson,

In the December number of your excellent Magazine *Close Up* you include some Stills from *Stampede*. May I congratulate you on the reproduction. I have, however, one grouse with which I know you will sympathise, and I feel sure you must have got your information from an erroneous source. The caption on the whole page illustration between pages 458 and 459 says: "This film has only a modicum of story etc."; this is entirely incorrect. The facts are exactly the opposite to this. Mr. Hinds, my wife and myself went out to Africa in order to make a film written to a definite story and photographed to a definite scenario of that story. Although the tribes we used don't know what a camera is, or a screen, they have a very definite idea of what a story is, and having no sub-conscious thought of "what they are going to look like on the screen" they "act" naturally.

My wife wrote the story on our combined knowledge of the life and customs of this tribe. The fact that it was taken to a careful scenario ensures that the film has tempo, continuity, and rhythm and provides material for proper montage. At the same time it is a real story of real things which have happened and are still happening in the lives of the tribe and the incidents are lived rather than acted by the people to whom these things have actually happened.

I am sorry to be long-winded but I know that you will understand that I am slightly peeved when having set out to make a definite story, I find that a magazine of the standing of *Close Up* states that the film has only "a modicum of a story."

I should be very much obliged if you could inform me

CLOSE UP

from whom you obtained your information in order that I may take steps to see that such a mistake does not occur again.

I hope that one of your staff will be able to see *Stampede* which is to be Trade Shewn some time towards the end of January by Pro Patria, 46, Brewer Street.

Yours faithfully,

MAJOR C. COURT TREATT.

In the ordinary course of events no-one would bother much about *The Co-optimists*, but when the film critic of one London newspaper describes it as "the gayest, wittiest and friendliest talking and singing film yet produced" it relieves one's feelings to say a few words.

This Edwin Greenwood production for New Era is really most astonishing. Not once in the whole five or six reels of it is there one quality that in any way remotely resembles Cinema. The impression you get is that one night they took a camera down to the theatre where the *Co-optimists* were playing and photographed the show on the spot.

The camera has three positions, long-shot, mid-shot, and (occasionally) close-up. Someone sings a song—long-shot from the middle of the stalls. He has finished the first verse and is starting on the chorus—mid-shot. He is concluding—close-up.

Just like that all the time.

Mr. David Burnaby introduces each turn with a few words—close-up of Mr. Burnaby introducing. Mr. Melville Gideon is about to sing—mid-shot of Mr. Gideon about to sing. Close-up of Mr. Gideon singing.

Monotony beyond conception, which even one or two of the brightest Co-op. numbers cannot dispel.

The Broadway Melody was bad enough, but it did have movement, and a certain idea of unity. But *The Co-optimists* has no movement, no unity, no imagination. It isn't even dead, because it was never alive.

R. BOND.

The Artkino Guild has been formed in Boston for the purpose of showing films of artistic value. It is hoped to arrange special performances for children and lectures for students of cinematography. Amongst a number of interesting films available for showing are *Jeanne Ney*, *Storm Over Asia*, *Berlin*, *The Peasant Women of Ryazan*, and *Ten Days*. It should certainly help to increase the number of students of the cinema in Boston.

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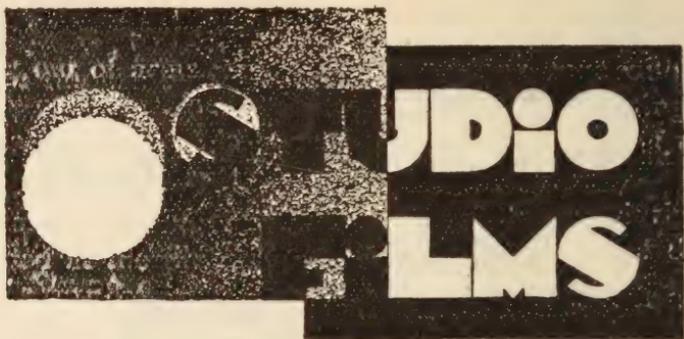
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AS IS

BY THE EDITOR

Having read with surprise in a recent program of the London Film Society, that *Uberfall* (wrongly entitled *Assault and Battery*)* was to be considered a "burlesque extract from the Police Court News", I think we can safely say now that *Welcome Danger*, in which Harold Lloyd is acutally better than in his earlier silent films, is a beauty-drenched idyll of Impetuous Youth. Lloyd, with his bright, mundane virtuosity, has again coupled spontaneity to a scenario as dilletante and gay as that of the never-to-be-forgotten *Speedy*. Perhaps I should say a scenario as frail and lissom as the dreams of girlhood? Its haunting pathos must certainly have made many a side ache and the tears of old men and maidens, young men and children will keep it afloat for many months to come.

* *Uberfall*, mistranslated in America, *Accident*, said the F. S. program. *Accident* never was meant to be a translation. It was the director's decision, and the writer was present when the English title was discussed, and *Accident* chosen.

Perhaps the Film Society was making one of those cacophonous, mordant epigrams, those slick turns of thought by which something hated becomes overnight the last, smart craze. Hair-tidies, samplers, tortoise-shell inlay and early Chaplin comedies became in the twinkling of an eye rare *objets d'art*. A table-cloth of plush with pompons as you know, is a thing that any young "culturine" might bear to his boudoir of black glass and patent leather, as a just too heavenly modern touch. The *fin-de-siecle* snigger is still going strong. Indeed, the comedy gallivanting of the Tivoli Orchestra can only have been meant to show that really arty people have not forgotten Ally Sloper, and, truly, the Film Society's Half Holiday must have seemed terribly chic to a number of people.

Perhaps it's peculiar, perhaps it's just English, that a society whose one reason for existence, presumably, was in protest against plagiarism and vulgarity, false representation and iconoclasm, should have been either consciously or unconsciously a champion for these forms of original tastelessness.

In the May 1929 *Close Up* appeared a fac-simile of a letter from the German censors, who had rejected *Uberfall*, stating their reasons. Here is what they said:—

The film . . . is a criminal film; its content and action move in the world of crime, and the representation of crime in this film is its own purpose. The events represent outrages, shown with impressive lucidity to the spectators, so that they might induce persons who incline to the commitment of crime to the execution thereof. The culmination of brutalities is reached in the scene where the hidden aggressor strikes the man already lying on the ground, on his head with a truncheon.

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The whole thing is apt to produce a lowering and dulling effect on the spectator's feelings through the accumulation of brutalities and raw-edged facts; for one cannot make out any ethical compensation (such as the criminal meeting, perhaps, some just punishment). The idea that consciously illegal spending of false money should lead to ill-luck is neither logically compelling, nor is it expressed in such a way that the spectator could take it as a practical moral application. Even, however, if this were so, one could not make out a case which would nullify the negative effect, if the final triumph of crime is considered. The film, which does not reveal an equal artistic equivalent, to induce a milder interpretation, could not be released because of its brutal and demoralising effect.

That is the German censor's letter. The French and English reasons were similar. When it was first banned we all complained. Metzner, himself, wrote an indignant reply. But none of us had thought of calling it burlesque. No, indeed. In the same *Close Up* Metzner replied to the censors as follows:—

Überfall is a short film corresponding to the short story form in literature. It represents a new method and must therefore be measured with new scales.

It seems incomprehensible that such a film could be interpreted by the censors as a criminal film.

It represents an event, without commentary, merely as a fact and dry as a report. The contents consist of the description of the hero's increasing state of fear, which must touch the spectators more than the "raw-edged facts" reproached to us, but which do not exist at all.

In the scene that is played in the room, the hero is neither strangled nor gagged, the towel serves merely to bind him; and the blow in the street is only hinted at. If one wishes to portray crimes, it would be easy to find matters more apt for this purpose, or even to heighten this one. It is impossible to understand the reproach of "accumulation of brutalities" if you think, for instance, of the American film *The Godless Girl*, the contents of

which deserve such a reproach in incomparably greater degree than *Uberfall*.

All the scenes of this film aim merely at inducing the feeling of fear, the consequence of which is the psychologically irreproachable dream of fear that has been thought out as the film's culmination.

It is the purpose of this letter to protest explicitly against the false interpretation that the aim of the film was the representation of brutality. One should examine how far the film's capacity of suggesting FEAR has induced the censors to a false interpretation of this effect, having attributed this impression to "brutality". Such a psychological turn of events is quite conceivable.

Metzner concludes his letter with these words:—

It should again be emphasised that the film has been totally mistaken, misunderstood and misinterpreted. It is an absolutely serious work that intends to create a new path for the German art of the film and that requires a measurement with a new set of scales.

Not a word about burlesque, as you see. Read Metzner's protest again, and for brutality substitute burlesque, and the protest holds good for the present occasion.

* * *

That is subversion reduced to its Euclidian absurdity, which was to be proved. All the newspapers said what a jolly little fragment. Only the *Cinema* politely complained. At least, I think I am right in saying so. It does not matter when people are foolish on a grand scale but the trite are always unforgiveable.

Which, we agree, is only one way of looking at things. There is the valid objection to that, that the grandly foolish are responsible for the trite. Perhaps they are. We all need to be defended against the understanding of others. Certainly the trite are responsible for the grandly foolish,

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certainly the commercial cinema is responsible for the avant garde. And somewhere in between comes something that is balance perhaps, if that is also not a myth.

What has been proved conclusively is that there is not and never has been and perhaps never will be, a good film. That is what makes the study of films so fascinating. To begin to understand them you have to understand so much besides—people, races, trends, the outgiven, quantitative statement of national character and characteristic all the world over, and the modification resultant from the absorption of external influence. An international chess game, in fact. The good, the *formidable*, the *fabelhaft* American film, as seen through French eyes, and again through German eyes, may in two different ways of mental approach lead to agreement. This very *formidable*, this *fabelhaft*, this gem of vigour, speed and wit, may in the land of its birth be the biggest egg that ever was a curate's! The *kitsch* film, stamped with Ufa's diamond square, may run for months in Iceland or Tierra del Fuego, figuratively speaking; knock all records for a triumph of artistic wonder. It may never even make a trade show for our British deadheads. It narrows down to fights between friends that in a past decade would soon have swelled the number of duels at dawn. People simply do not agree. And it makes a fascinating study, though a complicated one. Take Eisenstein. He told me (before I had seen *The General Line*, so all was well) that by the portions of this film which different people object to he can tell all about their sex life!

The reasons will be divulged in future pages, but it has something to do with physiological-psychological reflex

resultant from the overtone of individual strips of film, merged in their composite, psychic (montage) structure. Yes, take Eisenstein. We need many like him. And we certainly need understanding.

KENNETH MACPHERSON.

Next month begins a series of original, unpublished articles by S. M. EISENSTEIN, explaining his methods and conception for the future of sound-sight unity.

THE JAPANESE CINEMA

By N. KAUFMANN.

With an afterword by S. M. EISENSTEIN. Illustrated.

Published by *Teakinopechat*. Moscow, 1929.

This delightfully written and illustrated little book not only gives the reader a wealth of information on the subject of Japanese films but also a vivid and fascinating picture of the human scene and the material circumstances in which Japanese cinematographic art has developed; for instance, of the variegated crowds, clad in anything from a loin-cloth to plus-fours, who throng the streets of Tokyo and the alleys of the Akasus Park and drift through the curtained entrances

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of the cinema theatres, the men to one side and the women to the other—for in the Japanese cinema there is strict separation of the sexes, except for one central portion of the area where men may sit with their wives. As it is available only in Russian, we cull the following for the benefit of our readers.

At the time of the earthquake nearly all the Tokyo cinemas were destroyed, but, in response to the growing demand it was not long before 200 film-theatres had sprung up where 100 had been before—handsome concrete structures with high prices and American films for the rich, and wooden barracks with low prices and home-produced films for the poor. In addition to the floor-space there is a balcony, the front row of which is reserved for old women and mothers with children, and furnished with cushions upon which they may squat at their ease, Japanese fashion. The entertainment lasts from three to four hours, and has one unique feature, namely, the interpretation of the various rôles in the film drama by a so-called “story-teller”, who must be skilled in the art of mimicry and able to adapt his voice to the impersonation of the different characters, interspersing the narrative from time to time with improvised comments and witticisms. Some of these “story-tellers” attain a wide popularity, so that they constitute a draw in themselves, and there is even a demand for gramophone records of their portions of the entertainment. The use of a musical accompaniment is for the most part confined to nature-films, and scenes of war or other stirring mass scenes.

In his witty after-word to this book S. M. Eisenstein declares that in Japan, cinematographic technique is

exemplified in the alphabet, in drawing and painting and almost every department of life save only the cinema. The main reason for this has been the hopeless enslavement of the Japanese cinema to the influence and traditions of the Japanese theatre. Cinematography was, in fact, long regarded as an inferior branch of the theatrical art, suitable only for the delectation of the poor and uneducated masses; its actors were recruited from the ranks of the unsuccessful theatrical artistes, and any member of the regular acting profession who demeaned himself by acting for the films was at once ostracised by his brother actors. So, too, in the choice of its subjects, Japanese cinematography has looked to the theatre for inspiration, the result being a long succession of historical films, or "Jidai-Geki", adapted from dramas based on the history of feudal Japan and the legends of the Samurai, replete with magic, marvels, metamorphoses and much brilliant sword-play. Subject, psychology, settings and methods of the actors in these films are strictly—indeed exaggeratedly—formal and traditional, but they are redeemed by beauty, artistry and exquisitely rhythmic movement and they are valuable and interesting as reproductions of ancient Japanese life and art. A whole group of films, the "Chambari", centre round the sword, as the sanctified object of passionate longings, loves and hatreds, and the cause of endless conflicts and bloodshed. Yet even into this orthodox, traditional world a more modern, revolutionary spirit occasionally intrudes itself: in the last scene of one of the "Chambari" films, the hero, having finally secured the sword for whose sake innumerable lives have been sacrificed, stands on a bridge, and, after

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surveying the scene of bloodshed around him, hurls the sword into the water as a profitless and archaic object.

Other conventional subjects of Japanese film-dramas are love of parents for their children or of brother for brother, and fidelity of the wife to her husband or of the servant to his lord. The last is the subject of a famous Japanese film, *The Forty-Seven Faithful*, while another famous film, *Sen Khime*, is based on the theme of wifely fidelity. But Japanese audiences began to weary of this constant harping upon the same old themes and it became an urgent necessity for Japanese film-manufacturers to produce something that could compete with the increasingly popular American films. So far no Charlie Chaplin has been evolved in Japan, but a number of comic Japanese films have been produced, in which the peasantry and the lower middle classes—minor officials and clerks—furnish the stock targets for ridicule. And, in addition to a number of films based on Japanese contemporary life, several European films, including *La Dame aux Camélias* and Gorky's *In the Depths* have formed the basis for Japanese films, with Japanese heroes and heroines and Japanese settings.

The two outstanding Japanese film enterprises are the "Nikkatsu" and the "Soetsiku", the former of which has been in existence twenty years, but has been outstripped in importance by the latter, founded ten years later. "Nikkatsu" specialises in historical films, but it has also produced a number of films based on contemporary life, including the famous, *Himself and Five Women*, the conclusion of which was the subject of a dispute between the film-censor, who insisted that retribution must be meted

out to the sinner, however repentant, and the film-producer, intent on pandering to the public predilection for a happy ending. The fact that the censor won the day indicates another of the fetters upon the development of Japanese cinematographic art. The "Nikkatsu" has at its disposal the services not only of the best actors and film-directors, but also of the leading connoisseurs in Japanese antiquity, and the artistic merit of its productions is conspicuously high.

The Soetsiku organisation is more up-to-date and revolutionary in its methods and in its choice and treatment of its subjects. Whereas in the Nikkatsu films, contemporary life is idealised, romanticised, Americanised, the Soetsiku aims at a more realistic, naturalistic treatment of its material. In addition to a school of cinematography, it has founded three important film-factories, the chief of which, at Kamata, has become a sort of Japanese Hollywood. Some few years ago a stretch of rice fields with a few scattered houses, Kamata now has a population of 100,000, and the staff of its film-factory numbers some 1,000, including 50 directors, 80 technicians, 600 actors, as well as mounters, photographers, scenic artists, etc., while its well-equipped pavilions allow the completion of up to 12 films daily. At Kamata only films on contemporary subjects are produced. The other two Soetsiku factories are the "Simo-Kamo" and the "Bantsum"—the latter originally founded by the famous actor, Tsumasaburo Bando, whence its name—both of which specialise in films based on Japanese classical antiquity.

To most people the East stands for leisurely methods and America for hustle, but in cinematography American speed-records are far outdone by Japan. While the production of

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an American film occupies a period of several months, and Charlie Chaplin thinks nothing of devoting years to a single production, in Japan a full-length film is commonly completed in four weeks, and quite often in from seven to fifteen days. This feverish rate of production is necessitated by the economic difficulties under which the Japanese film industry is labouring, and by dint of it Japan produced in 1926 a total of 875 films, as compared with 755 produced by America in the same year. The life of the Japanese actor is correspondingly strenuous. Here is a day in the life of the famous Japanese film actor, Assari: from 7 a.m. to 12 p.m. he fills the rôle of a healthy young sportsman; from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. that of a worthless rake who seduces a young girl; from 7 p.m. until the early hours of the next morning he has to play the part of a love-sick peasant youth, and by noon of the same day he is at work on yet another film. All the Japanese film-actors come into one of two categories—those who specialise in historical rôles and those who specialise in contemporary rôles, the latter being further, though not so rigidly divided into sportsmen, comedians and lovers. This classification does not apply to the female members of the profession, who—in emulation of the American “star” system—are commonly selected more in virtue of their personal charms than of their suitability for the particular rôle; in *Himself and Five Women*, for instance, the female parts are played by a veritable constellation of Japanese film stars. The power of the Japanese film actors and the beauty of the Japanese film actresses are admirably exemplified in the illustration to N. Kaufmann’s delightful book, which, equally with the

text, and in spite of Eisenstein's witty strictures upon the shortcomings of Japanese films judged according to the canons of cinematographic art, makes the reader wish that some enterprising cinema proprietor in this country would treat us to a season of Japanese films.

W. M. RAY.

MOVIE : NEW YORK NOTES

I have just come from a trip to the Bronx whither I went to see and hear a Yiddish talkie called *Ad Musae* (The Eternal Prayer). It is about the worst film ever made, indicating absolutely no knowledge of the cinema, even the most elementary, on the part of the makers. It is a succession of "acts" with groups keening or singing Hebrew ritual songs, Kaddish and others. The "acts" are actually separated by blank intervals. Yet this film, bad as it is, is of singular importance to any genuinely perspicacious student of the cinema. It signifies the importance of the Jewish physiognomy, like the Negro, an unexploited cinema plastic material, the singularity of the intensive Jewish gestures, and most outstanding, the Yiddish and Hebrew utterances as the material of the sonal film. *Ad Musae* lures me into a survey of the Jew as Movie-Subject.

* * *

Very early in the history of the motion picture, Manager



A cynical study by Ralph Steiner, who made the film *H₂O*, from which *Close Up* readers may draw their own conclusions. Mr. Steiner suggests it is a fairly good comment on movies, talking and otherwise. The small bill on the extreme right states "She got what she wanted." Some, of course, are more fortunate than others.



A strip from H_2O . Reflection of two masts of a steamer disturbed by the passing of a ferry, taken with a 12" lens. The movement on the screen and change of pattern is very rapid—quite exciting but "hard on the eyes."



From *H₂O*, by Ralph Steiner. A reflection of the sun itself in water, taken also with a 12" lens, immediately after the water has been agitated by the dropping of a large stone.



Photo: Ufa

As contrast to the above, a dry scene from the Ufaton super of the Bloch-Rabinovitsch Production, *The White Devil*, a Caucasian film directed by A. Wolkoff.

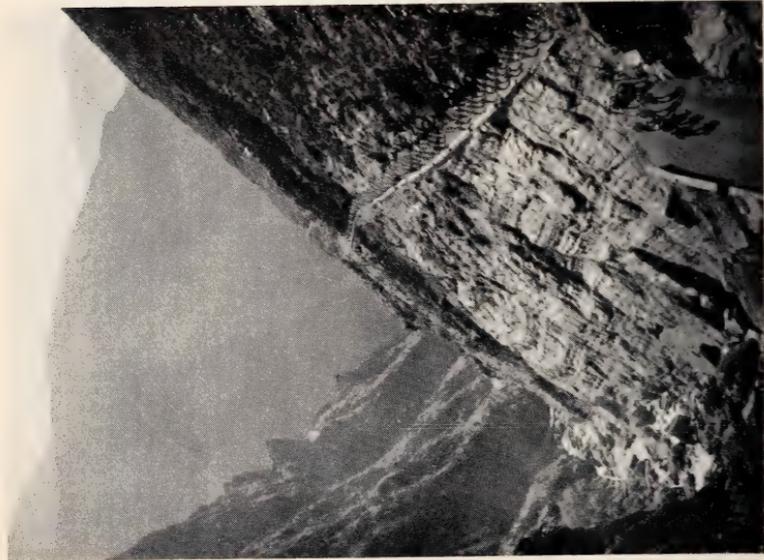


Photo: Ufa
Russian troops operating against the Caucasian tribes. A scene from the Ufaton Super of the Bloch-Rabinovitsch Production, *The White Devil*, directed by A. Wolkoff.



From *The Way to the Universe*, a Sovkino film directed by B. Shpits.



From *Shitkoz Giant*, a Sovkino film by L. Stepanova, photographed by Stepanoff.



Order and Chaos, a Sovkino educational film directed by Gavinsin.



"It's a Shame to Say," a Sovkino film directed by Armand and Oganessoff. Night watch on a ship.



"It's a Shame to Say," The hero of the film, Kosloff.



On board during a sportive festival. Red sailors at drill. From
"It's a Shame to Say."



Photo: Ufa

Joseph von Sternberg, the director of the first Emil Jannings Ufaton Super, *The Blue Angel* (Production Erich Pommer), talking matters over with Jannings at the Neubabelsberg Sound Studios.



Photo: Ufa

Father again succumbs ! Emil Jannings and Marlene Dietrich, the stars of the new Ufaton Super, *The Blue Angel*, directed for Erich Pommer Production by Joseph von Sternberg.

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Mark Dintenfass commissioned Irene Wallace, a Scotch-Irishwoman, to prepare for the Universal Company a scenario relating the grant of freedom to the Jews of Poland by the good King Kasimir. This might have indicated to alert entrepreneurs a rich field of subject-matter of historic and folk content. At that time occurred the infamous Mendel Beiliss case, with its cruelly absurd blood-accusation against the Jews. Films issued upon this theme and upon the general theme of persecutions in Russia: *Nihilist Vengeance*, *The Heart of a Jewess*, *The Terrors of Russia*, *The Black Hundred*, etc.

In 1912 the American Solax Company, in advertising their film, *A Man's Man*, said, "Up to very recently the stage Jew was the only type which furnished universal amusement. Long whiskers, derby hat down to the ears and hands moving like the fins of a fish. His manhood, his sentiments and his convictions are not burlesqued (that is, not in this film, *A Man's Man*) but are idealized. The Reliance Company produced *Solomon's Son*, so their notice read, "with dignity, minus the burlesque atmosphere usually attending the Gentile's version of a Jewish story." The burlesque-Jew enters the films very early from vaudeville and the burlesque theatre. It is this Jew, John Howard Lawson, the American playwright, put into *Processional* as the American acceptance of the Jew, a caricature of the immigrant's appearance and gestures. If the movie or theatre wanted a valid comic or gesturing Jew there was a stage-Jew at hand who was valid, the stereotype Jew of the Yiddish theatre, a vivid character amid the shoddiness of

that outlandish theatre, a character with his own striking idiom waiting for a Gogol to exploit it. Alexis Granowsky drew from this inartistic theatre the stylizations for his marvellous dynamic, ballet-principled productions. The method of the Granowsky theatre is highly suited to the film of folk fantasy.

The comic Jew of the films has been a grotesque hybrid caricature of Polish immigrant Jew and German, the German comic typified by the Ford Sterling of pre-Chaplin days. There was such a comedian in Max Asher, who has been continued, a little more semitized, in Max Davidson. Chaplin himself, of whom more brilliant wit might be expected, has used the burlesque hand-rubbing Jew as pawnbroker. A hand-rub may be insolent or it may, if derived from the hand-rub of the ecstatic Chassid or Jew lamenting, be a movement of great beauty; of joy or despair. Very closely related to these early comic Jews is the Jew who has been urged upon the films by the success of *Abie's Irish Rose*. This play, and its ensuing movies, has two antecedents: the Irish-Yiddish joke, now a further "incongruous juxtaposition" with sentimental optimism, and a film like *Humoresque*. Despite its pretence to sobriety, this film was the forerunner to the grimly funny lot born of *Abie's Irish Rose*, those fearful narrations of Irish-Jewish amities and enmities. *Humoresque* was an impertinent fable written by a sentimental woman, Fannie Hurst, further sentimentalized by the director, Frank Borzage, and almost obscenely sentimentalized in the performance of Vera Gordon, a product of the super-sentimental American

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Yiddish theatre. There was no critical appreciation of the Jewish content, ceremony, domesticity and ambition. It was a highly extravagant and incorrect study of Jewish society. Yet its tear-provocations won it the medal for the best film of the year. Other films which belong to this fictitious group are *His People*, where so fine a player as Rudolph Schildkraut was used so ignobly. *The Jazz Singer* is another "cheap" and spurious Jewish film.

More diligent attempts to do a substantial Jewish film in the American cinema were the ventures with Zangwill's Ghetto tales and an early Vitagraph picture, *The Golden Land*. The latter was a chronicle of an immigrant's progress in America and his desertion of his family in Russia. The sentiment was free of mockery and insolence, and patronage, an attitude which obscures the profound experience of the folk, but the film did not possess a thorough intimate understanding of the people portrayed.

Attempts have been made (to satisfy the Yiddish spectators) to employ traditional Jewish plays, like those of Jacob Gordin, with famous Jewish actors, Jacob and Sarah Adler, Bertha Kalich, Malvina Lobel. Films of complete Jewish casts with Yiddish captions, directed by Jews, usually untrained in the cinema, have been produced. These are about as bad as the Negro films made by Negro companies, because there is not sufficient training or cinematic insight for them. Having Jewish actors is not the sole answer to the problem of the Jewish films. Nor are Jewish directors needed for the Jewish film. The Hebrew Habima was directed by a non-Jew Vakhtangov. It is even possible a

non-Jew may have sufficient aesthetic detachment to use the genuine material most cinematically for full plastic virtue and intensity of the relevant movement. What I have so far summarized may seem to the pseudo-purist literary, but it is actually a statement of the working material. A study of this material implies a study of its cinematic conversion, beginning and end, experience into experience.

The American film being, as I have often said, literal, has never thought of the Jewish material of folk roots and philosophic reference: An-ski's *The Dybbuk*, Sackler's *The Tsaddik's Journey*. Did it want realistic material? There was Levick's *Rags*, far from a great play, but certainly profounder and even more effective than the material of *His People*. Germany with its intuition lusting for fantasy produced *The Golem*, and for dramatic material did not disdain to offer the *spielfilm* *Nathan the Wise* or *Tolerance*.

A film nearer to the American movie selectivity is Dupont's first picture, *Baruch*, called in London and New York *The Ancient Law*. This is not tremendous stuff, but it is far above the *Jazz Singer*, of which it is the continental counterpart. There is more scrutiny of the data of folk and the intensity of the village Jews, passionate of temperament, is rendered. Its reference is not extended beyond its tale and performance, and one can ask here for an expressionism of setting (though it was acceptable being modest) that found its basis rather in Chagall than some German studio-artist. Miss Iris Barry in *Let's go to the Movies* has justly praised the poignant sensitivity of the performance of Ernst Deutsch,

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but the most important characterization was that of the rabbi, his father, by Abraham Morewich of the Vilna Players. This was not slobbering, though it conveyed the emotionalism in the rigid orthodoxy, the rigid impassioned orthodoxy, of the parent. *Baruch* is not beyond the American interest. If the American director will look into it, he will find a commentary upon his crude use, whether in comedy or "serious" film, of the Jew. I have said its reference is not extended beyond its tale and performance. It is true that the film unfolds the metamorphosis of the young talmudic Jew into a man-of-the-world, who has cut his sidelocks and the tie that binds him to his home. It tells of the "blood being stronger than water." It tells of the battle between two worlds: the testament and the drama. But while it tells of these major knowledges of man born of race and parent, the tale does not remain as inference. It remains, however, as a lyric, and that can never be said of the American film treating of the Jew. Sincerity of attitude, directness of presentation—the intrusion of no extraneous sentiment—observation of type, care for revealing details . . . these created *Baruch*, and they are all within the ken of literalness, if it be faithful.

The talkie lends the Jew an added glamour as film-subject. I have referred to Granowsky's use of typical Yiddish sounds in the vocal rhythm, co-ordinated with bodily motion. *Ad Musae* indicates the opportunity for rhythm, stylized utterance, tragic utterance in the Jewish chant upon one sound Oi—thought of usually as comic. The shrill voice—North African in its source—the reiterated motif at one pitch

—inextricably joined with concentrated angular movements of finger, hand, body—or with the meaningful rock of the Jew—these wait for the thorough student and artist to re-animate in the new medium.

* * *

The new medium will serve and be served by philology. Undoubtedly someone will use its opportunity to record dialects comparatively. In the comparisons lies a vital clue to standardized speech sounds and rhythmic variations. Take the dialect of the American negro for an instance. The Heywards shied away from it when they made *Porgy*, but it is luscious with grand verbal play, which will be comprehensible by suggestion—intonation and reference. Verbal meanings are conveyed by non-verbal sounds. The garrulous saxophone is a handy example. “ Babe ” Cox in the current negro revue, *Hot Chocolates*, suggests all sorts of love-nuances, frustrations and hopes and poutings, by sounds sung to a vocal mood. Do you recall the two clowns, The Love-Birds, who carried on an amorous converse by whistles only? These are very, very elementary hints toward my far-reaching “ philologic ” film. I append two Gullah variations: “ W'en oona duh de-day, de-dee' duh no de-day; w'en oona yent dey, de dee' duh de-day.” (When one is there, the deer is not there; when one is not there, the deer is there).

“ Me yerre um; no shum; too long buffo' me shum, me yerre um.” (I heard him; I didn't see him; too long before I saw him, I heard him).

This so-called “ phonetic decay ” is a direct suggestion of

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reduced speech, which with monotone, non-inflection, sustained pitch, reduced or modified inflection, metronomic variations, etc., will lay the basis for the conventionalization of speech in the talkie. (And what of the lessons of Esperanto?) Does this sound too effete for the new medium? There is no reason why that medium must blunder in the erroneous path of duplication. Aesthetic organization is the very secret of health for any expression of man-called entertainment or art. It is not nearly so arbitrary a method as unexamined dialogue. The talkie is neither all-talkie nor part-talkie, it is a singular compound. . . *

* A very interesting suggestion toward this conventionalized speech can be found in *The Mask*, January, 1924. It is made by 'The Author of *Films*.' He calls his suggestion, which he offers as an "experiment for a new kind of speech" for the stage, "Acca," the Italian equivalent for H. H is excluded from his speech "because it has got itself entangled with the T's and the W's and other letters, and too many windy words are the result." There is practically no H in Italian. "This absence of the H," says the Editor of *The Mask*, "is one of the best reasons for Opera being sung to Italian words." Upon the basis of the elimination of H the author of "Acca" has, he says, been able to compile a vocabulary sufficient for the improvisation of a small comedy. He is after an actor's language, with speech as sound working with gesture. That is for the stage. The article is followed by three editorial reflections from Landor, Goethe and *The Mask* itself, all praising mime-ized loquacity and silence: says Goethe, "I for my part should be glad to . . . speak like creative nature only in pictures." Here's cannon-fodder for the silentists. Said *The Mask* in 1908, ". . . in silence we will reveal the Movement of Things . . . this is the nature of our Art." But not of *our* Art. An extract from a letter of London may be offered to both sides, silentists and sonorists: "England discovering Stanislavsky promises to be a joke. Are they not funny when these foreigners show them . . . words don't matter, the gestures are so eloquent!" Which argues against realistic or duplicate speech in favour of sonal speech, which is the argument in "Acca."

Applause for Mr. Mamoulian, though the Paramount ads. attribute that film to the actress and the author of the story. Gilbert Seldes finds in *Applause* a gratifying moment to digress upon the mobile camera. Says he in *The New Republic*, October 30th, 1929:—

“The essential problem of the talkie is to find the proper relation between the camera and the microphone . . . a satisfactory relationship can be maintained and that will be found when the nature of the mechanics of each has been understood. . . The camera is a recording instrument, but the record it makes is an illusion; the microphone is a recording instrument and the record it makes is a duplication (within quite narrow limits) of the actual. . . Thus, at the beginning we have the juxtaposition of two instruments with different and frequently incompatible capacities. The next point about the two is that the camera is, in practice, mobile almost without limitation . . . whereas the microphone is practically stationary. . . The problem of reconciling these two instruments is complicated by a non-technical and non-esthetic fact: the moving picture has accustomed us to quick movement and the microphone, attached to the movie, is an interesting novelty; so that either habit or curiosity must be given first gratification until a compromise is effected.”

Let us consider Mr. Seldes' observations up to this point. He is still a fundamentalist, or so he thinks, when he separates the sight from the speech in the film, one as an illusion the other as a fact. An illusory basis does not alone determine an illusion. As I have said previously, the illusion is in the organization of the “facts”—images or sounds—as much as in the mechanism. Moreover, is Mr. Seldes unaware of the *fact* that many of the sounds we hear in the sound film are not the actual sounds recorded? It is all in the conveyance, the instrument converts the sound by its very limitations—from this will standardized sound ensue. When Mr. Seldes thinks he hears a dry paper being crushed—

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so the visual image or his "illusion" informs him—in reality a wet paper is being crushed, lest the dry paper record like the collapse of a ton of coal. When he thinks he hears thunder, he is really hearing the noise made by rolling small sized rocks down a slight incline of less than four feet. If he believes he hears the noise of riveting, it is because a low-powered bell-buzzer taps on steel. Rain on the roof is shelled corn running through sieves. And the wild screeching of night-birds is a razor blade scratching on glass. Back-stage is back-screen.

As to the mobile camera and the immobile microphone, we might comment antithetically so: the camera need not be mobile (that is only a *kind* of camera-use) and the microphone can be mobilized. As we learn more and more about the nature of speech in the talkie, we will find the microphone can be freed. And also the invention which permits sound-recording apart from sight-recording (Mr. Seldes will not like this latter term) will permit mobility *or its results*. To get synchronization it is not necessary to record both sound and image simultaneously. This physical freedom will do much toward helping the formalizing of speech, such as my suggestions above work toward.

The non-technical and non-esthetic fact to which Mr. Seldes refers may have something to do with the compromise to satisfy Mr. Seldes' penchant for speed. But that penchant is a habit and an ailment, and if it is, as Mr. Seldes agrees it is, a non-esthetic fact, not demanded by the public (the usually accredited criterion) looking at and hearing sound films, then Mr. Seldes ought to have accepted this slowing-

up as a release from the tyranny of speed. So long as speed is accepted as a universal quality of the film, we will not attain to that ultimate film of "reflective processes." Neither habit nor curiosity need to be gratified by the true artist of the film. He must work toward the fulfilment of the intrinsic, and he will have his audiences for that. There is a difference between fluidity and mobility. Fluidity may be achieved with the stationary camera—in the montage.

* * *

Mr. Seldes continues by commenting on the films of Vidor (*Hallelujah!*) and Mamoulian: "Both of these directors have been happy when they used music and both seem to have struggled vainly when dialogue was imposed upon them." The secret is in the word *imposed*. ". . . good directors are avoiding speech and using sound as much as possible." They aren't so good and they aren't so free. "The solution is in the creation of artificial form. . ." I refer Mr. Seldes and the directors to the pages of *Close Up* and these notes. Mr. Seldes is "intrigued" by Mr. Watts of the New York Herald Tribune who has "caught a hint of such speech in (of all things) a British picture, *Blackmail* (which Mr. Seldes has not yet seen) which brings the speed of the talkie to the pace of the movie." Is this a test of the talkie's success? Mr. Seldes finds the Vidor film "a good movie in which the camera has held the first place." Yes, but it should not hold last place, nor *first* place in the conception. I can assure Mr. Seldes that it would not have been good silent or talking. The singing sequences gave a halo to the entire film, a false halo. The "most effective portion"—

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which Mr. Seldes finds the pursuit in the swamp—"is virtually a silent picture'," but were the little sound of breathing removed then, perhaps, Mr. Seldes could see the clap-trap triteness of it as drama or cinema. Yes, *Hallelujah!* is a silent film that betrays the audience into approval by the *imposition*—intended as betrayal—of sound. And that is exactly what the talkie must watch against, this use of the audible as a "trick" to hide a bad silent film. The movie was frequently made appealing by the insinuations of music. Mr. Seldes himself has been unable to penetrate the non-integral sonority of the Vidor film to see the actual spuriousness of the visual structure and the thematic false-rendering in the narration. What is this uncritical approval of a director who continues the worst in the Griffith tradition, the pettiness, the sentimentalism . . . ?

* * *

Now at last to *Applause*. First, since I have gone this far in my reading of the observations of Mr. Seldes, let me summarize his criticism of the film. The actress and tale are of little or no concern; it is the direction that counts. The faults are: the director's inability to render duration (why does Seldes want duration, doesn't he ask for speed?) the use of Russo-German camera angles to break up monotony—"but there is no excuse for monotony, in the first place" (that's why Mamoulian wanted to break it up) the overdoing of the mobile camera, "just as the Russians have overdone their trick (sic!) of cutting into brief flashes." "But the principle (of the mobile camera) is sound." And "Mr. Mamoulian has made all his comments cinematically."

Now I can compare my scrutinies with those of Mr. Seldes. In this way the readers of *Close Up* may get a more or less full sense of the film. . .

* * *

The two major faults of Mamoulian's film are: there is no sustained rhythmic structure, and there is no sense of speech as abstracted sound. The relation of camera to microphone is not the initial, inclusive and ultimate law Seldes would make it, simply because neither camera nor microphone is the sole instrument of visual film or sonal film. The one positive significance of *Applause* is a vindication of my declaration that an outre-Hollywood mind will extend the American film. Mamoulian excels Hollywood in its own virtue of competence and even elevates the competence at times by his caress of the angles and movements of figures—as when the chorus-women move about the newborn and her mother. It is evident that Mamoulian is more than a job-man, but no matter what sympathetic use of instruments he might evince, the fact that he has not thought of or realized the film in a sustained structure of visual and oral image would have destroyed whatever validity there was in his craftsmanship.

Whether it is the director's fault or not, the voice of the heroine is abominably maudlin. Speech is still realistic. Reality is achieved solely by analysis. And speech demands analysis (conventionalization) as much as non-verbal sound.

The story is no more trash than others. It is another version of *Stella Dallas* and as human revelation it is on no lower level than *Hallelujah!* or, when it is finally analyzed

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and estimated as to how much of the theme it finally conveys, even *The Crowd*. These are all fabrications rather than conclusive experiences.

Seldes unwittingly exposes the real fault of the Mamoulian treatment, which just about steps over the boundary out of virtuosity: "Mr. Mamoulian has made all his comments cinematically." The key is in the word *comments*. There are *comments* here with no major structure to be commented upon.

The most important film I have seen since my return—the most important American film that is—has been laughed at, sneered at, reviled by spectators, either ignored or utterly condemned by critics (critics, indeed!). It is a "filler" on the programme with *The Last Performance*, Universal hokum by Fejos, with Veidt modifying his usual facial rant. The film is by two amateurs, Jo Gerçon and Louis Hirshman, and is called *The Story of a Nobody*. It tells a story by means of objects only, a story of two human beings, a boy and girl, and is the first American attempt at a completely objectivized film. It is amateurish, perhaps naive, and too frequently there is a change in the distance between the seen objects and the unseen people, so that at one time the objectivity is about to collapse from proximity to the human personalities. But I do not want to consider details here: I wish to emphasize the principle of objectivity and a realization of it which is entirely in keeping with the American literal-mind: there is nothing nebulous here as in the Watson-Webber *Usher* film. I wish also to indicate the first American film (if we except Bruguiere's unfinished

fragment) to attempt intensiveness as against progression. There is a very good use of intensiveness through multiple exposure. A telephone is stationary centre, on either side counter images alternate. This is motion *within* the screen, as differing from motion across the screen, between the frames of the screen. The film is called a symphony and is divided into three movements captioned in analogy to music. I do not favour this method as more than tentative to call to the spectator's attention mutations of tempo in the rhythmic movement, which is also borne by repetitions of images, single or grouped variously. I compliment Mr. Alfred B. Kuttner for accepting and exhibiting this film against the counsels of commercial expedience and uncritical disparagement by the layman and those who call themselves critics. His programme-note is good if a bit grandiloquent (but then, do I not sound so here too?) by such means the little cinema serves its original educational purpose.

A Hearst Metrotone and Fox Movietone Newsreel Theatre now occupies the Embassy where *Hallelujah!* was last shown. An hour's programme of sound-newsreels for 25 cents (a shilling) and the house is always full. Theatres will be opened in other cities. In 1908 Pathé opened a newsreel theatre on the grand boulevard in Paris, and it is still going. When I went to the Broadway Newsreel Theatre I was annoyed by the hypocrisy of the re-elected mayor, of the industrial-captain Schwab, of the Martin Johnsons who made that spurious film, *Simba*. The interesting portions were those that were not ephemeral, such as wine-making in France, etc., and a murderer confessing. This latter was poignant

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and condemned the purposeful gentleness of the interrogator, the ghoulishness of producer and audience exploiting the poor frightened man, the "science" of criminology enjoying its new toy, the circumstances that made a harmless individual a murderer, the tabloid scandal tone of the theatre's announcement of the film—and created a pity, where pity could be created, for the man who said "youse" and could not remember what led to the firing. It was an exposé of humanity that was more concerned with the capture of the "criminal" who did not want to escape save by suicide, than with saving the wounded girl. A very dramatic film that should free the actor, but a film which should not be repeated or broadcast.

HARRY A. POTAMKIN.

TWENTY-THREE TALKIES

From Al Jolson to *Atlantic*. And even beginning before, with the De Forrest shorts at the Capitol, and the first Movietones at the New Gallery. I went to *The Singing Fool* twice because I wanted to see the end of it; but I never did. Otherwise I saw every talkie that came over, up to *The Canary Murder Case*. Then I got ill for a few months, but that didn't hurt any. Talkies and I just went

on in our own way. I lay in bed, thinking, and talkies, as for as I could see, went on, not thinking, but being made. I saw *Broadway Melody*, which was a great shock, and I went away for a month. *Blackmail*, when I came back was a surprise. Now I have seen most of them again, and want to explain why.

Sure you get out of here before I cop you on the jaw . . . Oh, yeah? You've said it you're yellow . . . sure . . . come on out of this, sweetie you leave this to me . . . sure and if that pink-eyed bum comes near me again . . . Oh, yeah? Mr. Callaghan, you wouldn't do that to a porr goil . . . what wants her name in lights . . . bo, you're a pal . . . that's all right, bo . . . regular guy. . . . wouldn't let my mother know sure, she's white she's yaller . . . I'm feeling blue . . . sure, sure, sure, I couldn't git sore with you is that so? . . . sez you. Well, all that does need explaining. Especially when none of the esses come out. But out of all that, rising out of that perpetual chatter, there have been one or two little whispers, twenty-three, in all, hints of spring if the rash winds of production don't blow them down before they have had time to show what they were like.

The first was *Melody of Love*, where one or two things happened for the first time, including an attempt to use sound expressionistically. There was a string of play-films, *Hometowners*, *Interference*, *The Doctor's Secret*, which quite successfully put the movies inside a proscenium, in the usual attempt of the magnates to show how much more than mere cinema the movies really were. As good as a play. Then it occurred to someone that they were as good as life, and we

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had the Movietone short of King Alfonso, which was easy and bright and natural, and we had *White Shadows*, which did a lot to me then, but won't do so much to people who have seen a lot of the later ones before it is generally released in February. But there we got away a bit from dialogue, and had sound going on, not representing the images, but going along complementary to them; we had the mike outdoors, too. I know we also had a close-up of Monte Blue, and the sound that came from his laughing was very small and distant, but that is so obvious a flaw it is hardly worth discovering. The mike went further outdoors with *In Old Arizona*, the first talkie "Western". Here there were noises, life-noises, hooves and clatter and dishes . . . you remember, one of the high-lights of the picture was that you saw AND heard a bacon being boiled with its egg. I know this was absurd, I know we all screamed that we didn't want to hear what we saw, but something else, and that *Interference* marked something or other because we watched a person phoning, and heard the other person at the other end. But it is true that the people had to show us this was possible for us, the wise ones, to be good enough to point out just when it was good to hear the frying bacon (I am sorry, I said boiled just now). There are obviously moments when it might be. When food is being cooked, something boils over . . . it is then the sound that attracts the attention of people who may be engaged in drama in another room. The sound is all that is needed, a little picture of an over-boiling saucepan is not really needed, and isn't specially cinematic. A film is much smoother if sound lets you keep on with the visually main theme, instead of swooping about. We have

got used to swooping about, until we think that is cinema, but it was really a pis aller. Refer to the Russians' statement, which no one has read enough.

But in *In Old Arizona* there was more. The hero was a 'Cisco Kid who was "wanted" in the town. A gay, swaggering, clinking fellow. It amused him to visit the sheriff, who was the barber, and have a bath. He had it, while the sheriff outside talked of his plans for capturing the 'Cisco Kid. We saw the Kid feeling the water, and pouring oils in, cutting to the sheriff in the old-cinema way. But while the sheriff talked, we didn't cut back. We should have, in silent days, it was the only way to get the suspense, the parallel action. Here is a man who is wanted, and here, in the next room, is the man who wants him. But with sound, we could hear the bath water pouring in, while we saw the man, the sheriff, talking. This was much better. It gave us one visual thing, and added to it by sound. The main thing was the sheriff talking, and it was built up and added to by hearing the water running in. There in the next room was the 'Cisco Kid himself, and we knew it. We could hear him. We could hear him because the walls were thin. That added to the suspense. Not only were we in possession of the fact that hunter and hunted were in adjoining rooms, and that we could hear the hunted through the walls, but we knew, by this, that the walls were thin, that there was almost nothing between the two, that the 'Cisco Kid was very daring to be there.

I think I may record that this was one of the first films in which there were several languages, Spanish and Chinese, and they got their effect as dramatic noise, not as dialogue,

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which is a point. Although, also, we heard a cart rumbling into the distance, and heard horses galloping round a bend, we had to cut pretty quickly; the mike in those days didn't move I think I am right in saying.

These two outdoor films came pretty soon after each other. Then there were crook films, William Powell films, play films, and then the first musical, *Broadway Melody*. Shall I ever forget it? Ever forget Anita Page, and Bessie Love's sob out of a blank screen? Let's try, and hurry on to *Movietone Follies*, which I dealt with all by itself some months back, and need not do again, save point out that sound and visual imagery were blended for the first time and that the camera was allowed to move around and make its own patterns while the sound, in this case of a song being sung, was quite straight. This came first, you see; it did not occur to people to do anything with sound but use it straight. Until *Blackmail*. I do hope I am right in these suppositions. But *Blackmail* used sound with bits of imagination. The famous instances are now famous enough, but let me record how well the sound began, after a man had been caught by the Flying Squad, the detectives breaking into speech for the first time as they left the job. They didn't talk about that, they didn't at once proceed to unfold the drama as dictated by a script. They talked about their tailors as they washed their hands. And how well silence was used, too, that was an advance. It also got us a little away from the dreariness of everything having to be realistic. Smaller directors would not have risked silence in parts of a talkie, because they would have worried about the fact that traffic noises don't suddenly stop, that people don't

suddenly cease making a noise. This would have pre-occupied them at the expense of what the mind felt. And, a last instance, what an excellent laugh the girl had in the beginning, as she was leaving with her detective-sweetheart. Such a stupid, spoilt laugh. We are prepared at once for her type. Mr. Hitchcock risked making his heroine unsympathetic by that laugh . . . or maybe he didn't, maybe he was just giving us an ordinary London girl. Well, that was quite an innovation. He let us think what we liked of that laugh and most directors in talkies don't let us think. They present us with the point of view of someone manifestly unable to think, themselves. People always hold up against talkies that they prevent you thinking, that they "leave nothing to the imagination". That is, save in the terms, true, as at present used. But what should be seen is that if this is true it means that the talkies are impossible to get away from. As an instrument of expression, they are strong, powerful; there is no getting away from them. If a good talkie was made by a good man, therefore, there *would* be no getting away from it. So that talkie must be made. Late in the summer came *The Idle Rich*. If you didn't think talkies had done anything but say Oh, yeah, here you were. This answered the criticism that the microphone took the movie indoors by keeping it there, in one room, the whole time. Did it deliberately, on purpose. Maybe couldn't see the new kind of talkie that had to be evolved, but did see at least that if you were play-filming, don't try and make it a film by insert action and scenes, as in *Madame X*. There was no action in *The Idle Rich*. It was just talk. The talk woke up the class-consciousness of the middle-classes

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when one of them married a millionaire. They were as good as he was, they had their pride, they were, O, indeed they were and how, the middle-classes. And it was all talk. Talk in a little cramped room, washing the dishes, avoiding the furniture, trying to get a few minutes alone with a member of the family and being interrupted because the table had to be laid, or the door answered. This was something different from the plain canned-play of *The Hometowners*, where they just grouped in front of the microphone and wished they were on the stage and what was the camera for, anyhow? *The Idle Rich* as it was given us, couldn't have been given by the stage or by the old film. It said, the microphone gives us talk, and it rules out action and much change of scene, so it talked and talked in one room, and built up plausible characters by talk, by talkie. This wasn't a good film, isn't new film, but it was a kind of progress because it was a logical carrying to a conclusion.

But talkies could be fluid, could get movement into them. There were good sequences in *The Perfect Alibi*. There was a lot of bunk, which would have been there anyway, but there were good sequences. And if you writhe at the inanity of dialogue, remember that that is only another way of acknowledging the expressiveness of talkies. That inanity in the dialogue would have been implied in the silent film; if you didn't notice it then, the silent film was not so sharp. Dialogue has simply got to be better, it isn't wrong in itself, except that hundred per cent. literal dialogue isn't wanted, has nix to do with cinema. *Fashions in Love* did things, very useful things with sound. An amusing drawing-room comedy, with an interesting pattern of sound, ruined only by

the playing of a badly-recorded piano. Drawing-room comedies are not what we want on the screen, but we had them before, so don't complain when they are better done. The main fear is that they will be so well-done that people will like them too much. The answer to that is that if they can be done as well as that, the right kind of film can be done better. The answer is, as to most things, keep your head.

Musical films. How we have suffered. How jazz has suffered, too. What rotten tunes in, *The Hollywood Revue*, *Sunnyside Up*, *Gold Diggers*, for instance. And the terrible plots used to introduce the singers that have been roped in. But the talkies had to do this, they did after all have to show that the camera gave dancing and the mike gave singing, and they did have to mix them as quickly as possible. Now they have proved this, and fed up the public with it, let them stop. *Big Time* was worth making, because, as in *The Idle Rich*, real people emerged. And the fact that on the screen you can see the faces (which you never can on the stage) was used. Screen and mike treatment were blended, if you looked, so that the characters grew up out of more than the dialogue. It wasn't what was said, nor the tones, but what was done or just not done before and after the lines, the thinking going on behind the talking. It was acted by Lee Tracy, Mae Clark, and Stepin Fetchit.

Signalons aussi, as the French papers say, *The Trespasser*, *Madame X*, *To What Red Hell*, *The Sacred Flame*, *Great Gabbo*, and others. Mention them, because they are one and all incroyable! *Trespasser* and *To What Red Hell* especially, though why pick names. But they all illustrate the most dangerous flaw, the most disturbing thing about

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talkies, the thing that makes Eisenstein say that colour is far less upsetting . . . the continuity. It is AWFUL to switch from one bit of dialogue to another bit, only related dramatically. It happens all the time. We have one bit, then different voices, different theme, flung at us sharply, shatteringly. This can't go on. In cinema, scene after scene is linked which has no literal connection. The principle is montage. You know what I mean. But no one attempts to mount dialogue. It begins and leaves off. We are used in cinema to quite different scenes which fit rightly because of their weight, of their rhythm, of the light vibration on black and white. We cut from a person waving a hand to a signal going down and steam from the engine being blown, and all that is design, montage and composition. But a person saying " Good-bye, give my love to Ethel ", a whistle blowing and someone in the train saying " Excuse me, my seat I think " have little in common, and that is a mild instance. We usually cut from Ethel being given love to two men in the train saying " When they arrive, sock 'em on the boko, I'll see to this, we'll meet at Redmane Guy's ", and then Redmane Guy's is shown with raucous laughter that only begins the minute the picture comes on the screen though the movement in the picture has clearly been continuous. Notice this in *The Virginian*, and *Condemned*. The sound must be all patterned itself; just dramatic fitness won't do. And the patterning takes three things into account, besides subject. There is the actual noise, the change in the voices, which change in timbre far more sharply than the images do in weight and light; this must be recognised, it can then be an advantage as well as an obstacle to surmount. There is the

changing from one voice to many, although people present in picture may roughly be the same, and there is this last fact that speech always begins and ends so neatly, in other words says what it has to say, comes on when the picture does and ends when the picture cuts, whilst the movement in each piece of film is continuous: goes on after it is off the screen, and has been going on before. Whoever sees a scene in which the characters just begin to move, a scene which opens on a gesture which has not been led up to, if not positively interrupted? Sound and dialogue must have that done to them, and they can't if they continue to be used literally. Dialogue, no less than sound, must be split up into images, and sound need not be lifelike, if that is going to make it impossible to mount a door banging, a car starting and a woman crying. Sound **MUST** be mounted. Sidney Howard tried a little in *Condemned*; that is to say that his scenes were written for the screen, were short; but they had this flaw of giving the impression that now the characters are ready to speak, and that they stop the minute you don't see them. Hitchcock was far better in *Juno and the Paycock*, with people moving away while they were still talking, and sounds coming up before you saw their causes. Hitchcock didn't digest the play into a real talkie, but in playing round with certain aspects of sound, he got to several minor off-roots of the problem. It was interesting to see in one scene in *Condemned* how the director tried to be daring. The convicts were just landed, they were talking. Talking of home. He wanted to get over the longing for home. The word "Paris" kept on emerging. That was what you heard most. Rumble, rumble, PARIS, blurrh, blurrh,

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blurrh, PARIS PARIS. It didn't work, because you began to look out for the word, and in a literal talkie you soon found that the rest of what they were saying didn't count.

I thought the life-noises in *Condemned* were going to be fun, but they brought about a disaster. They showed up the studioness of the sets. This is going to be fatal. The real noises among cardboard walls and canvas deserts won't do. The better the sounds, the more false are the sets going to be shown up as, and then you start seeing which of them the characters in the film match, the comparatively real or the patently false. Whoever saw a Russia like that of *The Cock-eyed World*? The bright ray to be found here is that studio sets will be abandoned.

In *The Trespasser*, Gloria was sent for by a dying man. She caught up a wrap, you know, and flung out. There followed a quite unnecessary sequence showing a car bonnet going along a street full of obliging noises. Then we saw the marquise arrived at the house of the dying man and rushing upstairs. The car bonnet had effectively prevented there being any connection between these three bits. If the film had been silent, we'd have seen Gloria flying down her own stairs and cut to her rushing up the other ones, there would have been sight-continuity at least. Here there was neither sight nor sound continuity. It was just what happened. It was LITERAL.

In *Juno and the Paycock*, there are several moments when it is important to some character that there is a noise in the street or on the stairs. The men in trench coats come to take away the informer, or Juno is heard returning by her

husband. Hitchcock gives the noises, of course, but he guides the eye at the same time. And not always to match the character's reaction. As far as I remember, the son hears a ring at the door. We are shot to the window, getting the street idea. But the son looks at the door, where the men will enter from the street. The noise of the funeral rising out of the gramophone was well-done in this film, too, but it was a queer film with little bits well done, and no one able to disguise the fact that it was stage players we were watching, in a play that had been filmed as a play, and not re-visualised into a talkie; and above all nothing could disguise the oddity of filming at this date a young girl who advances into the middle of the room when she is going to have a baby, and declaims that there cannot be a God, he wouldn't let this happen. Nor did I find it easy to sympathise with a father who was so horrified at this thing which was described as "worse than consumption", a father who turned the girl out, and a mother who said, clasping the errant daughter to her chest, "never mind, your baby may have no father but it will have what is much better two mothers". Question mark, and echoes of "IS that so?" I mean really, does this sort of thing go on among tenement dwellers, or is it just a dramatist's fancy? It may be remarked that for sheer courage this talkie has not been beaten. For consider, the crying need of British films is a world market, and so they make a long film completely in the Irish brogue, which is not only very tiring but difficult even for Englishmen to understand completely, so different are the inflections and many of the words. It is not I that would decry experiment, but I do think that for wild

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courage, Elstree must be given the palm of a really big hand.

So here we are at the next and latest Elstree production, *Atlantic*, a film as abysmal as the deepest ocean. False in sentiment, conventional in language. These are some of the noblest lines from the English version. "He's a brute!" "He's not that, Betty, not that!" "HE IS" "This is no time for mincing matters" "Padre, find my father for me. Tell him he is making my mother ill" (because he is flirting with another woman) . . . "Steady, see it through, old man" and finally, "Don't forget those words of Henley's", to which cue Monty Banks in the copy at the trade-show sang "Captain of My Soul". It was a very noble film; everyone was very noble; Ellaline Terriss knelt in the water for hours, just to help British pictures, and none of the men took off their evening shirts so as to be able to swim better. It was so noble, and so unconvincing. You felt none of these people had lived or enjoyed themselves and had hell at all. It all belonged to the stage, the talking before the mike, the grouping, the exits and entrances.

That is where we come. I know there have been a lot of terrible things due to the talkies, hardly any of them atoned for. We have heard "You've said it . . . and "oh, YEAH?" been dragged into dressing-rooms and out before the footlights. We have seen actresses lose their facial play and act, like Ruth Chatterton, with their voice only. We have heard those same voices twisted by once good screen actresses into all kinds of shapes and refinements (except in *Gold Diggers*, which was honestly rough and rowdy) and we

have seen gestures become unspontaneous because people were bothering about their voices, whilst at the same time we have seen a lot of unnecessary gesturing because someone had an idea you can't stand still and talk for more than two seconds. We have lost a great deal. But here and there in these twenty-three talkies, I think there may be found hints of something done that won't excuse all the rest that has been done, but does at least point the way to some kind of gain for the future, if that is recognised to have very little in method to do with the present.

And a year after all, a year and some months, isn't very long in which to have come from *The Jazz Singer* and *The Terror* and *Hometowners* to *Gold Diggers*, and Arlen talking with ten times more life, and Tashman, superb in colour and speech, and *The Virginian* and *On with the Show*.

What has got to be scrapped is the same as before; the theatre idea. Dialogue isn't just plain conversation, any more than film-making is plain filming of a story. Film-making is blending and mounting and lighting. Sound must be "lit", too; it must be brought together in sound waves, as the images are in light waves. And it must be cut up, seen and felt in bits, as film is seen and felt in pieces. If that is done, it can't be theatrical any more. And it CAN be something it never has been before, and that's what it must be. Meisel tried in a small way to mount a score in a film manner, with his saxophone close-ups and so on, to *The Crimson Circle*, but that film didn't give the score a chance, and it was a musical score anyway, not a score of sound proper. In *Mickey* we can all see how sound is used, and can see that that is how sound must be used. The sound

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there is all of a pattern. Whether it is the noise of a milkcan falling over or a piano being played (and there are too many pianos played now in Mickey films, scarcely one without one) it builds onto the next noise, linking it to the one before, in sound-pictures or wave-images. The noise made by Mickey's foot isn't literally the noise of a foot, not always, any more than the sound of his train is that of any actual express locomotive. But foot and train meet in sound as a kind of loco-pedestrianism, each having one of the other, as it were, each being different from itself, as everything is, more than itself only, and also like something else, perhaps more like than the actual thing. Mickey's foot is more vocal than his tongue. Take again the cat seen for a few seconds in *When the Cat's Away*. It drinks from a bottle. There is the throat-noise, bottle-noise, and also the comment, "Little Brown Jug How I Love Thee", which switches over into "Over the Hills and Far Away" for the next scene. Mickey's sound is made up of many pieces of noise, no one definite noise joined on to another definite noise without any thought being taken for their conjunction and combustion. That is left to talkies. But if cinema is to gain from talk, and there have been these little small gains since, using my publicity sheet like a certain well-known critic, since Warner Brothers, Pioneers of the Motion Picture Industry, opened their never-to-be-forgotten Vitaphone season at the Piccadilly Theatre in London, to fill up an article, if the cinema is to make any use of these gains, it must in the future discard literalness for reality, and work like Mickey. Lifelike noises are not essential. The noise of the footsteps in *Juno and the Paycock* was awful, and the whole thing seemed too strident

at its trade show. But what we want is not absolute faithfulness to life, but creative relation to each other, in our sounds. We want them to be part of each other as the opening pieces of *New Babylon* are part of each other. As it is now, films are ripped asunder, should they be even tolerably mounted (which *Taming of the Shrew* was not) by a current of noise, consisting of a million unrelated noises, flowing straight on. Sound must relate to sound, not to the drama alone.

But of course, none of this may mean much, because I see that Miss Betty Balfour has not yet announced her plans for 1930. She will do so shortly, and that, of course, will make a lot of difference. O, yeah? SURE!

ROBERT HERRING.

A GERMAN SCHOOL FILM

There is much experiment and progression at work all over the world in the educational field, but it is none of it co-ordinated, and half of the experimenters are ignorant of what their neighbours are doing. This was particularly the case when after seeing *Kampf der Tertia*, I tried to discover exactly how much of it was commercial and how much schoolboy, for it is a very obvious mixture of falseness and reality. But I could not find out very much: half the people

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laughed, others took it very seriously indeed. About all the information I could find was that it was made by a professional director, with a star, and professional cameramen, with the co-operation of a school of boys.

It should certainly be shown in England in spite of its defects. For it has the romantic child-mind in view, it is no worse than the scores of school books turned out annually by English publishers, and it has at least some kind of constructive idea behind it.

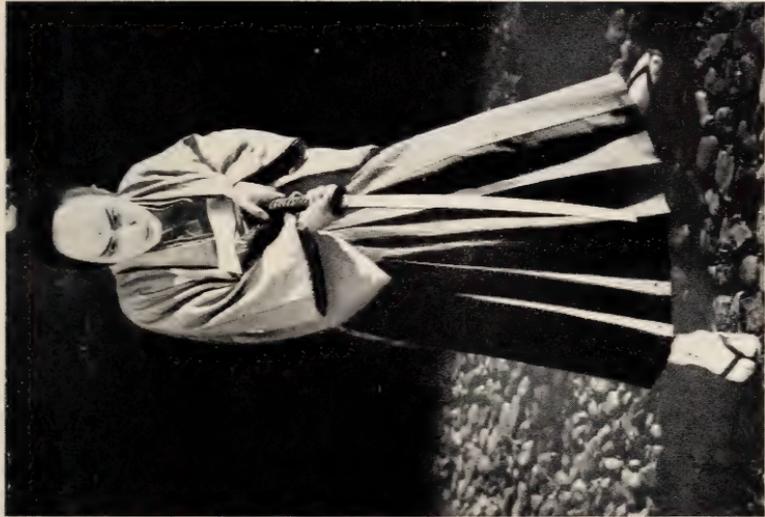
Its great defect is, that it presents school life from the romantic point of view, all sweetness and happy ending, as the adult pictures it and NOT as the bitter reality that is apparent to the child. It is also so cheaply made that a great deal of material that might have been made very lovely, has been spoiled for want of panchromatic stock and better lighting. In spite of this there is an impression given of small town and sea shore and wind. And the children (whether professional or not) do get an amazing energy into their performance.

The story is excellent in its main details. There is an old sleepy country town set near the Baltic. A vivid contrast is made between the dusty shut in town school and one of the experimental school communities set on an island not far from the town. (Lest the English educationalist who sees the picture, should think that the co-educational houses with their leaders and bare legged children are a poetic exaggeration, I can assure him that this is one of the truest parts of the picture, as I have myself visited German schools equipped in precisely the same manner). We are shown a meeting of the town council. And the old clothes-dealer of

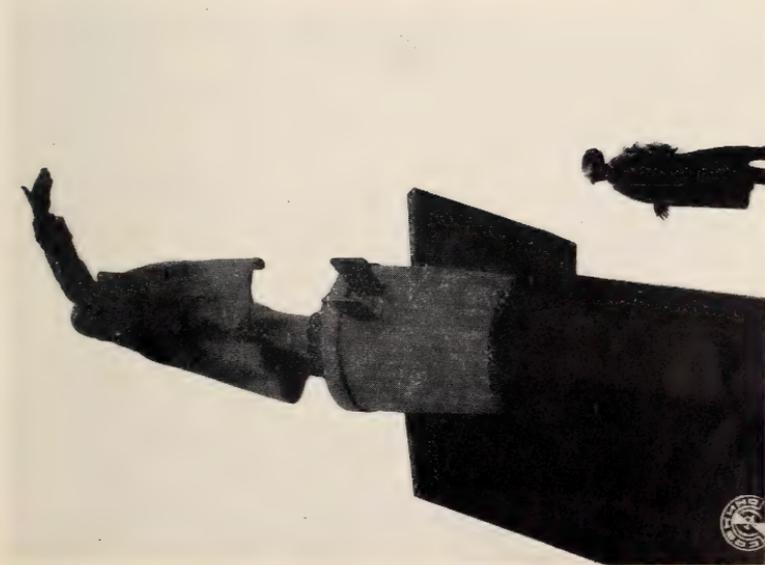
the town anxious for cat skins (much used in certain parts of Europe) gets up and persuades them to make a bye-law, providing that stray cats may be killed immediately. His excuse is a mad cat has attacked him. This is done in a cartoon. It is worked in most amusingly in the middle of the film itself and the scene changes from the council hall to the cartoon of the dealer being pursued by a gigantic cat, and back from this to the ordinary view of the council hall.

The bye-law is passed. The dealer offers twopence each for any cat skin brought him, and the Town Clerk, a lover of animals, rushes to warn the Tertia, a class roughly corresponding to the Lower Fifth in England, full of children about fourteen or fifteen years of age. The Tertia filled with indignation, plan revenge.

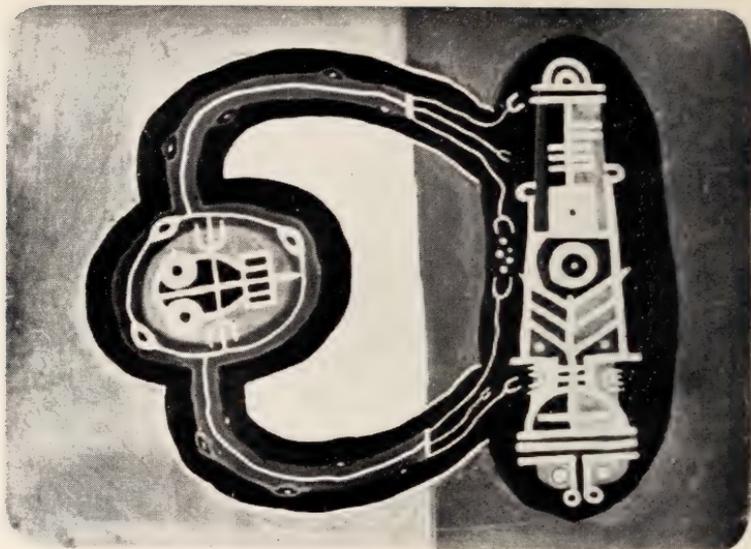
At this point, however, another interest is worked into the story. There are forty boys in the Tertia but only one girl. I objected to this as unlikely, but was assured by friends in Germany that although co-education was growing, frequently there are only two or three girls in a class of boys. But the girl Daniela, can run faster and climb better than the boys. They are at point to elect their class-leader and Daniela would have been elected, had she not, being a dog lover, felt the enthusiasm for cats a little too violent, and if she had not, therefore, made an indiscreet remark upon the subject. Her rival, a boy, is therefore elected as leader. Whereupon she walks off and sulks. This seemed strange to English psychology and I felt that it was being dragged in to make a drama of the male and female attitudes. I argued that any girl who had so accepted the community atmosphere as to have nearly been elected leader of a group, would have been



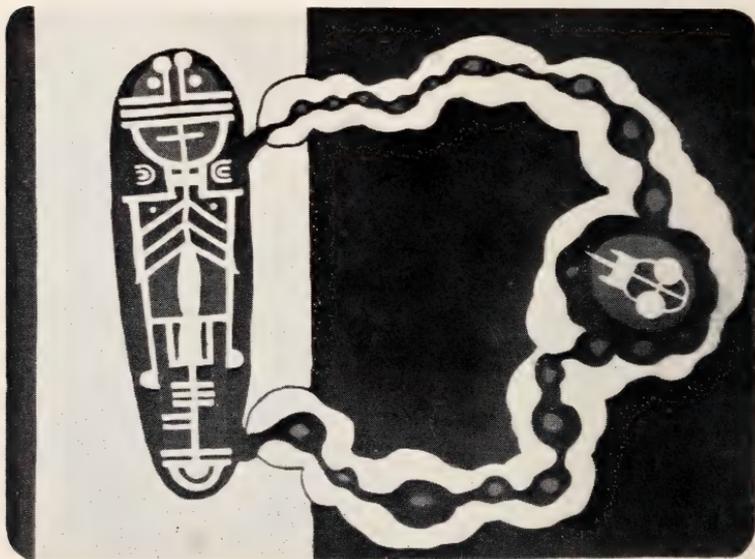
Bantsuma, one of Japan's leading film character actors, in a warrior part. His real name is Tsuma Saburo-Bando. The photograph is by the well known Japanese director, J. Shige Sudzuky



From *The Stump of an Empire*, a Sovkino film directed by F. Ermiler. Cameraman: E. Schneider.



Two stills from *Tusalava*, a film by Len Lye. See note in Comment and Review. A film of life cells, attack and repudiation.





From *Spring*, the Vufku film by M. Kaufman, who is both author and cameraman.





From the new film by Joris Ivens, *Heien*. *Heien* is the driving in of piles prior to building. The film is roughly 350 metres in length.



Heien has been shown to the Dutch Filmliga, and in the first Avant-garde theatre in Amsterdam "de Uitlek." The film will soon be in Paris, and is being taken by Joris Ivens to Russia.



From *Spring*, by M. Kaufman. A Vufku film.



Heien.



Catherine Hessling in *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge*, a film by A. Cavalcanti.



Photos: Eli Lotar



Photo: Eli Lotar

Catherine Hessling, an unconventional equestrienne in *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge*, in which appears also Jean Renoir.



Nogent Eldorado du Dimanche (Paris Week-End), a film by Marcel Carne. See notice in Comment and Review.



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too proud or too dominated by communal atmosphere to have sulked simply because she was not elected. Friends in Berlin assured me, however, that it happened because she being more developed than the boys, considered that they had based their choice on petty reasons. I deal with this in detail as I think a film of this kind bares certain psychological differences in the education of different peoples that need to be understood, especially by the teaching world.

That night the Tertia sets out in the late evening armed with paints and brushes, and covers the town with inscriptions in five different languages, "Be kind to animals," "Soyez bon pour les animaux," etc. Only Daniela remains behind comfortably in bed. But the one small boy who has remained true to Daniela, finding that they are being pursued by the solitary policeman throws himself at the policeman's legs in order to permit the others to escape. He is himself dragged off to the town hall. There he is presently rescued by some of the other boys who accuse him (for no apparent reason except to make a school story!) of having betrayed them. He is of course rescued by Daniela whom they are anxious to persuade to return to the band. But the war on cats continues. Finally they march again to the town, but in daylight and with all the pocket money they have been able to collect. And this is the best moment of the film. For the children go from house to house collecting all the cats they can buy for sixpence each and putting them in a place of safety. Suddenly, however, the town realises what has happened and the town children pour out to fight them and to open the baskets so that the cats escape and, therefore, as stray animals can be killed. The Tertia are outnumbered

when Daniela at the critical moment, marches to the rescue with two gigantic hounds. Then all march together to the town hall and make such a noise (aided by the dogs barking) that they finally capture the old clothes-dealer and compel him to get the bye-law repealed so that the cats are safe again. And the Tertia is reconciled. I objected to my friends that it would be unlikely that any school could disappear for the larger part of the night, unchecked, but was informed that in such a community, it might well be possible as the leaders would probably have arranged with authority beforehand and explanation of their objective would not always be necessary. My friends, however, objected to the "militaristic" aspects of the film, the boys marching in rows, the general precision, etc. It did not strike me as more militaristic than any English girls' school, but then England has not had conscription (except during the war) and there is probably not the deeply rooted aversion to anything that could suggest the pre-war army, that I found prevalent across Germany and Austria. That the school was controlled by a tradition of the rigid unprogressive type of the average English Public School was obvious, and this as I have said, was the great defect of the film. But the scenes along the sea coast and of the animals in the small town and many of the sequences with the boys were excellent and thoroughly to be recommended for children's performances.

There was a big discrepancy between the girl (a professional cinema actress) trying to smile in shorts like any Hollywood bathing girl, and the naturalism of the children. Boris was played by G. Stark-Gstetten Dauer the small boy in the *Frau im Mond*. I was unable to find out how many of the

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others had faced a camera previously. The bulk I imagine had not. Had the film been pruned and made entirely by school children and enthusiastic amateurs it would have been one of the most interesting experiments made to date. As it was, I kept feeling they had remembered "entertainment angles" just as things were getting interesting. It would have been improved, too, by panchromatic stock. (The copy I saw was old and dropping to pieces). The children in the audience loved it.

It would certainly be worth while bringing it to London if only as a demonstration of German school mentality as opposed to English, being careful, of course, to allow for the romantic elements precisely as the English child allows for these in any school story it may be reading. As the customs dues, however, would amount to about a hundred pounds odd and as it is a film for children and educationalists, and not the general public, it is unlikely to be shown in England. (Under the conditions pertaining abroad it could be shown for a limited number of performances for a customs' fee of from three to ten pounds). And besides it would probably be censored, for there is one shot of a frightened kitten being let out of its basket and the censor's regulations state that cruelty to animals may not be displayed on the screen.

Kampf der Tertia is a Bruckmann Verleih film, made for Terra and directed by M. Mack. The address of Terra is Kochstrasse 73, Berlin, S.W.68, should any schools desire to make enquiries about it.

BRYHER.

IN PRAISE OF SIMPLICITY

Since I find it impossible to treat my theme schematically and in carefully chosen words, I must begin with an apology for the lack of orderliness in what is to follow. It represents sincere convictions and these must stand for what they are worth.

The speech-film has still many enemies. This I do not find in any way strange. Not all my fondness for renewal can save me from regretting the marvellous past of the silent film: gentle reliable giver of so many priceless hours. Nevertheless, I grow impatient with those worthy but limited souls who, with amazing lack of insight, continue daily, on the pretext of safeguarding ART, to bewail the speech-film. It does not occur to them that the film is quite simply the sole contemporary method of expression and that we are walking in darkness the moment we imagine it the private property of those of us who are more or less professionally engaged upon it. It is natural to feel a deep and lively satisfaction over certain of its intellectual, technical and artistic feats. But this is not sufficient.

Either the film is a popular art, and to admit this is by no means to call it inferior, or it is, as has been claimed, the impassioned pastime of the elect. Personally, I have

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no faith in the appeal to caste. I believe in a vast educational programme (in the most intelligent interpretation of the term) and I submit that the public wants to be emotionally stirred, dreads boredom, wants to weep and laugh, hates to be fooled and at the same time desires instruction, but not to be crushed by a too obviously educational intention. And the public is perfectly right. For can you tell me what is the worth of a cinematic product which only technicians, aesthetes and inner-circle cinema folk find interesting and remarkable? What may be admissible for many forms of artistic expression has no meaning when applied to the film.

To attempt such an application is to enter a vicious circle : no comparison is possible between the art of the film and the other arts and it is only to the heavy hand of tradition that we owe our quite natural efforts to make one. The film has its laws that from time to time we may have felt in operation without either clearly locating them or drawing from their felt presence any useful or stable conclusions. And I find in the film's continuous advance—witness the horrified astonishment with which now we regard what pleased us even a year ago—in its ceaseless unforeseen changes, the mark of youth and an astonishing vitality.

Why must we decree that the film is this or that? The film, with all due deference to the sensitives, is as various as changing, as promising and alluring, and as deceptive, as life itself. And there are many who fear life. Others, in spite or perhaps because of its deceptions, its banalities, its ugliness and above all because of its unexpectedness, love life. If we are weaklings, let us admit it instead of impeaching life.

The professionals have discovered that speech-films lead to the abyss, to a bastard form of expression, to a total overthrow of all artistic principles. But let me tell you that the film is hardier than these scared folk who see no further than the ends of their noses, that it is much too young to be held up by fond fears and useless lamentations. What foundation is there for the laws these good people would establish? Natural experience or hybrid deduction? They have discovered that the film must remain silent. Because, for example, Chaplin has said that it has no more need of words than has a Beethoven symphony. But, since when is the film a symphony? Certainly not since Madame Germaine Dulac has produced what she chooses to describe as "visual symphonies".

A hundred years hence it may be possible to establish the laws of cinematography. Up to the present there are only conventions, based upon work accomplished to date. But supposing to-morrow a genius should arrive and reverse all these conventions? And is it not possible to imagine that the arrival of the speech-film has performed exactly this service?

Let us not forget that the silent film is actually stifled by its own perfection. Carl Dryer's *Joan of Arc*, Sternberg's *Docks of New York* prove this indubitably. What remains to be done? Repeat the technical triumphs, the wonderful lighting, the overwhelming setting, with actors as denuded of staginess as were those who took part in it? No. We have demonstrably reached the culmination of one form of cinematic expression and if the speech-film had not been invented, producers the world over would have been looking

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for jobs. Disquieting as it may seem, we have reached a point where there is nothing ahead short of a fundamental renewal. Theoretically, to-day, any intelligent spectator should be able to make a good film. He no longer has the right to blunder. But where would be the interest of such an undertaking?

Everything must be forgotten. We must make a fresh start. Explore, invent, find means hitherto unthought-of. Otherwise we risk dying of perfection.

And the speech-film, by virtue even of its monstrous blundering, its sins against good taste, its amazing lack of intelligence, the results of groping forward through an initial darkness, is a thing of promise. In *Broadway Melody*, which on the whole was nothing more than second-rate melodrama, there were moments of a hitherto unexpected beauty. As René Clair remarked with such sympathetic simplicity in a recent article in *Pour Vous*: the actors speak, but you do not see their mouths *in close-up* and you are not tempted to pay too much attention to the vicissitudes of synchronisation (after all a subordinate matter)—but you see the faces of those who listen. And is not that altogether of the cinema?

It is said that speech-films are of the theatre just because they are spoken. But has anyone yet heard shadows speak on a stage or a *close-up of a face* expressing itself in words? I leave it to others to enumerate still more interesting examples of the absence of parallelism between film and stage.

This search for fresh means, this naïve clumsiness, will ultimately give us works of a splendid simplicity. Bad films, so long as they are silent, are endured by a public with an

eye not yet sufficiently educated to revolt from the inanities for the most part filling the screen. Through the medium of words such films become so aggressively stupid that protest is inevitable. False complications will disappear, realistic opulence, serving only to disguise poverty of imagination, will stand self-condemned.

Only the other day I chanced upon a performance admirably illustrating my contention. A showing of Man Ray's last film, *Le Mystère du Château du Dé* and of *Un Chien Andalou* by the young Spanish producer Louis Bunuel, was preceded by a Harold Lloyd comedy dating from the time when he was a beginner. But the ingenuity of his ideas and discoveries by far outdoes anything to be found in these new films whose only excuse is an occasional felicity in their setting. This little old picture was a condensed witticism. Its star had something to express. The stars of to-day are content with trying to stagger us.

Man Ray has unloaded his single novelty. He is an amiable fantasist who doubtless greatly enjoys exhibiting his virtuosity, who tries to dazzle us with his photographic ingenuities and is satisfied when he has demonstrated, by means of literary sub-titles, that he has heard all about what is called idea or scenario. It is not a great matter and one may pass an agreeable hour watching these cleverly arranged photos.

Louis Bunuel's first film, *Le Chien Andalou*, is of a different brand. It is the representation of a waking dream, forcefully and intelligently constructed. From the beginning of the first short reel a warmth, at once brutal and admirable, emanates from the chosen images and remains throughout the whole performance, which reveals moreover in the

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handling of the actors, the most dangerous pitfall for inexperienced producers, a complete cinematic intelligence. Nevertheless, one is tempted to ask whether he would not have done better with a more engaging idea. I am aware that he conceived this film for the benefit of a selected public. But I feel that his astonishing mastery of the medium he is using for the first time would enable him to prove his worth in a less specialised scenario.

Intelligence is insufficient unless backed by simplicity and sincerity. Monsieur Bunuel fears to be simple lest he be taken for an illiterate cinematographer. It is this unjustifiable fear that the speech-film will destroy—so much remains still unsaid, still to be handled by imaginative inventiveness, in even the simplest subject. The makers of speech-films start unhampered by the dead weight of past cinematic expression. In this almost untried medium everything is yet to be discovered. They will be explorers, untroubled by the fear of falling into cliché or commonplace, for so far these do not exist.

It is useless to confront me with the hundred bad speech-films already in existence. They trouble me not at all. The cinematographers are exactly where they were at the time of the making of *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise* and the hardened scenarists of to-day merely repeat the productions of thirty years ago when even the aesthetes had no inkling of what a marvellous instrument the cinema was to become.

Satiated with the magnitude of Murnau, the pretentiousness of Abel Gance, the technical perfection of the current American productions, we demand simplicity, emotional and

spiritual. A new instrument is in the hands of those who are moved to create. If they will make adequate use of it the emotional possibilities are beyond divining. I greet them in advance with deep and joyous confidence.

JEAN LENAUER.

CINEMA IN THE ARGENTINE

South America, and more especially the Argentine, seem to have been forgotten by those who discuss film centres. Yet, though the Argentine is, comparatively speaking, a non-producer, it must be one of the world's greatest consumers.

It is perhaps the only big and important country in the world which consumes films without producing them; and it may, therefore, be considered as a centre which is not biased by the tendencies of its own productions. It becomes an impartial judge.

What makes the country even more impartial is the fact that it is also one of the world's most cosmopolitan towns. There is a huge colony of twenty-thousand English; fifteen-thousand Germans. Colonies in varying sizes of French, Russian, Italian, Spanish, North Americans, Chinese, Japanese, Poles, Checko-Slovaks. Every single race in the world is represented in large numbers.

Take all this as a whole, a mass. Think of it as a mixture,

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which tolerates no censor, and it can be realised that what in a good many ways is the effect of a film in that cosmopolitan centre, would be the effect in Europe, too.

Two-million inhabitants. Two-hundred cinemas. Ninety-five tons of films imported. Then that as a centre with no production. As a cosmopolitan mass seething and surrounding an emotional people. As a mass, which has some of the strongest and most powerful Communist and Socialist centres in the world. And then, Mr. European censor, take a voyage, and see if you cannot decide after all to show some of those revolution and culture sex films in the old continent.

Russian films have acquired a big reputation in the Argentine. The U.S.S.R. has opened a distributing centre, and all the Soviet productions are shown in due course.

Potemkin was run with enormous success. As in Europe, it was the first Russian film to attract the attention of the people towards the merits of Slavonic productions. It was discussed. Passed on to all the smallest and cheapest cinemas: all the cinemas in dockland and the roughest and toughest parts of the town. It must have been seen by every worker of every nationality. By every sailor ashore. Socialist and Communist societies made a speciality of it: it was the feature of any radical meeting. At the ordinary cinemas, with the impartial audience, there was no bias. At a biased meeting, such as the Socialist party, it was at least amusing to hear the unanimous applause, as officer after officer on the good ship *Potemkin* was set upon and hurled overboard. But these are societies: and biased. In the ordinary cinemas, the audiences, as always, occupied themselves with the film and not with the indicated prejudice.

Ten Days, was another success. It was shown in a practically uncut form, and was hailed by all critics as a masterpiece.

Here are two outstanding films recording revolution exhibited without "let or hindrance" in every part of a free thinkers' country. Did the Argentine navy throw their officers overboard? Did the workers seize their arms and mob the congress?

Sex. Intelligent sex culture films for the edification of the people are shown in several cinemas. Russian and German productions. These films are advertised in an ordinary manner and are generally exhibited uncut. Films treating venereal diseases are similarly shown. Any citizen desirous of obtaining an education or relieving himself of the usual abnormal ignorance on the subject is at liberty to do so.

In addition to the large choice of films of every nationality being run in the commercial cinemas, there has recently been formed the "Cine Club de Buenos Aires". This club gives weekly lectures, discussions and exhibitions, having a choice of all old copies from renting houses in the town. In the case of U.S.S.R. films the club has been allowed to give exhibitions of Russian films before a general release: such being the case with *The Peasant Women of Riazan* and some films of Dziga Vertof.

The American film capitalists' dream with respect to talking films has almost been realised: that foreign countries shall be so impressed with talkies, that they will learn English to go and see them; or that they will be content to listen to a strange language: in mute silence listen to a noise.

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In a good many Argentine cinemas, talking films have been shown and are still being shown absolutely untouched. Even so they have "caught on". Week after week cinemas change over to sound apparatus. With *Broadway Melody*, sub-titles in Spanish were inserted after each spoken phrase. Thus being hoped to convey the meaning. The film had (as elsewhere in its own language) a great success. The idea of inserting written sub-titles to translate the dialogue is interesting as an attempt to solve the international difficulty with talk films. Certainly it must have made every Argentine familiar with the American language.

To a certain extent, although a cosmopolitan town, Buenos Aires is unanimous in two things: impartiality and sense of humour. These two characteristics are eventually acquired by every resident of whatever nationality who stays long enough. The impartiality, because the Argentine judges an individual on his personal bearing only, no matter if he be coloured or white, or persecuted in other countries, he is judged by what he does in the Argentine. This air of liberality, and the cordiality consequent, so noticed by the foreigner on arrival used to the narrow racial conventions of Europe spreads to everyone in the country. The second unanimity of sense of humour seems, in a similar way, to percolate to every inhabitant. This is due entirely to environment. It is the complete absence of a sense of satire or exaggeration: both qualities are taken literally.

When thinking of some of the outstanding films of all nationalities, that have had successful runs, or else been failures, it is useful to take into account the sense of humour and impartiality. The former will sometimes wreck a film;

the latter will make a success of most films (in relation to merit).

Of Soviet Productions, undoubtedly the success was *Potemkin*, following *Ten Days*. Next, the film of the *Krassin* had an extraordinary run. *The Yellow Identity Card*, directed by Ozep was also quite successful. *Two Days* by Stabavoi was a failure as were also the Sovkino *Bulat Batyr* by Taritsch. *Storm over Asia*, known out here as the *Yellow Storm*, after a doubtful start is, at the time of writing, still running, and to judge by newspaper critics and advance bookings will continue to do so for some time. Impartiality: whereas in Europe the newspapers were concerned chiefly in pointing out the political significance, anti-imperialistic propaganda, identity of the militarists, in the Argentine the controversial political side was never even mentioned in the newspapers. Critics confined themselves entirely to the artistic and technical construction of the film.

Of German productions, *Variety* was the forerunner in establishing an Ufa reputation. *Metropolis* had a moderate run, and *The Spy*, considering its comparative European success also fell. It did not convince the essentially Latin spirit. Of the culture sex films an outstanding success was *Conjugal Life*, a Lander-Film Berlin, by E. Frowein. Large audiences of both sexes flocked to see this production, which, as is rare in sex films, combined taste with intelligence and instruction.

Marcel Herbie's *L'Argent* was a general uplift to French production. Probably because the Argentine is essentially a money-making centre, that the depiction of a modern money-maniac caused a deep impression. When it came to

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a question of satire: Jacque Feyder's *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*: the meaning was completely missed. Quick rise "labour" ministers and the humour of slumbering deputies or an assembly of "desk-bangers" did not succeed.

American films are numerous; but *Broadway Melody* and the Fairbankian *Iron Mask* were both appreciated above the average. Of mixed American manufacture, Sternberg's *Docks of New York*, Murnaus' *Four Devils* and Stroheim's *Wedding March* were noted.

A country may be democratic and have an aristocracy; may be capitalistic and have powerful Communist parties; may be universal but very cosmopolitan. The Argentine combines all these points. It also revels in freedom. Result: Buenos Aires is the perfect cinema cosmopolitan town. In the grand assimilation of the films of all countries it is a successful melting pot. And the purely artistic, the purely political, the purely propaganda, the purely culture: all these ideas are sifted and taken. And no one minds what tendency as long as there is good cinema.

Indeed, one thinks that others (especially censors) might learn much from such a centre of cinema freedom.

H. P. TEW.

AH, OUI ! LE CINEMA !

C'est bon pour les enfants, confiait à son collègue, un modeste wattmanx, des niaiseries ! J'y suis allé une fois, il y a bien une dizaine d'années, et je n'y ai jamais remis les pieds, pas la peine de perde son temps à des gamineries pareilles ! Et le bonhomme préfère s'user la peau du pouce, des heures durant, à taper le carton au bistro.

Ainsi donc il est des gens qui s'imaginent que roulent encore sur l'écran tonneaux et melons affolés. Le cinéma, pourtant, a évolué, et à l'heure qu'il est, constitue un amuseur très suffisamment doué pour satisfaire le public moyen. Quant à contenter l'élément cultivé de ce même public, c'est une autre affaire et il y a cent à parier contre un qu'en voulant plaire à celui-ci l'on rebutera l'autre, et vice-versa.

Nous allons au cinéma pour nous distraire. Nous n'entendons pas y trouver matière à réflexion. Après une journée de travail bien remplie, ce qu'il nous faut, c'est un dérivatif, dit le premier, et vivent les pots qui défoncent les feutres, les portes qui écrasent les nez, vivent encore les cross-en-jambe, les pirouettes, les glissades, les tartes à la crème. Si c'est de sentiment qu'il s'agit, finesse est de rigueur, et pour l'exprimer, que s'accolent, s'embrassent, se décollent les couples dans les allées ratissées, sous le regard paterne de la

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lune ; que l'on voie clairement qui s'aime et qui ne s'aime point . . . et pas d'indifférents, s'il vous plaît, cela ne rime à rien.

Vous aimez le ragoût ? Vous, vous, vous aussi . . . combien donc, au total ? Ah ! la majorité. Bien, que l'on serve du ragoût, vite, et beaucoup . . . et toujours. Quel habile restaurateur que le cinéma !

Ainsi tenez, me disait l'autre jour un spectateur désabusé :
Le film américain, ah oui ! Le beau film américain fait travailler 100 charpentiers, 30 décorateurs, 10 électriciens, mobilise 6 vedettes célèbres, ameute 1,000 figurants, requiert un budget de publicité de 50,000 dollars et . . . va son chemin. Et les Allemands, eux, persistent à prendre le colossal pour le beau, l'obscur pour le profond, le plat pour l'accidenté. Le rire ne se fabrique pas à Berlin, mieux vaut cela car le rire german n'est pas communicatif du tout. Mais au moins ici déjà les idées apparaissent, les desseins ont une certaine portée, les réalisations une saveur particulière. Et Vienne tourne des valse, comme si de rien n'était, sans s'inquiéter de personne. Vienne puise et repuise dans le stock, en nombre inépuisable, des archiducs folichons, des souverains gâteux et des roitelets. Vienne sabre le champagne, recrée des bataillons de Strauss mélancoliques, arrose le parquet de fleurs, les films de sous-titres rêveurs, le monde d'actualité fanée. Vienne fait gai, puis lassant, et enfin intolérable. L'Italie, paraît-il, va se remettre au travail. Pour notre bonheur et pour le sien, espérons une transformation radicale de sa manière. Espérons surtout la disparition d'attitudes " inbertinement " détestables, d'exploits " macistement " banals. La France ! trop vieille et trop jeune à la fois ; les

jeunes de talent y mendient les occasions et si, par hasard, ils réussissent à sortir une bande intéressante, l'oncle Sam empoche l'homme et ses possibilités. Il est beaucoup de petits vieux, par contre, forts d'une expérience théâtrale, d'une situation coquette, qui tournent mal, incurablement mal. Il est des quantités d'acteurs qui posent pour le repos des béats . . . et d'innombrables petites amies qui étalent leur anatomie sans vie. Mais les bons interprètes, sobres, intelligents qui s'essaient à vivre devant la camera sont maintenus de force dans le cadre d'une tradition scénique qui tend à étouffer le complet essor de leur personnalité.

Le "cant" britannique enlève aux produits d'outre-Manche, saveur et virilité. Restent les bateaux, les marins, les pêcheurs, les démonstrations navales, les intrigues de tea-room, les charlestons . . . et puie . . . et puis la féconde imagination de Wallace. Et pourtant que ne fournit pas l'Angleterre en fait d'individualités de caractère !

Le film russe, ah ! les belles images et les types si vrais, ah ! le merveilleuse sincérité de la prise de vues . . . que de promesses ! Mais pourquoi duper éternellement l'honnête homme en lui faisant croire que c'est chez les fortunés seuls que se rencontrent les tares ? Quand cet boniment aura disparu du film soviétique, alors il sera peut-être sans reproche.

Et le monde du cinéma, c'est bien le plus beaux qui soit ! Les talents y coudoient les génies et l'on ne peut faire un pas sans marcher sur le pied d'une étoile . . . ces étoiles qui brillent le plus souvent de tout l'éclat d'un fard indispensable, portées aux nues, car elles ne sauraient y atteindre de leurs propres moyens, elles s'y cramponnent, puis pâlissent, et se

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retirent, quand on ne les retire pas. Un physique ébouriffant ne constitue pas un grave inconvénient . . . affublé de robes flatteuses . . . il passe . . . et repasse, sans provoquer la nausée.

Carpentier, Dempsey, Schmeling . . . trois sportifs populaires . . . figurent dans une superproduction sentimentale, en gentlemen. Des as! Les as sont inévitables. Que ne donneraient les industriels du film pour repêcher les criminels et les vampires de tout acabit, car eux aussi, dans une superproduction, assureraient une location de tout repos.

Les scénarios, pour la plupart, tiennent du roman-feuilleton, nourriture par excellence de M. Tout le Monde. Il n'y est fait aucune part à l'observation directe, à la pensée, à la réalité. Aucune prise pour la réflexion dans ce fatras de situations faites sur commande, où les personnages ne font que gesticuler et ne vivent pas. Un scénario commercial ne commence, ni ne finit comme la vie, qui ne finit pas. Un scénario commercial finit inévitablement de la façon dont se terminent toutes les histoires pour cerveaux faibles. Il vous sert une tranche de destinée, comme une portion de moka, et l'une comme l'autre sont écoeurantes. Il est superflu de relever la complète balourdise des textes cinégraphiques, joints incommodes et souvent gênants qui viennent expliquer ce qui n'importe, et n'importera jamais. Ah! le cinéma . . .

FREDDY CHEVALLEY.

AN OUTBURST ON THE OLD SUBJECT

One has become more or less used to talking films, even if reconciliation—or rather, contact—is not quite complete. It is true that a shudder of distaste is apt to move the long-suffering frame in those tense moments when a screaming woman sounds like a lost cow bellowing in a fog. But on the whole, it is really amazing to what heights of fortitude a human being can nerve himself.

Apart from this, in due course one imagines that really audible films will be evolved.

Seriously, though, until the spectator is “broken in” to talkies it is difficult for him to concentrate on the standard of production and the technique of the actual film. It is apparent, however, from the very beginning, that most of the action of the film is rendered unnecessary. The players need only sit in elegant attitudes and tell us the stories of their lives, and there is no necessity for any pictorial representation of same. In due course, no doubt, the visual side of film production will be treated with the contempt which most producers seem to think it deserves, and we shall be entertained most tensely, merely by listening to thrilling stories falling in metallic accents from the lips of our favourite amplifier stars. What a chance for the plain girl!

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At present, the screen proves rather distracting. When the ear is accustomed to American of all shades, and the average audience has become bi-lingual (Anglo-American), then, perhaps, we might be permitted to see a little acting now and again. Until that happy day, however, it might be advisable to educate the cinema-goer by placing him in the darkened theatre, and let him hear the story being unfolded without confusing him by making him take notice of the exquisite acting and productive technique simultaneously. Having survived the first shock and become inured to his fate, the victim will probably summon sufficient courage to think of both production and sound. When he has reached this happy stage, he may be capable of receiving the following impressions:—

Women's voices, with few exceptions, are rather ghastly. They seem to be afflicted with perpetual colds in the head.

Englishmen's voices are superior to others.

A savage, making unintelligible noises can be really splendid.

Foghorns are very natural.

Footsteps on a wooden floor are reminiscent of nails being hammered into a coffin in an Edgar Allan Poe story. (If he ever wrote one about such a subject).

A whisky and soda sounds very refreshing.

It seems a pity, to me, that is, that it is necessary to include a little screaming in most films, because it always raises a snigger in provincial audiences (I live in the Provinces) and thus breaks the tense effect which has—one hopes—been carefully worked up by the Producer.

However, one cheers oneself somewhat. This enlightened

town has obtained *The Patriot* at the one decent Cinema which has not been converted into the ways of unrighteousness. Even sound effects for *The Patriot* cannot be heard there, but only a little orchestra which does it best with Symphony No. 6. One, therefore, staggers round to hear this pathetic accompaniment with gratitude, and sees *The Patriot* three times in one week with even sincerer thanks to the powers that be that we still have Jannings and one cinema which has not gone to the dogs. (Sorry, that last word should be T g F s).

D. L. H.

COMMENT AND REVIEW

FILM CURIOSITIES.—No. 9.

THE WHIRLPOOL OF FATE.

AN EARLY HESSLING.

This must have been directed by Renoir: the nit-wit English title is surrogate for the credit-titles, but this must have been directed by R.

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A canal gives moving backgrounds. Uncle walks across the moving barge keeping central in the picture; artifice with sound filmic 'source'. Papa is another who worries about the source of things; drawing water from the canal he falls in. Hessling finishes a gag, with a dirty megaphone, then notices that papa has fallen in.

Throughout the night they drag the water. A woman, wearing a black shawl, stands by the orphan. White streaks on the black, lost streaks of darkness.

Uncle spreads a line of glasses before him; swipes the lot. *En Rade* eyes. See this, and don't try to seduce a film star. At the windows the Hessling howls, and how she bites the bad man's arm.

Dormant captions: having run miles down the river, the girl decides, in a title, to run away.

Transcendental treat: Catherine Hessling and Rin Tin Tin in a picture! One thinks of it because she hauls an alsatian after her.

A boy, up a tree, asks her where she is going.

"To the Avenue Pavillon, sir, I hope," she might have answered.

The boy is a poacher. His mother, a gypsy, lives in a caravan. They plant Hessling outside a gate, to give the alarm, while the boy steals cabbages. Could there be any better way to draw attention to a theft? Catherine Hessling, who *will* wear boots.

Magdalenian play with two thin, long bunches of flowers. Pre-*La P'tite Lily* period.

The dog overturns a rich farmer on his bicycle. Subterranean plots for revenge. A hay-stack is burnt. Full of

hate and wine . . . run the subtitles. Susurrous titles : dots, . . . BURN THE WAGON OF THE GIPSY. See the great super film and the burning wagon!

Mother and son escape, running down a road illuminated by sun arcs. Aren't they afraid that someone will see them? Hessling is drawing water.

She hides, from the mob, inside the wagon. Great moment; shadows of sticks on the glass doors.

Escaping she falls down a pit and becomes half mad. It rains while she dreams. Here the Renoir touches. Floating from the ground onto the branches of trees; standing in an aisle of pillars, watching reptiles enter the picture diagonally. The rain makes her hair a net of stars; she rides a white horse through the storm clouds.

The squire's son cannot sleep for thinking of the little girl whose home has been burnt down. In the storm he seeks her. (See the great storm scene and the hero's smart line in mackintoshes).

Interior shots; reality frozen in icicle shadows on the walls. Convalescence. A title to say that the young man is becoming eloquent. His face cross-cut with cows in a stream. Who is being compared to the cows? "And Virginia, in her humble condition, bursts into tears." So much for eloquence.

Uncle comes back and kicks his niece in the face. The brave girl carries on her slavey's duties in her own way; one plate at a time, tossed into the air and caught before drying. Uncle steals money. Catherine does not say a word. But it is too late in the film to start a real misunderstanding, and, in the end, the lovers go off to Algeria, with

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the squire and his wife. Cut yourself a piece of cake, everybody.

One interesting point is raised. It never was sufficiently commented on in the old films, and is never blamed in the new—the equal quality of make up. Mother, father, brother, sister, all wear the same make up, all look alike in the texture of their skin.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

SKETCHES BY LEN LYE.

Tusalava, the film by Len Lye, is really a prologue to two further episodes.

During the greater part of the picture the screen is divided into two parts. In the left hand panel is a self shape, which develops into a primitive totem. There is the attacking element which attempts to assimilate the shape, but, in so doing, is itself annihilated. The symbolism is concerned with external influences corrupting the true spirit of the artist. The attacking element can be taken to be romanticism, eroticism, etcetera.

The sequence begins with a series of dots—life cells. There is no cutting, beloved of the Russians, or jugglery with the camera; the screen is considered instead of the camera. One is reminded, from time to time, of the work of Kandinsky.

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The second section, as yet unmade, deals with earth and sea figures. Layer upon layer the earth builds up, and the sea corrodes, washes away. The earth figures become palpitating light, recessed circles of vibrations; the sea figure forms a contact, and, again, there is annihilation in a series of electric sparks.

A ballet movement is planned for the third section; a solution to the problems raised in the scenario.

Len Lye is a great artist with great ideas. I wish him, and Mr. Norman Cameron (who, I am told, helped so much in the past), the courage to finish their splendid project.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

THE AVENUE PRESENTS.

The sound cartoon has given a convention to the cinema : the sounds and movements come *from the machine*.

Mr. Stuart Davis will show a colour cartoon, *Hiawatha* (Peroff Pictures, Inc.). If a hill is limned out Hiawatha walks up and down each undulation, never across; the convention of the filmic machines is unconventional.

Colour makes the cartoon historical : it makes us long for the day when we will see Mickey struck pink as well as a literal " all of a heap ".

O. B.

BOOK REVIEWS.

Foto-auge: Jan Tschichold (Verlag, Dr. Fritz Vedekind & Co., Stuttgart).

In the days of Charlemagne, says the author, only the scholar could write; to-day, every child can write. To-morrow, will everyone be able to take a photograph? Will camera classes replace antiquated drawing lessons? Will the man who cannot handle his camera be branded as an illiterate?

The author goes on to point out that those people who find photography "far-fetched in section, stiff and unorganic" have the same reproach ready for the graphic arts of the moderns.

The illustrations cover the usual ground; usual in these beautifully produced German books, but still revolutionary in England. Florence Henri, with her strip of mirror and crystal globes; El Lissitzky, with his bottle of paste; Max Ernst, with painting on photographic backgrounds; Moholy-Nagy, with a Paris drain; Peterhans, with the bits of everything that make up still life (death?) They are all very clever, and, I suppose, they have to go on—one with the mirror and globes, the other with the bottle of paste—for fear they should not be functioning on the tremendous day when England becomes alive to the world beyond the walls of The Royal Photographic Society.

Plate 73 is a police record of a man murdered with violence. "Next slide, please," as the lecturers say.

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Das Deutsche Litchibild (Robert & Bruno Schultz, 12, Schellingstrasse, Berlin) is another presageful collection. Gerhard Riebick has a sublime nude diver. Hedda Walter has posed a gorilla in ducal manner.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

Das Kofferkino, by R. Dahlgreen. (Wilh. Knapp, Halle, Saale). Price: 1 RM (1 sh.)

If you see a man in the street with a little suitcase in his hand, it may be his gramophone, his typewriter or his projector. And if in addition to it, he is carrying a knapsack on his shoulder it is surely the screen, for you can fold and roll it in a parcel, even if its size is 10 x 10 feet.

To-day, the eminent importance of the film for schools, shall we say, is an undisputed matter of fact, and it is only due to the technical difficulties of projecting films, of buying all the expensive apparatus, that film does not yet obtain the place which it rightly claims. And so every technical progress, which makes film accessible to a greater number of pupils is no more merely a technical one. And the box-projector seems to have achieved such a kind of progress. Besides schools it is used in business houses (for advertising, etc.), or for mere entertainment.

Dahlgreen gives a report on the box-projectors in a little German booklet; he describes the various types of apparatus. We read that one needs nothing more than ordinary domestic

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electric current, that the weight of the box-projectors varies from 25 to 45 lbs, and that the reels take about 1,200 feet of film. The types, described by Dahlgreen are : Kinobox B and C (by Zeiss Ikon, Dresden), Knirps, De Vry, and Jacky (Debie).

If you are interested in box-projectors you will find any amount of valuable information in this book.

T. WEISS.

The Informer (Nacht nach dem Verrat).

Let us thank Mr. Ogilvie for showing Robinson's film silent. As though paying homage to his Avenue Pavilion days, Mr. Ogilvie, not content with leaving us undistracted by unfriendly chatter, went further, and permitted the orchestral accompaniment to remain very much in the background, frequently, in fact, to disappear altogether, thus heightening the power of the film and incidentally thumbing his nose at the talkie merchants and their loud-speaker films, possibly for the last time. The Gentleman responsible for the horrid noises which must to a great extent have caused the Fall, or rather the collapse of the *Fall of the House of Usher*, should think it over.

Although the *Informer* was directed by a German, with Lya de Putti and Lars Hansen in the leading rôles, it proves at least that a good film can come out of a British studio through a British censor, and it is difficult to understand

why the patriots did not give it a bit more boosting, because it fully deserves it. Perhaps that's the reason.

If *Asphalt* is accused of being on too grand a scale for its content, the trouble about the *Informer* lies in precisely the opposite direction. The film might have been terrific. Directed by a Russian it would have exploited the more universal aspects of the events portrayed, would also have held more of the splendid violence which is in the tradition of the Russian film. This is not to say that the Russian method or achievement is the sole desideratum, but this story of the Irish rebellion is so eminently suitable for treatment à la Russe that it becomes almost a duty to lament over what might have been.

As it is, most of the usual childish concessions were dropped. The story is thrilling and restless, and the feeling of uncertainty, uncertainty as to what will come, of a letter, a walk in the street, a simple gesture, serves to intensify and make still more real the terror of uncertainty in the minds of the people moving in a world admitting of one distinction—hunters and hunted, this last (subjective) uncertainty itself superbly conveyed by a concession of incidents which contrive to be cumulative in effect.

The best of the acting comes from Lars Hansen, who has a rôle worthy of him, and a director who evidently understands his qualities. Lya de Putti, on the other hand, fails, one feels through no fault of her own or of the director.

Lighting and technique stamp the picture as the work of the Director of *Warning Shadows*, *Manon Lescaut* and *Looping the Loop*.

H. A. M.

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The *Hannoverscher Anzeiger*, Anzeiger-Hochhaus, Hannover, a German paper, has edited a new supplement which is devoted to the problems of cultural film; they call it *Rund um den Kulturfilm**. A cinema for cultural films belongs to the paper, the editor of which explains in a leading article the tasks of his movy-theatre—which seems to be a similar institution to the KAMERA in Berlin—and what he understands by the term “cultural film”. We must not confound cultural film with documentary film, for this would be too narrow a limitation for the scope of culture. Any film, which means an enrichment of the spectator’s mind and being must be called a cultural film. It is the task of the *Kulturfilmbühne* to bring the most valuable films—viewed from the artistic standpoint—and to satisfy those, who are either oversaturated by the average production methods, or those who have a hostile attitude toward the cinema—though they believe in its possibilities—because they have only seen the usual Kitsch-films.

The specimen-copy, which has been sent to us contains, furthermore, two interesting articles, one by Lola Kreutzberg, the other by Th. Dreyer, and an essay on the popular documentary film, as well as reproductions of stills.

The editor hopes to receive contributions from *Close Up* readers if they have something to say about cinema and the question of sound-film.

T. WEISS.

* Concerning the Culture-film.

HOLLYWOOD NOTES.

Hell's Angels, a twelve-reel picture dealing with World War aviation, has broken all Hollywood records for time, footage and money expended. It has been three years in the making, has consumed two million feet of film, and has cost upwards of four million dollars. It has employed the services of twenty-thousand extras, thirty-six cameramen, one-hundred-and-thirty-seven airplane pilots, and twelve scenario editors. The original silent version, almost completed about a year ago, was scrapped upon the advent of the phono-film and the picture was re-made in the new medium, with several members of the cast replaced, including Greta Nissen, the leading woman. Howard Huges, a young man of twenty-five, with unlimited personal capital at his command, is the producer as well as the director of the picture. According to present plans it will be released sometime this winter.

* * *

M-G-M are following the lead of Warner Brothers and Paramount-Lasky in using the radio as a means of advertising. They have recently appropriated five-hundred-thousand dollars for the purpose. Their weekly programmes, broadcast from a chain of stations reaching across the continent, consist of songs, monologues, and skits by their featured players, as well as news concerning current studio activities. During the year, with the inauguration of the contemplated hook-up with European radio stations, these programmes will be heard simultaneously in England, Holland, and Germany.

* * *

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In celebration of the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of Virgil, the American Classical League are undertaking a mammoth film production of the *Aeneid*. It is designed as an educational rather than a commercial venture, and to this end the League have enlisted the interest and the aid of the various Hollywood producers, who will combine forces in the making of this classic film, the estimated cost of which will be about a million dollars. Aside from the leading rôles, which will be played by Hollywood professionals, the players will be recruited from the student bodies of Los Angeles colleges and high schools and will contribute their services without pay. Credit for the idea of the picture and the aroused interest in it goes to Miss Anne Edwards, a teacher of Latin in Beverly Hills, a residential suburb of Hollywood.

* * *

M-G-M are so well assured of Greta Garbo's success as a talking screen actress since the completion of her two versions of *Anna Christie*, in English and German, that they have assigned her the star rôle in the phono-film adaptation of *Romance*, the popular Edward Sheldon stage play. Clarence Brown will direct the picture.

* * *

Bride 66 is to be Arthur Hammerstein's first production for United Artists. Special interest attaches to this initial film enterprise of Mr. Hammerstein's, in that it strikingly reflects the changing order in the theatrical world. For years an outstanding New York stage producer, Mr. Hammerstein now concedes that talking films have spelled the doom of stage musical comedy and he is accordingly

transferring his interests as well as his residence to Hollywood and will devote himself to phono-film productions. Of further interest in connection with this first picture of his, *Bride 66*, is the fact that it will mark the return to the screen of Dorothy Dalton, his wife, who in the hey-day of the silent movies ranked among the most popular of the screen stars.

* * *

The British purists who have been lying awake at night worrying over the invasion of the "American language" via the phono-film, will no doubt find fresh cause for worry in the titles of two forthcoming Hollywood films. These are *Nix on Dames*, a Fox comedy, and *Puttin' on the Ritz*, a United Artists revue.

* * *

Universal Company's news reels will hereafter dispense with printed titles. In place of them a speaking voice will introduce and describe the various pictorial items. Films of this character, portraying current events, are extremely popular in the United States, and there is scarcely a theatre that does not include them regularly in their programmes. In recognition of this popular interest the Fox Company are setting aside certain of their theatres to be devoted exclusively to the showing of news pictures.

* * *

Paramount-Lasky engineers have perfected a portable radio transmitting set for use in the recording of sounds and speech in aerial scenes. It was successfully given its first practical tryout in Charles Rogers' new aviation picture, *Young Eagles*. Microphones installed in the planes trans-

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mitted the sound waves to the studio recording laboratories, where they were synchronized with the camera shots of the scenes.

* * *

Two more pictures depicting Hollywood studio life are following Paramount-Lasky's *Behind the Make-up*. One of these is Buster Keaton's first talking film, *On the Set*, an M-G-M production. The other is a Fox picture, *Fast Workers*, which not only reveals the personalities and the inside activities of the studio, but also opens to the world the doors of Hollywood's cafés, dance "palaces," beach clubs, and other social gathering places of the movie-land colony.

C. H.

Mr. Ralh Steiner has projected for me his film H_2O (see stills) and has, at the same time, expressed himself orally upon his conception of the amateur's field. He is not interested, nor does he think the amateur should be interested, in what he terms "trick" filming. If Mr. Steiner refers to aimless virtuosity, he is quite justified in his opposition to such devices as multiple exposure, direct use of the negative, prismatic distortion, truncation by angle, etc.; but when these are conceived in a pre-ordained and integrated structure, they are certainly legitimate. However, I am inclined to urge, with Mr. Steiner, the amateur's initial concern with the non-modified methodology or technique, for the reason, as Steiner put it, that the simple content of the

cinema-medium has been far from conclusively exploited. Steiner's own film is a good example of the direct-method photographer's film. Unlike Gremillon's *Tour au Large*, it limits itself severely to the surface rush and pattern of water; it does not concern itself with volumes save at the start, when the film is given its momentum by water spurting from a pipe. After this beginning the water is an unimpeded tempo of changing surfaces: bubbles and froth, shadows of intermediate set patterns (bridges, etc.) and liquid shadows and grains. The film is sustained in its simple rapid pace (the pace of the water surface) its textural quality—very smooth and lustrous—and its design. It is not yet a cinematic structure, since structures demand more than surfaces; there is no lingering upon a surface to penetrate it; no scrutiny of separating water (spray as in *Moana*) but it is a film of merit in the American attitude. That is, a film of this sort ought to work into the American practice easily, since it asks not for the non-literal eye, but for the sharpening of the literal eye. The latter can be sharpened by a simple discipline of looking long and steadily and with the intention of seeing the quality of a thing (*photogénie*) as the camera can see it, if it is disciplined. The dynamic category of this film is of the sequential, linear straight-ahead movement of the American cinema, discoverable in films as wide apart thematically as *Chang* and *Underworld*. It convinces one, in its modest way, that literalness need not mean bluntness. If films can be decorative, this is a decorative film. I use the word decorative in its immediate sense of antonym, as German painters use it, to *mahlerisch* or, as the French use it, to *plastique*, both of which terms may

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be translated by *structural*. Ultimately, the decorative film is an anomaly: a progressive, changing form cannot be decorative—the decorative is created into or upon an established structure (a mural, a stone column, a hat). Perhaps the film of this order might be classed as a “foot-note film.” But after the major forms and with them, we shall still want our minor, including the animated cartoon, which Mr. Steiner, among others, admires. And Mr. Steiner has done wisely to avoid the actor, in his first film. I prefer it a thousand times to Paul Fejos’ first American picture, *The Last Moment*, where the human content of professional players did very little to aid the water. The distinction is one between an amateur and an amateur-looking-west.

Vendanges

par Georges Rouquier

Un nouveau petit film de jeune a été récemment présenté à Paris, qui mérite de retenir l'attention. Il s'agit d'un essai très réussi et qui marque les débuts d'un collaborateur d'Eugen Deslaw : Georges Rouquier.

Cette courte bande à sujet documentaire, réalisée avec des moyens très restreints (comme hélas la plupart des films de recherches) a pour titre *Vendanges*. Elle a été tournée pendant le dernier été dans le sud de la France. Au lieu de réaliser une oeuvre purement documentaire, sèche et terne, Rouquier s'est efforcé au contraire de traduire en images très “ciné-

graphiques " les nombreuses et diverses phases de la cueillette des grappes de raisin, recherchant toujours, et souvent avec grand bonheur, le caractère poétique, visuel ou curieux des vendanges. Essais et recherches n'ont pas été menagés dans cette bande originale, d'avant garde presque, peut on dire, bien que le sujet soit loin d'être abstrait, et qui abonde en vues harmonieuses et en plans étonnants.

Il y a là un réel souci d'art et un goût parfait qu'il était bon de mentionner car cette oeuvre qui franchit courageusement les bornes habituelles du documentaire ordinaire apportera aux spectateurs quelques minutes d'émotion esthétique vraie et sincère.

Nogent Eldorado du Dimanche

par Marcel Carné

C'est aussi pendant l'été dernier qu'un de nos confrères de *Cinémagazine*, Marcel Carné, jeune cinégraphiste qui a travaillé déjà dans d'importantes productions, a réalisé avec la collaboration de Sanvoisin, un documentaire que l'on peut qualifier de " spécialisé " : *Nogent Eldorado du Dimanche (Paris Week-end)*. Une salle d'avant garde n'a pas hésité à retenir cette petite bande et on ne peut pas nier qu'elle a remporté un estimable succès. En 400 mètres (et à ce propos Carné me permettra sans doute de faire remarquer que son film ecourté ne pourrait être que meilleur), le réalisateur a peint très agréablement-une journée de plaisir des parisiens " moyens ", l'été, sur les bords de la Marne.

Les idées heureuses pullulent et, au contraire de ce qu'on

CLOSE UP

pouvait attendre, elles ont été habilement choisies et groupées. Le début surtout est reminiscence de *Trois dans un Sous-sol*, le fameux film russe. Nous voyons le départ des Parisiens qui laissent Paris désert (à cet endroit quelques scènes heureuses : la Bourse abandonnée, les magasins cachés par leurs armures métalliques, une vue perspective de machines à écrire recouvertes de leurs housses).

Puis ce sont les plaisirs nombreux de la banlieue, nage, aviron, sports, kermesses, bals.

Enfin le retour un peu plus triste à la pensée du lendemain. Je tenais à dire quelques mots du film de mon sympathique confrère car il est lourd de plaisantes promesses.

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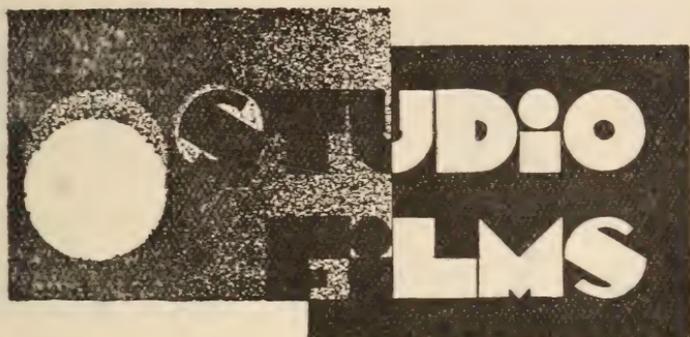
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AS IS

BY THE EDITOR.

The second crop of war films is about to descend on us—the war films without “ saccharine sentiment or anything that smacks of hokum ”. *Sergeant Grischa* is one, but perhaps the most important is *All Quiet on the Western Front*, a book that has upset so many by falling short of the Sapper and Bairnsfather precedent. Someone wrote that if this was the spirit of the German front lines, no wonder the Germans were beaten, and that was a reproach, my friends, for men must massacre and women must urge them to it—a lady who writes of World Affairs has told us so. Let us not, says she, only in the language of a parliamentary candidate, let us not call such shirkers effeminate, for women deserve no such slander. Perhaps we can send these meddling dames to fight the next war, and they too may return purified, if they don't, that won't matter much either. Others have said the book is sensational, and perhaps they believe a war book should be deep and twi-lit, like angelus in a cloister, or if they mean those rude words, you know, the bible is a bit

of a sensation, too, and so is the Restoration, and even Shakespeare in the school editions contains *the* most shocking puns, my dear!

No, *All Quiet* was not a *nice* book, for it asked in as many words, who has the right to send men to a death we do not permit to the most decrepid of our diseased cattle? If Universal gets that stated on film, they will have done something more revolutionary than perhaps they realise, for, indeed, who has the right? Pabst's forthcoming war film* takes this question as theme. Such a theme must state that any country that sets its civilians at war is being repulsive, cowardly and generally unfit to exist, and that is surely, as they still say, saying a mouthful. Germany or Russia can perhaps make such a statement most opportunely, for they both kicked out their incubus and started again, so that if *All Quiet* is likely to create more excitement among the general public, Pabst's film is likely to be more apt.

I read in the Universal booklet that *All Quiet* will be a straight and honest attempt, that Carl Laemmle Jr. has adopted a policy of hands off, so that the inherent genius of these men, (Remarque, the author, Lewis Milestone, the director, and Maxwell Anderson, who made the adaptation) will have full and complete opportunity. They have a soft eyed boy with blonde soft hair, unknown more or less, to play the leading part of Paul; one, Lewis Ayres who played with Greta the Great in a film called *The Kiss*. Rather a mother's boy, rather a Barry Norton of the *What Price Glory* days. And that, by way of a start, seems odd, for Paul was

* *Westfront, 1918*, from E. Johannsen's novel. A Nero-Film. (Tobis).

CLOSE -UP

a sensitive of a different order, an undeluded not abnormally protected youth whose reactions of horror were more humanitarian than personal. Perhaps it is significant, also, of the method, that ten miles of trenches were constructed? Anyhow, it suggests a scale, a million dollar scale, by which the film will make its appeal rather than in the thematic accusation implied and required. Perhaps I do it an injustice. I hope I do. The one thing certain is that the better it is the more vehement will be the refutations of the gentlemen who never went to the war, and the ladies who want to get on with the next.

* * *

And what about the Wide Film Menace?

These are the words of Mr. Arthur Dent, Managing Director of Wardour Films: "Wide film will mean new equipment from first to last in the industry, new studio equipment, possibly new studios, new negative, new projection, equipment, possibly new cinemas. From the point of view of the British distributors in this country, if America goes over to wide film, British distributors may almost go out of business."

Faced with this appalling future, many came together in agreement that a group should at once be formed to organise a campaign against those now inaugurating a wide-film project in the States—a million pound group someone suggested. This group was to discuss and co-ordinate the British industry's views on wide film in order to place them specifically before the Society of Motion Picture Engineers of America, whose session in April will be partly devoted to evolving a decision for the standardisation of wide film.

The idea was, of course, to make an entente with the Society of Motion Picture Engineers, through the functioning of which Great Britain would not be ignored and defeated, but that the development of wide film should call for a basis of international adjustment.

Whether this will come about remains to be seen. At the present moment three different and unrelated systems of wide film are in operation. It is evident that such haphazardness cannot meet with success. These three systems differ considerably and need totally different equipment; the limitations thus impinged are evident.

And what of wide film abroad? In France, Germany, Russia and in all countries, too, without internal production which are dependent on imported films? How foolish it would be, how chaotic, for any unit to dash indiscriminately into wide film production until a standardization has been effected. The gravity of the situation for those concerned is that everything constructed must be scrapped—from the camera and the studio to the projector and often the theatre too.

Wide film, it should be understood, is not *enlarged* film, as produced by the magnascope. It is a new seventy millimeter stock in place of the thirty-five millimeter stock now in use, and its effect is one of great width while the height of the screen remains more or less unchanged. It is this width which will wipe so many hundred little kinos from the side streets, and they, alas, have been our mainstay, for so often have they booked the cheap films, and so often these include the good films for which there is so little sale.

KENNETH MACPHERSON.

AN INTRODUCTION TO "THE FOURTH DIMENSION IN THE KINO"

The ensuing article, *The Fourth Dimension in the Kino*, is of vast importance to students of cinema, professional and otherwise, and comes at a felicitous moment in the history of "the decline and fall" of the silent film. It is in part a fragment of what Eisenstein has already said concerning montage in his recent Film Society lectures.

At this period of blind grouping, every ray of light that will serve to guide a way toward aesthetic organisation and logic, that will help to excavate an impeccable foundation for the new art of tone-film, is of vital importance.

Eisenstein's contributions are more than a ray of light. They reveal means whereby the somewhat procrustean attempts that have been made to bring sound and sight together, can be turned to an active creative force, working along the line of recognized root principle, and understanding of the elements that compose a comparatively unexplored medium.

Without full understanding, without complete awareness of the function of sound-sight, nobody can give to it the essential organic health that must come first. Sound-sight must be self-aware, its anatomy, its needs, its possibilities

—even its apologia, must be explored and mapped. To spring casually into an apathetic world is not wonderful enough. The unequipped, raw state of ignorance must give place to education, discipline, culture, productivity and strength.

Maybe it will. But such teachings as these must first be assimilated by those in whose hands the talking film is still being hewn to a strange, uncomfortable form.

I have prefaced the essay, not presumptuously, I hope, but to help those who may have difficulty in following the technicalities to understand more fully that they might otherwise have done.

* * *

“ Mutual relations of conflict ” Imagine any point where two scenes are joined together. Between the relinquishing of the old and the acceptance of the new, there will be a kind of mental “ re-snapshotting ”. The relating, the knitting together, comes after this instant of “ conflict ”. From sharply contrasted construction to “ transfusion ” embraces various possibilities of effect in the composite (that is, composed) structure, all of which are the concern of the regisseur.

It was with this aim in view that about two years ago in Germany, it was planned, although it never came about, that ten directors would agree on a certain scenario, and each make it independently according to his own method.

The results were afterwards to be compared.

Let us assume that I have read the scenario, and that I see it as a film of vast inferential texture, interplaying up and down the planes of consciousness. My neighbour reads it,

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and sees it stung with the epigrammatic impact of the "physiological". He will make it that way. The same scene, in short, can be seen in many ways, can be "dominated" not by dominants but by *temperaments*. Eisenstein himself here says, "The characteristics of the dominant are variable and profoundly relative".

"I walked in the rain", will be, in another author's way of experiencing it, "Rain beat upon me as I walked", and in another's—"A light sprinkling of rain was lifting scent from the earth like tall grass, and I was out in it, hearing the trickles, the gulps, the small swishings of the opening soil". Another—"Damnation! More rain! What a world! What people! What a life!" and again—"My best clothes and no umbrella! Perennial signal for a tropical downpour!"

All these, each of these, could perhaps by itself fit in the context of each and every one of the supposedly quoted authors (sic!). It is the prevailing mood, the dominant of the total that brings us up with a jerk, reading something like this:—"You may think you're all the cheese, I says, but what's one maggot more or less, I says, and rain was beating on me in a proud, austere rebellion." And this example though literary (if you can bear to think of it as that!) will serve to show Eisenstein's meaning in letting go the orthodox method of montage according to dominants (significance, shall we say, sentence by sentence) and concentrating on a finality of intentions—that is to say, intentions in place of sentences, and sweep rather than pedantry: a unified, orchestrated whole, relying on mass grandeur rather than niggling detail *in its effect*. In its effect, because the

ultimate success of such a method can be relatively successful only insofar as it is the more meticulous, selective and ascetic. Anything else is grammar, more or less. And grammar is a schoolroom study.

Eisenstein is more concerned with the use of incident, of image, of expression, out of its rigid, "grammatically imposed" context, in a form of "surprise" that will make an instant pounce or spark—very much like an electric current—of recognition and absorption in the beholding brain.

The impressionists might claim him for this reason, but their sometimes unlawful liberties, evasions, shall we say, must be evidenced against them. Expediency is, to Eisenstein, no justification for relaxed effort. The realists, too, might claim him. "Stark realism" is never very long absent from any discussion of his work. Stark realism, meaning what? Impressionism if you like, for what is action but the summary of many factors? To leave "stark realism" unquestioned would denote a poor critic; realism being "like real" would go almost far enough, but realism being "as real as possible" or even "more real than possible" would be no less a turning of the back on truth than to tag his method "impressionistic". A man sitting in a chair may be just a man sitting in a chair. Realistically, that is all he can be. Symbolically, or suggestively he can be anything. War, famine, love, eternity, betrayal, what you will. Even the chair without the man. Bryher writes of *Ten Days that Shook the World*,* referring to Kerensky's chair "at the end of a long table"—

* See *Film Problems of Soviet Russia*. Pool. 6s.

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“ comparing the treatment of Kerensky in this film and in *The End of St. Petersburg*, his actual flight in Pudovkin’s film, though more personal, cannot achieve the power of the single empty chair, which throws back at the receptive spectator whole cycles of history.”

It is true that objectivism judiciously displaced from “ rigid context ” becomes subjectivism, becomes associative symbolism, with an allied hold on actuality and vision—a method of killing two birds with one stone, in fact.

There is Eisenstein’s secret. His insistence on the physiological is not of necessity insistence on the physical. The physiology of psychology has already been sufficiently recognised for this to be clear. Eisenstein’s “ physiology ” is inseparable from the psychic, from the inferential—as, in fact, it always must be—“ The physiological process of the higher nerve centres is physiological only according as it is also psychic ”.

A face that turns at just such and such a moment does so because in so doing, it will lift a veil before vision; in its “ annunciatory ” sense. This will not seem exaggerated to those who will consider that our daily moods are swayed and evoked more readily by trifles than by the general fate of our fortunes. Dr. Hanns Sachs, Vienna’s famous psychoanalyst, writing in an earlier *Close Up*, said, for example, of one of the sailor’s faces in *Potemkin*:

“ A friend who had just seen Eisenstein’s film for the third or fourth time, explained to me that at one point in the representation he had been very strongly moved without being able to discover what it was that had moved

him. On each occasion this experience came to him at the moment when, by the captain's command, the sail-cloth is being carried on board. In the midst of this operation the head of the fogleman of the guard called up for the shooting, emerges clearly for a moment, turned to watch. This watching head seems to have no particular expression, and any expression it might bear, would, owing to the fractional time during which it appears in the picture, be lost upon the spectator.

“As my friend is a particularly intelligent and experienced film-professional, I felt urged to discover the solution of the riddle, and when next I saw the film, I paid particularly close attention to the scene that had so profoundly impressed him and that yet in itself seemed so slight and so incidental. Picture the situation: on the one hand the guard standing to attention, firm, stern, mechanised by discipline—on the other, the sailors driven hither and thither in the maze of conflicting emotions of rage, despair and long-practised obedience.

“When the captain has the sail-cloth brought along, tension rises to its height and our sympathies are concentrated upon the question as to which will be the stronger, human pity or the force of discipline. Will the guard shoot or refrain? When, at this moment, one of the guard—whom so far we have considered as a creature bereft of individuality by drilling, a mere mechanically functioning unit—is dissociated from the group, and by means of a movement (independent and not dictated by discipline) by looking round at the sail-cloth as it is being carried past, betrays, however slightly, his character of a human being

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involved in the proceedings, our question begins to be answered. We know that even the guard, in its totality an unfeeling machine, is made up of men capable of sympathy, and we begin to hope.

“ In order to produce this moment of extreme tension it was of the highest importance that the transformation should appear suddenly and unexpectedly at the moment of greatest danger, at the sounding of the word of command : fire. Only thus could come about the powerful release carrying each spectator with it. But for this operation, sudden only in its arrival, the spectator’s mind must be cunningly prepared. Something within him must have desired, surmised, anticipated an event which otherwise would remain outside him, strange, a rescue from the clouds, the work of a *deus ex machina*. The sense of a strong psychic release is to be attained only in the case of a sudden ending of a painful to-and-fro between hope and fear. The onlooker must anticipate the turn of affairs without himself being aware of his anticipation. This suddenly seen head of the leader of the guard is to be counted amongst the things that assist his unconscious expectation.”

The sailor’s head has been more or less devoid of expression. It is a matter of reference—what has gone before, what is likely to come. You must look to the *overtone*.

It is this overtone with which Eisenstein is now concerned, the overtone method of montage as opposed to the orthodox method “ according to dominants ”. The undertonal, too. Says Eisenstein (speaking still of *The General Line*) “ this

montage has been based not on a particular dominant, but takes as its dominant the sum total of the appeals of all the stimuli." The sum total of the appeals—an emanation. You could think of it as that.

What has gone to make this "emanation"? How is one to judge so tenuous a thing, to recognise it, gauge it, fashion it? *At the source.* By motivation. By pre-plan, by intention. Orthodox montage and orthodox filming are onlookers' montage and onlookers' filming. That is to say, actions take place that are controlled and observed through recognisable externals. Motivation here is the telling of a story.

Eisenstein in *The General Line*, has chosen a psychic-physiological basis according to observances made over a long period (of which he is now writing a book) in a study of the laws of pathetics. Pathos, he has found, in its every manifestation in art, literature and life, derives from a single source, is governed by defined, brief laws, and carries the same application into various fields. These laws he has applied to create a pathetic-physiological appeal for matter which in itself is not emotional—cattle grazing, a religious procession, people worshipping in the fields. With this aim in view, every scene has been composed to create a special nervous reflexive response, as a unit first, and in montage as a whole irrespective of "individual attractions".

"The fundamental character of the piece is taken to be the total ultimate effect on the cortex of the human brain as a whole, irrespective of the ways along which its constituent appeals arrived at that end".

'Overtone is the cumulative effect of responses continually



From *The Earth*, a new Vufku film directed by Dovjenko, whose recent film, *Arsenal*, has created a sensation in Russia and America, where it was shown in somewhat abbreviated form.



Photo: Prometheus-Film

Turksib, the Vostok-Kino film, directed by V. Turin, has been bought by Prometheus-film. *Turksib* is the story of the construction of the Turkestan-Siberian Railway. A full account was in the December *Close Up*.



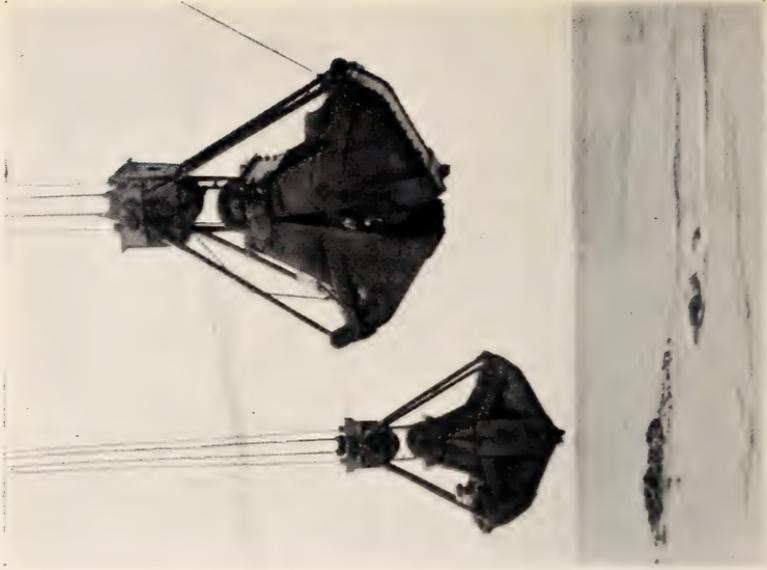
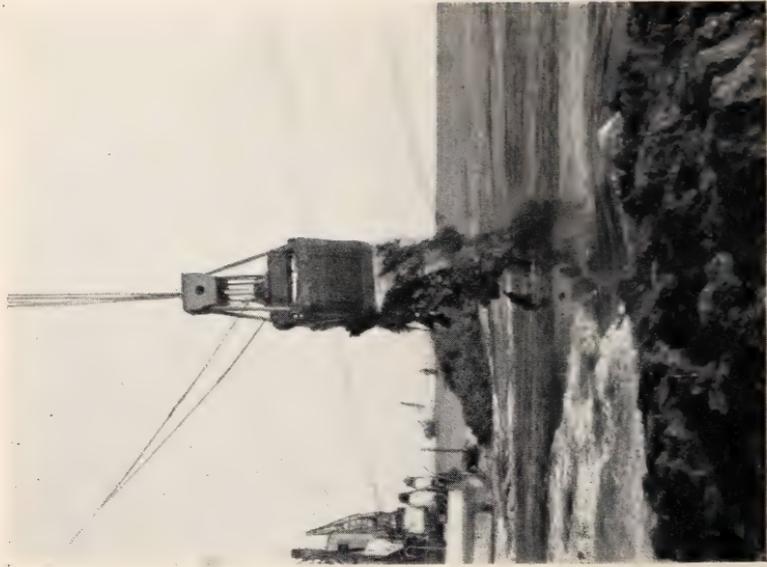
Photo: Prometheus-Film

Transport. The old method and the new. From *Turksib*.



"*Quand les épis se courbent . . .*", a film conceived and realised by J. Van Canstein, a young Dutch *cinéaste*, with the collaboration of Jean Dréville, whose film, *Autour de L'Argent*, will be remembered by *Close Up* readers. See note in Comment and Review.





From Joris Ivens' new film, *Zuiderzee-Arbeiden*, a film in the manner of *The Bridge*, treating the draining of the Zuiderzee. On left, the dyke is almost closed.

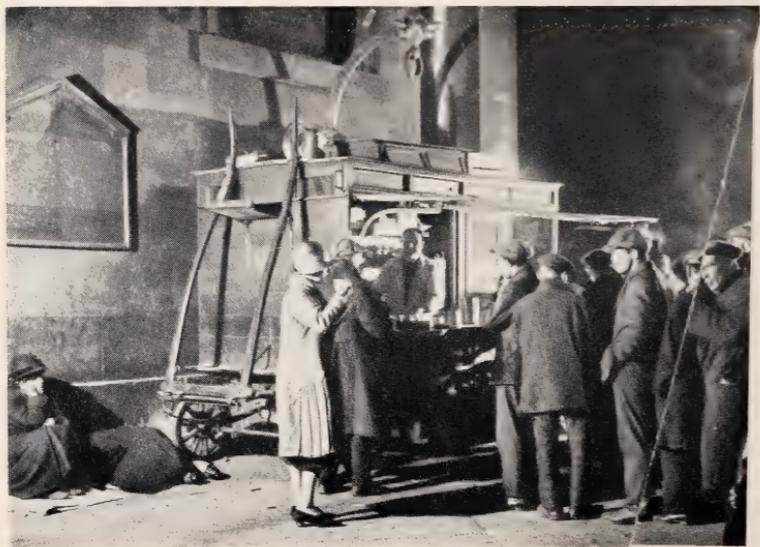


From *Zuiderzee-Arbeiten*. Above, the last wave surges through before the dyke meets from end to end. Joris Ivens has taken this film with him to Moscow, where he is lecturing.





Two episodes from *The Night Patrol*, a film of London's after-dark, dealing with the destitute and homeless hordes that bring drama and tragedy to the dim streets. See note in Comment and Review.





Hallelujah, King Vidor's all negro production for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. The girl is torn between religious ecstasy and lust, a state of tension which communicates itself to the evangelist, who bears her into the hut while the crowd waits. Her cap is part of the immersing robe. Nina Mae McKinney and Daniel Haynes.



One of the Evangelical scenes cut from *Hallelujah*. Daniel Haynes
"by the river of Jordan."



Uno Henning and Norah Baring in *A Cottage on Dartmoor*, Anthony Asquith's new film for British Instructional. Uno Henning will be remembered for his excellent work in *The Love of Jeanne Ney*.



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called into action. A perfectly composed work, examinable and flawless, may leave "a nasty taste in the mouth" Overtone is the final dominant. The nasty taste will cease to remain so intransitive a term when you can "put your finger on what is wrong". The work of art will be judged not on its technical or tonic value, but on its over-tonal stimulus. "Pervaded by an indefinable coarseness" or "pathos" or indefinable this, that or the other, is a term that proves detection of overtone. But the overtone is not absolute. The "indefinable coarseness" of one critic may be the "queer, savage beauty" of another. The artist who knows what he is about, hears and judges. Pronouncements are confessions.

Eisenstein refers to "the impossibility of the montage combinations in which *The General Line* abounds". "See" is inaccurate. "Hear" is inaccurate. "See and hear" is inaccurate. *Sense*, says Eisenstein, is the clue to overtone or fourth dimension. I sense—vividly, faintly, overwhelmingly, not at all. I sense must mean I re-organise, I *resound*. To see means little, means nothing, unless it is a process of absorption and creation. You need only walk round a picture gallery to know this, or to go to the opera, and realise the moment when you react no more to what you are seeing or what you are hearing, though, while you remain there, you will continue to see or to hear. With this saturation point, comes the cessation of creative energy that makes appreciation and assimilation. "I sense" (I *resound*) is, therefore, the paramount consideration, and *subject to almost no restriction*. Psychic-physiological experience, conscious and unconscious, active and passive,

symbolic and “ realistic ”, is a source of infinite supply, and authentic on almost any plane of organised, scientific selection. The new overtone montage will avoid saturation. It will stimulate and provoke, thwart and incite, until response is absolute. I would like to see the method carried over to the “ temptation ” film!

* * *

In this introduction I have made use freely of the terms “ tonal and overtone ” montage. This term is Eisenstein’s and although it will enter now into general use, it was used by Eisenstein in these articles (which were begun in August, 1929) for the first time.

K. M.

THE FOURTH DIMENSION IN THE KINO

Just a year ago—August 19th, 1928, when the montage of *The General Line* had not yet been effected, I wrote in *Art Life* No. 34, in connection with the sentiment of the Japanese theatre :

“ . . . In Kabuki . . . there is a single monistic perception of the theatrical ‘ appeal ’. The Japanese regards all theatrical attractions not as incommensurable units of various

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categories of effects (on the various sense-organs) but as the single unit of *the theatre*.

“ Addressing himself to the various sense organs, he builds up his calculation (of each separate ‘ piece ’) on the final *total* of the appeals to the human brain, not taking account of the incidental deviations by which he arrived at his end ”. . .

Art Life, No 34. 19. VIII. 28.

This description of the “ Kabuki ” theatre proved prophetic.

This method became the basis of the montage of *The General Line*.

* * *

Orthodox montage is montage according to *dominants*, i.e. joining together of the parts in accordance with their predominant character. Montage according to tempo. Montage according to the dominant infra-cadre tendency. Montage according to the lengths (degrees of slowness) of the pieces and so forth. Montage according to foreground, or background.

The dominating characters of two parts placed side by side are felt in certain mutual relations of conflict with one another, whence arises a certain expressive effect (by which we mean here a purely *montage* effect).

This condition embraces all the stages of intensiveness of montage conjunction—of shock.

From complete contrast of dominants, i.e. sharply contrasted construction, up to barely perceptible “ transfusion ”

of part into part (all the cases of conflict—including, therefore, the case of its entire absence).

As regards the dominant itself, it is impossible to consider it as something independent, absolute and invariably stable. By various technical methods of fashioning the piece, its dominant may be more or less defined, but never absolutely.

The characteristics of the dominant are variable and profoundly relative.

The manifestations of its characteristics depends on that very conjunction of parts, of whose conjunction it is itself a condition.

Circle? One equation with two unknowns?

A dog catching hold of its own tail?

No, simply an exact definition of that which is.

Actually.

If we have even a *series* of montage pieces :

1. A grey-haired old man,
2. A grey-haired old woman,
3. A white horse,
4. A roof covered with snow,

then it is as yet quite unknown whether this series is working at " age " or " whiteness ".

And this series may be continued for a very long time, until at length there comes a piece which acts as an indicator and at once " baptises " the whole series (backwards too !) by this or that attribute.

This is why it is advisable to place such an indicator as near as possible to the beginning (in " orthodox " construc-

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tion). Sometimes it even has to be done by means of—the title.

These considerations completely exclude the non-dialectic stating of the question concerning the *oneness of meaning* of the cadre in itself.

The cadre never becomes a letter, but always remains a hieroglyph having a number of meanings.

And it can be interpreted only according to its context; just as a hieroglyph acquires a specific significance, meaning and even verbal pronunciation (sometimes diametrically opposed the one to the other) only in accordance with its context, its isolation or a small sign—the key to the interpretation—placed by the side of it.

The montage of *The General Line* is different from orthodox montage in its accordance with special dominants.

In place of the “ aristocratism ” of the single dominant, we have “ democratic ” equality of rights for all the appeals regarded as a whole, as a complex.

The point is that the dominant (with all the limitations upon its relativity) is by no means the only—even if it be the most powerful—appeal of the piece. For instance, the sex appeal of the beautiful American heroine is accompanied by the following additional appeals: costliness, resulting from the material of her dress; light-stimulus, resulting from the character of the illumination; racial and national appeal (positive: “ native American type ”, or negative: “ coloniser and oppressor ” for a negro or Chinese audience); social class appeal, etc.

We find exactly the same thing in acoustics (and in the particular instance of instrumental music).

There, equally with the fundamental dominant tone, we have a whole series of similar sounds, the so-called over-tones and under-tones. Their mutual collision, the collision with the fundamental and so forth, envelops the fundamental tone with a whole multitude of secondary sounds.

If in acoustics these accessory sounds are merely "impeding" factors, in music—considered from the standpoint of composition, they supply our left-wing composers (Debussy, Scriabin) with one of the most striking means of producing their effects.

Similarly in optics. Aberrations, mutilations and other defects, which may be overcome by systems of lenses in the object-glasses, afford—utilised for purposes of composition—a whole series of effects (variation of object-glasses from 28 to 310).

In conjunction with the calculation of accessory "visual sounding" of the actual material for photography, this gives—just as in the case of music—the visual over-tone complex of the piece.

The montage of *The General Line* has been executed in accordance with this principle. This montage has been based not on a particular dominant, but takes as its dominant the sum total of the appeals of all the stimuli.

This is an original montage-complex *within the piece*, produced by the collisions and conjunctions of the different appeals present in it.

These appeals are heterogeneous as regards their "external nature", but welded into an iron unity by their *reflex-physiological* essence.

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The physiological process of the *higher nerve centres* is physiological only according as it is also psychic.

In this way the general character of the piece is its physiological collective sound *as a whole*, as a complex unity of all the appeals which go to form it.

This is the general "sensation" of the piece, which the piece as a whole produces.

And this is for the montage-piece the same thing as the Kabuki methods are for its separate scenes. (See above).

The fundamental character of the piece is taken to be the total ultimate effect on the cortex of the human brain as a whole, irrespective of the ways along which its constituent appeals arrived at that end.

The totals thus obtained may be put together in such conflict-conjunctions as may be desired, whereby completely new possibilities of montage-solutions are revealed.

As we have seen—in virtue of the very genetics of these methods—they must be accompanied by an unusual physiological factor.

As with that music which builds up its productions on a two-fold utilisation of over-tones.

Not the classicism of Beethoven but the physiological element of Debussy or of Scriabin.

The unusual physiological effect of *The General Line* has frequently been remarked upon.

And for the very reason that it is the first picture to the montage of which the principle of visual over-tone has been applied.

The method of montage itself may be attentively examined.

If, in the dim classic distances of the cinematographer of

the future, the cinema will undoubtedly utilise montage in over-tonic, both simultaneously and according to the character of the dominants (tonic); in its first stages, as always happens, the new principle is asserting itself continually by rendering the question of principle more acute.

Over-tone montage at the first stages of its development was obliged to take a line in direct defiance of the dominant.

In many cases, it is true, and in *The General Line* itself, it was already possible to find such "synthetic" combinations of tonal and over-tone montages.

For example, "diving under the ikons" in the religious procession, or the grasshopper and the hay-cutter, are mounted visually according to their sound-association with a distinguished manifestation and their spatial similarity.

But, in connection with method, of course, the a-dominant constructions are instructive. Or those where the dominant appears in the form of a purely physiological formulation of the problem (which is the same). For example, the montage of the beginning of the religious procession according to the "degree of saturation with heat" of the individual parts, or of the beginning of the collective farm along the line of "carnivorousness". Conditions that, as we see, stand outside pure formal cinematographic disciplines affording the most unexpected physiological indications of equality between materials absolutely neutral to one another both in formal logic and in real life.

There are also a number of cases of montage, which are vociferous jeers at the orthodox scholastic montage according to dominants.

The easiest way of demonstrating this is to examine the

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picture on the table. Only then is the absolute " impossibility " of the montage combinations in which *The General Line* abounds revealed with absolute clearness. Then, too, the extreme simplicity of its metrics are also revealed.

Whole large sections of the parts consist of pieces of completely uniform length or absolutely primitive short abridgments. The whole complex rhythmic-sensuous nuancing of the conjunction of the pieces is effected almost exclusively along the line of work on the " psycho-physiological " visual sound of the piece.

The sharply defined boundaries characterising the montage of *The General Line* were revealed definitely to me myself " on the table."

When it was necessary to make abridgments and cuttings.

" The creative ecstasy ", accompanying the assemblage and the montage composition, " the creative ecstasy ", when you hear and feel the pieces, has already passed at such a moment.

Abridgments and cuttings do not call for inspiration, but only for technique and knowledge.

When I examined " the religious procession " on the table I could not classify the conjunction of the pieces under any of the orthodox categories within which they are arranged by dint of pure experience.

On the table, *motionless*, it is quite incomprehensible to judge with what attribute the strips have been selected.

The criterion for their selection is seen to be outside the ordinary formal cinematographic criteria.

And here is revealed yet another curious feature of

resemblance between the visual over-tone and the musical overtone.

This also we cannot trace in the statics of the piece, just as the over-tones of music are not traceable in the score.

Both the one and the other emerge as real magnitudes only in the dynamics of the musical or cinematographic process.

The over-tone conflicts, foreseen but incapable of being recorded in the score, emerge only as a dialectic contrivance when the film-strip passes through the projector or when the symphony is performed by the orchestra.

The visual over-tone is revealed to be an actual constituent, a real element . . . of the fourth dimension.

In three-dimensional space spatially inexpressible and only in four-dimensional (3 plus time) emerging and existing.

4th dimension?

Einstein or mysticism?

It is time to cease being alarmed by this bogey of a fourth dimension.

Having at our disposal such a very excellent instrument of knowledge as cinematography—even the primitive phenomenon of it—the sense of movement—implies a fourth dimension—we shall soon achieve a concrete orientation in this fourth dimension and come to feel completely at home with it.

And we shall have to consider the question of a fifth dimension!

Over-tone montage is a new montage-category to be added to the number of montage-processes known to us hitherto.

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The significance of this method in its direct application is immense.

And, in particular, in connection with the most burning question of present-day cinematography—the sound film.

In the article already referred to above, pointing out an unexpected connection—the resemblance between Kabuki and the sound film—I wrote in regard to the contrapuntal method of conjunction of the visual and the sound image :

“ . . . for the mastery of this method it is necessary to develop in one's self a new perception : the capacity to reduce to a single denominator the visual and sound impressions. . . ”

Meanwhile, the sound and visual impressions cannot be reduced to a single denominator.

They are magnitudes of different dimensions.

But the visual over-tone and the sound over-tone are magnitudes of *one* dimension.

Because the cadre is a *visual* impression and the tone a *sound* impression ; but *both* the visual and the sound *over-tones* are *physiological sensations*.

And consequently of one and the same order, outside the sound or auditive *categories*, which seem merely guides, ways to its attainment.

For the musical over-tone (beat) the term “ I hear ” is not really applicable.

Nor for the visual—“ I see ”.

For both we must introduce the new homogeneous formula : “ I sense ”.

The theory and methodology of the musical over-tone have been studied and are familiar (Debussy, Scriabin).

The General Line introduces the conception of the visual over-tone.

On the contrapuntal conflict between the visual and the sound over-tones the composition of the Soviet sound film will be based.

S. M. EISENSTEIN.

Moscow, August 19, 1929.

* * *

“ Is the method of overtone montage an irrelevant method, artificially inoculated into cinematography, or is it simply such a quantitative accumulation of one attribute that it makes a dialectic leap and begins to figure as a new qualitative attribute? ”

Next month S. M. Eisenstein will discuss this question as well as the construction and technique of other forms of montage—metric, rhythmic and tonal.

FILMIC ART AND TRAINING

By S. M. EISENSTEIN.

(In an interview with Mark Segal).

Under the auspices of the Film Society two study courses were recently held in London: one, under the German director, Mr. Hans Richter, on practical filmic production; and the second on the theory of filmic representation, under Mr. S. M. Eisenstein, professor in the National Institute of Cinematography at Moscow, producer of *Potemkin* and of other films which have had a great vogue in Russia, Germany, and elsewhere.

These two courses, said Mr. Eisenstein, must merely be regarded as introductory. What is needed is the establishment in England of a permanent film academy, with lecturers in the various branches of filmic art, such as psychological expression; and with adequate facilities for practical work in working out scripts, studio work, and editing. If the financing of a film academy presents any difficulty, its activities could be limited to the winter months.

Such an institution would provide a training, not only for young directors and for enthusiastic amateurs in film pro-

duction, but also for journalists in critical work. At the present time film critics, with rare exceptions, never really discuss the art of the cinema, but describe the story and the actors and actresses from their own, purely personal, point of view. The power of critics for good is very great, as witness the great part played by critics in the development of the theatre in Russia before and since the Revolution. Conversely, critics can do great harm; in fact, their mistakes are more harmful than the mistakes of directors.

Another function of such an academy would be research and experimental work. One of the most essential and urgent tasks, for which sufficient material now exists, is to find out the basic principles of filmic art and the laws of its expression and development.*

The historic moment has arrived for the film to develop a new intellectual form which will establish the synthesis of art and science; for art has become almost entirely the expression of emotion; and science has become arid and intellectual, has withdrawn itself from everyday life and people, and has lost the sense of the picturesque in its expression.

It is the function of the film to devise new and vital associations, and not to illustrate conventional symbols, such as the hackneyed image of blind Justice, upholding a pair of scales. And it is within the power of the film alone to perform this function, for the film is a dynamic process; whereas painting and sculpture are static; and music and literature are not sufficiently concrete.

* The most important contribution to this work has been made by Mr. Eisenstein himself.—M.S.

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There is no real conflict between the different arts, and it is essential to ascertain the laws pertaining to all forms of human expression, to discover the mechanics of expression, and to demonstrate how these principles change only their aspect from one mode of expression to another. Hence it is important to show that the film is one of the modes of expression, and that it is distinct from the stage play; the film is, indeed, in historical development the next step after the stage play.

The principles governing the construction of the various modes of expression are the same: as I have sought to show in my lectures, they are all based on the same laws of conflict and on the combination of conflicting tendencies; for example, the same laws of construction underlie abstract drawing and the different styles of painting and sculpture. I hope one day to be able to fuse all these elements into one big system and to show what part in the whole complex is played by the film.

The most interesting element in the film at the present time is sound, which will play a great part in the development of the film. Nevertheless, new points of view will not come from the element of sound, but from the new intellectual film referred to above; that is to say, sound will not dictate a new form of expression, but will be, like the visual element, one of the components of constructive editing—except in so far as sound develops along the lines of Douglas Fairbanks' *Taming of the Shrew*.

MARK SEGAL.

SCENARIO-WRITER

Do you remember *The Crook with a Heart*, by Jimmy Perkins? It was the same fertile brain which conceived that awe-inspiring tragedy, *Canadian Patrol*, the winner in the National Photoplay Contest. It is still talked of, generally because Rosa del Oro and Irving Booth won their spurs and lost their hearts to one another, while playing in Perkins's first creation. But Jimmy did not attain to the pinnacle of success at once. No, thereby hangs a tale, as they say. If the public knew the upward steep path beset by perils which brought him to his *Paradiso*, admiration for Jimmy's genius would be even greater than it is.

The mentor, the pathfinder, the invisible Virgil, as it were, lighting a lamp for his feet was our national institution, the Contest. We love nothing so much as a little contest, whether it be prize-fighting, poetry or photoplays. And our "hero" showed a predilection for contests since childhood which marked him as being apart from his less gifted playmates. When at the age of twenty or so Jimmy began to dash off those long poems in the Sunday supplement of the *News*, it was generally predicted by people who have knowledge in such matters that he will write a novel one of these days "that will set the town talking". It is not surprising, therefore,

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that when the National Poetry Contest was announced the future scenario writer should be found among the thirty-five thousand contestants who were eager to enrich the treasures of poetry. It may seem vulgar, perhaps, to suggest that the two-hundred dollar prize or the love for publicity and not the sacred cause of poetry were the real reasons for the public interest. At any rate, during the first poetic Olympiad, a certain gentleman who related in a kind of *vers libre* which for want of a fitting prosodical term may be described in the borrowed terminology of the culinary art as "chop suey" the original discovery that "Hot afternoons were in Montana" carried off the prize by the unanimous vote of the judges. The following year the winning poem belonged to the pen of a master psychoanalyst who described in the ultra-modern style (no capitals, no punctuation, no rhyme, etc.) the soul complexes of a construction foreman. Jimmy, who as a literary artist belonged to the orthodox school known for a strict regard for "form", found himself considerably baffled by the later day tendencies.

But since despair was not a part and parcel of Jimmy's Weltanschauung he took defeat cheerfully remembering, perhaps, the time-worn adage about the brevity of life and the difficulty of art. And the earlier experiences in journalism and poetry serving him in good stead he set about with all the earnestness of a man eager to get to the top to participate in the then current and hotly debated National Soap Name Contest, International Toothpick Slogan Contest, the New Magazine Name Contest, and, of course, in the lesser "puzzle" contests, "Ask me another one" contest. Well it were for the historian to indicate here by a full-stop the

successful termination of a praiseworthy effort and record for once the exceptional case of literary merit recognised and properly rewarded in the infancy of an author's creation, as it were. If Fate held back the award till a later date, who need complain, remembering the benefits accrued to the silent drama through Jimmy's early, bitter struggles when his art was maturing in obscurity—" *Ein Talent sich in der Stille bilt'* ". . . Perhaps it was his early newspaper experience that gave him the first inkling for the soul-stirring drama " with a touch of Kipling and Poe ", *East or West*. Or, again, it may be that he owed *Canadian Patrol* to his voracious reading of detective stories and cinema revues. . . Who knows?

But as if to make up for a period of lean years Success arrived in a windfall. A contest promising a thousand dollars and a job in the movies for the best photoplay offered our hero a long-sought opportunity. Like most people nowadays Jimmy felt himself particularly fitted for the screen (in what capacity it was not always clear to him). It was, therefore, in a spirit of working at his own *métier* that he approached the task of writing the film. For a long time there lingered, in as yet, a nebulous form somewhere in his richly-stored brain the original idea of writing a drama with something " different " on the *Canadian Patrol*. . . Why the *Canadian Patrol*? It is difficult to say whence the basic idea of the drama happened to come to him. Psychologists warn us of the difficulties attending any attempt to penetrate the *sanctum sanctorum* of a creative mind; we shall, therefore, draw the curtain of discretion over this interesting question and confine ourselves to facts. . . True it is, Jimmy had never

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been to Canada; he had never seen any members of the Canadian Patrol; he had not even any prospects of ever going to Canada. "But how many people" he reflected, "with no more knowledge than mine have made fame and fortune in the movies"? Opportunity knocked at his door and Jimmy was ready. . . For thirty minutes by the clock he pondered, wrote, "as if possessed by a demon", scratched . . . until a brain-child was born unto him, proving once more, of course, that Inspiration may win where mere plodding Application usually falters and fails.

As an impartial, high-minded critic already characterised *The Canadian Patrol* in the *Screen Success*, it would be presumptuous to improve upon the criticism. No one can say it better. "There's more than a dash of originality", we are told by the critic, "in this sombre Canadian drama. Not only does the author show knowledge of the country he pictures, but the way the Crook manages to elude the long arm of the law reveals the fact that old Shakespeare did not have a monopoly on brains, after all. In brief, it is a Big, Wholesome, fresh air drama of the North-west with three rousing murders". The Crook ultimately receives his due at the hands of the law. It is evidently a matter of principle with Jimmy to let Virtue triumph and Evil to suffer punishment. Besides, the dear public too likes the ethical denouement served up in Jimmy's style. And thus, everybody is satisfied. Yes, the author refused to compromise his art on the question of punishing the Crook, although he it said to the latter's honour that he did reform towards the end under the influence of the farmer's daughter.

As the plot is almost universal property to-day, the barest

outline will serve to refresh it in everybody's mind. A Crook, who contrives to steal simultaneously a farmer's apples and the love of his daughter is surprised in one of his poaching expeditions by three Canadian Patrolmen, whom in self-defence he finds obliged to shoot. In the ensuing hunt for the murderer the Police are outwitted by the farmer's amorous, generous daughter who conceals her lover, the Crook, in the thick branches of an apple-tree. (One of those original Perkins touches for which he endeared himself to the Public). In the end, however, compelled by the sweetheart who at first protected him, the Crook is made to come "clean" and atone for his crime. Perhaps with a view of heightening the dramatic effect it is disclosed just before the hanging that the Crook is no other than the prodigal son of a British Earl by a left-handed marriage. . .

The general enthusiasm which the publication of the winning scenario created in the literary and dramatic circles of the country is but another testimonial to the thought, taste, and feeling of our intellectual aristocracy. Silverspan himself hailed it in the Press as "a sign that our young generation is not taking a back seat when it comes to brain-matter." Everywhere one could see photographs of Petrikin, read interviews with him. Some enthusiasts even professed to find in his work certain unmistakable signs of genius not unlike that of "Michael Arlen Himself".

Jimmy's subsequent success is a matter of common knowledge. What masculine heart has not felt the thrill of responding to Rosa's sex appeal in that Perkins drama full of "it", *A Virgin in the Night*? And on the other hand, so to say, what feminine heart has not experienced the soul-

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state described by press-agents as " a flood of emotion " watching Irving Booth in another Perkin success, *The Beau of 42nd Street?* *The Archduke and the Waitress*, *Red Moscow*, *The Sheik's Grandson*, have delighted millions. But Jimmy's reputation will always rest on his creation, *East or West*. It is the story of a bad woman, the proprietor of a night-club who goes to the tropics to become the wife of a British commissioner in a far African post. Unable to resist the bent of her evil nature, she seduces every male in sight until her desperate husband decides to regain his wife's affection by exciting her jealousy through liaisons with other women. (Another famous Perkins touch). The artful handling of the climax won Jimmy the plaudits of all the press-agents of the country. When it was seen how the scenario-writer manœuvred to re-establish the villainous woman in the good graces of the public by the simple expedient of making her shed motherly tears at the sight of her only son leaving for war, everyone in the " game " agreed that Jimmy was " a genuine genius ". Rosa del Oro played the part of the villainous woman, of course, and Irving Booth " added another great rôle to his repertoire ". It is after the presentation of this play that a critic wrote : " Jimmy Perkins is a cinema Columbus. He is the industry's Man of Destiny ". And another master-mind of dramatic criticism spoke with equal enthusiasm : " Jimmy Perkins is one of those fellows " he wrote, " who can look at a play of Shakespeare's and say, 'Terrible! I'll write a better one '. And can. And does. Most erratic and eccentric man in Hollywood."

They say that in New York every street-car conductor

busies himself at odd moments with the amusing task of writing plays. Some of these artistic productions have been holding the Anglo-American stage for such a considerable period that "the street-car conductor movement" must needs impose a definite mark on the stage literature of the time. Indeed, if the fallen dignity of man in the field of creative drama is to re-assert itself, it is undoubtedly to Jimmy Perkins and his soul-mates that we must look for ultimate "conducting".

MICHAEL STUART.

PRESENT TENSE

Talkies! "Yeah?" . . . "Shure!"

Gabble.

Suspense, of the wrong kind . . . fog . . . also of the wrong kind. Photography? No. Talkies?

Photographic fog . . . I think we might distinguish between fog and 'phog'.

"British and Best". So this is London phog? . . . London special! Foggy sound, too. The audio-frequency end of the electric spectrum also suffers from . . . I want still another new word here . . . suffers from sound fogginess.

Pitch distortion! Two shots of the same military band marching out of the same 'phog' . . . high pitch instruments

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are as quickly abandoned for Concert. Remarkable. I am waiting to hear something more terrible than high pitch bag-pipes followed by concert fifes!

This is true: A shot of a liner making its way towards a landing stage . . . let's go with a fog horn (appropriately) which records exceptionally well. Young lady in seat just in front . . . " . . . isn't that just like real? "

" Two Minutes Silence ". At the Cenotaph. We disagree. Didn't notice it. Who was it who said that he required three brass bands to render his composition " Silence " ?

To be treated regularly to the sensation of blocked eustachion tubes which clear now and then with a throaty " glub " . . . to be troubled with cataract of the eye . . . this is London special . . . " British and Best ". Do we think it is our best? We shall all finish up with adenoids *and* horn rims.

" Bary! Bary! Brig be the Bustard! "

* * *

I intended to write about the Present Tense as the subconscious one . . . the old silent Topical was to have been my objective in an attack on the dull uncircumstantial flat-wash of up-to-the-minute news reels . . . but there is in addition this barrage of sound.

Do we not forever strive to shut out the present? It seems we must perform our tasks and rounds of life in a misty subconsciousness. We have invented speech and writing, I think, to get away from " now " . . . we ponder over books, problems, caressing thoughts, to help us obliterate tedium

. . . we are drawn to drama, the majority of us to cinema, because the present is like a heavy weight which we would fain have lifted off our shoulders for a space. The last thing I want to witness when this mood induces me to spend stall money, is the sound topical. Up-to-the-minute-events bore when they are shown in flat un-circumstantial perspective.

I think we are most of us reconciled to the progress complex. Sound had to be, so it seems. It was an advance (oh, happy thought) . . . the march of something or other, which a lot of us wished had been confined to barracks. It has brought back the present tense as well . . . the sound news reel being thereby the dullest item, because it is the most subjective. With one noticeable exception, I doubt if the gazette film has progressed from its beginning. It is time something was done . . . as Vertoff said when he manned his battery of movie cameras. He alone appears to have transfused the cinema of the actual with his own past-tense-consciousness . . . circumstantial associations which merge the subconscious present into the living thought-consciousness of one Vertoff.

We are conscious in our associative analytic moods; subconscious in the flat reality called "now".

* * *

A ship-yard is to give birth to a liner . . . birth, not berth . . . there is to be a launch.

Topicals men show us little more than "berth" . . . they are pretending to show us the other. To-day's news is the launching. The circumstance which leads up to the news is the building. Rush it through by super-speed photography

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(how about the sound?) mixing from the giant moving off after the baptismal tosh . . . just as one's imagination would play with the thought. Keel, bones, ribs, plates, back, belly, tail, nose, and bottom, build themselves in a twinkling. This is the real consciousness. The launch we are relegating to the subconscious even as we watch it . . . a subject for *thoughts*, which become our real consciousness. Here is the key, I think, to all cinema. At once we can get away from the ordinary . . . playing with the material freely, even as the mind plays. True consciousness is extraordinarily plastic stuff, and the beauty of it is that it has found a mobile and truthful counterpart in cinema.

See now! I am hurrying to Cardington in my mind . . . in fact, instantly I am there. Cardington means for me nothing more than an airship hangar. My imagination sees an airship being cut in two. Now a new portion is being fitted in and once again R101 plus 2 emerges, a fat cigar with a belly-band!

A typical theme this, which will be handled in the usual way, however, with explanatory titles or voices, including the inevitable gang of disappointed M.P's. If these uncinematic animals must be shown, there is at least some scope in airship-like cigars.

Under no circumstances should the camera pan at any moment whilst in the hangar . . . the mass is too large; it is not sailing away in space. My imagination of an airship in its hangar is a static one. Optical illusions which upset the static conception are out of place.

* * *

There is a French season running at our local specialised

kino . . . *En Rade* comes to my mind in support of the argument of Present Tense subconsciousness. Why is it nothing happens in *En Rade*? That, of course, is the motif of the whole thing . . . the boy feels the dullness . . . we do admittedly . . . he day-dreams in a struggle to become conscious to something worth while. His eyes were expressive of struggle.

I am not satisfied that his consciousness was fully realised in this film . . . only the languid subconsciousness of the moment came through. And yet his dreams were vague, so that perhaps as a whole it was a self-consistent picture. Nothing happened . . . even the immense estaminét proprietress only *spoke* to the drudge. She spoke in more than one sense, and the other sense was ponderous. As she stood there, flat of feet, a hideous towering bulk, I was ready for anything; keyed up rather. The spell was broken by my companion who shockingly remarked, “. . sssss . . . Développé! ”

Taking a look round, I can remember only a few actors who reveal their true part consciousness (absent tense) . . . the self-absorbed type, who display either a pathetic or comic, but intensely cinematic, lack of contact with . . . with their contacts! ! (You must have it this way!)

The greatest personality in this category is without doubt Chester Conklin . . . producer-wasted because not producer-bred.

Can there ever be a sound-voice parallel for an inflexion which is dumb show? By nature this about which I speak, is pure cinema . . . one has to *look* to perceive it. The soliloquy does not exist. Will the compound cinema be

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capable of penetrating the thought consciousness, worded *and* visualised? Then, will we be able to recognise it for what it pretends to be? These are questions for diligent research . . . experiment has much before it. And now more than ever psychologic laws must be probed.

To what extent is cinema capable of penetration into the various tenses? The thought consciousness roves freely from past to future, present to conditional . . . I wander often in the subjunctive . . . the future " if " . . . would; could; should; might . . . " *provided* " . . .

Present tense is easy. There is the "cast back" to the past. By Past Tense, I mean not films of the past. There have been very few passages in the future tense of some actor's thought consciousness. Where is the subjunctive, conditional?

The difficulties seem insuperable. Here is a new phase awaiting conquest by the compound cinema. Exactly here, I become reconciled to sound. Exactly here we reach the greatest extent of the domain of the silent drama. We have rhythm, counterpoint, manifest and latent content, symbolism, condensation, displacement, dramatization, even regression* to play with, in our silent scenario. Of these, only regression will help me to conjure the future tense. The conditional future is too complicated to emerge from these mechanisms. There is no need to review famous literary and dramatic work to find an example of the dramatic use of the

* Those who have read Mr. Saalschutz on " The Film in Relation to the Unconscious " will recall his borrowed meanings for these words from Freud.

conditional future. It simply teems with it. Every plot that ever failed was brewed in a subjunctive-pot!

* * *

Needless to say, I do not subscribe to the prevalent idea that the mechanisms of the " silent " have been exhausted. I am not ready for sound yet. And, as I have previously indicated, there are grave reasons for thinking that if we do not accept it more slowly, that which we have built up already as film art, will be smashed almost beyond repair. So fickle is the palate, that, although the flavour may still be there, the taste may become insensitive.

L. SAALSCHUTZ.

SUPER FILM

I am going to make a super film. Nobody has given me the commission, but I have acquired the decision. Polemics pullulate pukka pictures: everyone chirrup theories to be demonstrated in the new super, which they are always on the point of making. Those who have not learnt the trick go about with peeked faces, while those about-to-direct have an aureole which lights up their chubbiness.

Some talk of a super kitsch film, " too, too much fun "

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after the *continual* cerebation; others want to make a document of the oppression of the aristocrats by peasants, destining it for Moscow as propaganda; pseudo workers dream of their cess-pools (flutterings of magnolia eyelids by the avant-garde). I am taking my super seriously, finding, in so doing, a galvanizing exercise in solving problems. Much about THE FUTURE OF AN ART can be estimated by saying, "Would I do this in my super?"

Shall my super film have supernumeries? After mental-political sterilisation, by official forms P. and Q., Russian cinema producers have been allowed to visit England. On account of such *cultural relations* we all know, or feel that we ought to know, the history of the Russian crowd film. The first difficulty with crowds is to make their movements the product of decision: the effect to be counteracted is that of a jerky curtain rising on a posed tableau. Gestures must be dictated by what has gone before, cries made up in the heart long before the lips have a chance to utter them. Hesitation will often help: people do pause before they take the final step. Finesse of pause is the peptonized art of drama.

Then, shall I engage actors or work with types?

"Use actors?" gobble neuropathic students, "I thought you said you were taking your film seriously?"

Much maligned actors; they need, in this time of their eclipse, a little encouragement. Anyway, we all need a little clear thinking.

"Types," persist the parrot students, "are better than actors." They will persist until somebody, whom they can make a cult, tells them that Russia is working out its own

spirit, that there is room for more than one kind of achievement.

“ Actors are impossible because they grimace; tell an actor to express an emotion and he will pull such and such a face. An actor will not use his body, throw himself into the correct and natural attitudes; he will, simply, frown, smile, etcetera. Why is it that when we are asked if we have seen anything of interest in the theatre lately we have to answer NO? Is it not explained by the infesting of the theatre with actors? How could any human play in film after film and feel shattering emotions day after day? To a type you can offer resistances. You can instruct him to look at a definite point on the wall, at the same time counting up to ninety-nine. Very soon you can make the man bad-tempered; he will not be acting his part, he will be genuinely angry.”

The impeachment is meant for actors; possibly, however, it only touches bad actors.

Russia mastered the mounting of films in the observed rhythms of emotion, mastered how to make, by a formula of cutting, the milk separator as dramatic as the threatened rape. Why should the director be allowed a formula and the artiste denied it? Why cannot the actor feel his emotion once—as the type can—and use his gift, the actor's part, for remembering all the outward manifestations? Why should not “ camera conscious ” become as proud a tribute as “ montage conscious ”?

And I have assiduously avoided talking about learning lines of dialogue. The point, in the aphoristic nut-shell, is why should peasant songs on the violin make one despise Kreisler?

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Types, actors : propaganda (expressing what is real and true to the individual) and being paid by the day. Do I choose to ignore PROPAGANDA which gave conviction to the early Russian films?

About that, too, I am doubtful : it begins to force the aesthetic as regards the physical image. The spectator says " That's a good shot " because it is a shot of the hero.

Of course my film will be a talkie? No, it will be a part talkie ; one of those half and half affairs which began the craze of the sound film and are now universally denigrated. I feel convinced a lot can be done by suddenly stopping the speech . . . A woman comes into a room, sees her greatest enemy : lips of the people in the room continue to move but do not speak. Humming a tune a man is shaving. Suddenly he is seized with a desire to slit his throat : his lips continue to make the humming movements but no sound is heard . . . Theatrical? About that, too, I am doubtful : keeping too closely to life tends to weaken intellectual and imaginative activity.

There is a lot more about my super film I would like to discuss, but I imagine the editor would not be tolerant of too much heresy, and the reader, also, may have views of his own on what is fair game.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

MOVIE: NEW YORK NOTES

I never read mystery stories, except those which are arabesques like the tales of Poe. The sole mystery for me is the person who writes these stories. Therefore, there could be no more mysterious individual to me than Mr. Edgar Wallace of Albion, who, according to himself, has written "one or two" popular mystery novels. It was accordingly, no small excitement that preceded my meeting with this prolific gentleman at the luncheon of the Associated Motion Picture Advertisers. I shall not comment on Mr. Wallace's Tammany appearance nor on the delight he finds in his own playing at modesty. I shall limit myself, as movie correspondent, to his observations re cinema.

"My claim to distinction," said he, "is, I'm the first author to come to the United States with no intention of going to Hollywood. I won't go to Hollywood until the producers charter the Berengaria for me and give me a million dollars in advance. I know well enough that Hollywood doesn't think anything of anybody unless he's hard to get and has cost them a pile of money." I submit this as valuable criticism of the commercial cinema, and I am not facetious.

"I have another claim to distinction," continued the man



From *Images d'Ostende*, a film of short-metragé by H. Storck of the Club du Cinema, Ostende. Mr. Storck describes it as an atmospheric film of the quais and boats of the *ville marine*.





Light Rhythms, the film by Francis Brugniere and Oswell Blakeston, which opened a season at the Avenue Pavilion, London, on February 17th.





The evolution of rhythmic design in *Light Rhythms*. Mr. Blakeston has an interesting comment on the film in this issue





Exclusive stills, which have just arrived from Japan, of a new film by J. Shige Sudsuky, whose work is not unknown to readers of *Close Up*. Mr. Sudsuky writes that the title of the film is "Why She Must Do." We are not certain if this means "Why She Must Finish" or "What She Must Do." Information on this point has been asked for, but communication with Japan takes time.





The star of "Why She Must Done," which makes, after all, an attractively cryptic title, is Miss Keiko Takastu, who features in each of these stills. She is only seventeen years of age, but we are informed she is really wonderful. A short note is in Comment and Review. In the lower picture, the lady in spectacles is Miss Hozama.





Photo: Ufa

Marlene Dietrich, a vaudeville vamp in Joseph von Sternberg's Ufatone Super (Prod. Erich Pommer), *The Blue Angel*, featuring Emil Jannings.



Photo: Ufa

Joseph von Sternberg with Marlene Dietrich, director and female star of *The Blue Angel*.



Photo: Ufa

The Immortal Vagabond. Gustav Frohlich as a village teacher in the Ufatone Super, Joe May production, directed by Gustav Ucicky.



Photo: Ufa

An amusing still of a rehearsal for a song scene for *The Immortal Vagabond*. The cameraman is Carl Hoffman.



An interesting photo of the light-decor of the recently opened Schauburg Hamm cinema in Hamburg. Meanwhile in England we continue to pile murderous "atmospheric" frescoes on spurious rococo and call it modern.



From *Extinction*, a new film on 16 mm. stock by J. H. Ahern (who made *Gaiety of Nations*) and E. Heiman.

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of mysteries. "I am the president of a film company that hasn't earned a penny yet. We were just about ready to produce when the talkie came along. Well, we're in for the talkies now. I was told it would cost me \$100,000 each for the making of four films, \$100,000 a film! I turned one out for \$15,000. And do you know why? I was on the job all the time. No graft. Every penny spent went into the film." Another valuable, if not original, criticism.

Third criticism: "They made a film called *The Terror* in Hollywood. I wrote a story by that name once. Well, the characters in the film and the characters in the novel had the same names, but I'm not sure the story of mine they bought was the one that came back with the laundry. I'm not one of those writers who objects to a change in his tale, but—."

The "but" recalls the introduction to the "movie" edition, published by Grosset and Dunlap, of Melville's *Moby Dick*. The writer, S. R. Buchman, argues too aptly:

"In story, the screen version of *Moby Dick* exceeds the book. The discrepancy between the two must not be considered as a profanely wanton alteration. The episode of the book has not been misused; it has been enlarged and clarified. This approach of the producers was dictated not by any aimless unprincipled desire for melodramatic heightening, but by the bald limitation of the cinema. . . . To some minds, any departure from the original in the picturization or dramatization of the classic is censorable. *The Sea Beast* is a clear reflection of the spirit originally infused into the work by Melville."

Here we have a dishonest application of a correct principle of conversion. Omit the "nots" from where they are placed and put them before the affirmative statements and you have the justification for the remarks of Leon Moussinac

upon the rankness of *The Sea Beast*, for which that intelligent critic was indicted. The last line of Buchman is a lie or it indicates the shallowness of the man. The test of conversion is: Has the theme been re-rendered? are its inferences included? have the changes aided or thwarted the scope of the original material? is there an equality in the final experiences of book and film?

Yes, I confess, Mr. Wallace has served me as an expedient for this tirade.

He will serve me again:

“Will the talkie kill the stage? Killing the stage is an old, old scare. I ought to know something about the theatre. I’ve got a few plays in the provinces—6 or 7 or 8, I dunno—so take this tip from me: the theatre’s going to stay, and the talkie’s going to help it and it’s going to help the talkie. The sound film will be a recruiting-ground for the new theatre audience, and the theatre will be the recruiting-ground for the talkie’s actors. Why, Henry Irving used to say the theatre’s dying because people would rather ride on bicycles.”

Arthur Hopkins, the theatrical producer, has just said the theatre began to decline with the motor-car. The truth seems to me to be rather that these popular amusements came opportunely with the decline of the *popular* theatre. Entertainment is a whole, and what one part loses, another wins. The film and radio have become the popular entertainment. If we list the popular forms that have died or are dying we will find a numerous lot, in America at least: the minstrel troupe (the most defined of all in organization), vaudeville (a city like Philadelphia has lost its one major house), burlesque, the circus (in America the large companies

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have consolidated), the comic quartette, the ventriloquist, etc. Indeed, the talkie has come into sing the swan song of the black-face minstrel, the ventriloquist (*The Great Gabbo*), the burlesque actor (*The Dance of Life, Applause*). . . These swan-songs, like the movie as a whole, have not passed beyond O. Henry fabrication as yet. I have faith, the American film will be more than feuilleton stuff some day.

* * *

Mention of *Applause* reminds me I met Rouben Mamoulian, its director, the other day. Mr. Mamoulian does not think his film great, because, as we agreed, a banal subject-matter can not yield a transcendent film. But he thinks of his work as something of a conquest. His contract allowed him freedom to choose his scenario. This was resolved actually into a choice of the least bad among three. Mamoulian thinks the lack of good scenarii a basic problem. He was given time to study the mechanisms of the studio and then decided, since he was obligated to produce a film, to plunge in. The plunge was taken with astuteness and determination. He let it be felt he had a point of view for which he would fight. Studio practices were disturbed and the disturbances have since become the practice. For instance, Mamoulian used two sound-units working simultaneously to get sound receding—sound in distance, mobile sound, so to speak. This was unheard-of: the practice was to get first the sound on one spot and then on the other. Two sound-units working on one sequence together was too expensive an operation. But it proved a cost of economy. It has been supposed by some observers that Mamoulian used

a crane for mobile-camera. He moved about in a bulky cage. "It was," he said, "like playing polo on elephants." I have already commented on the paralleling of two sounds in *Applause*, a banal result so I felt and still do. Mamoulian points out, however, the victory of the talkie in simultaneity of sound. "The theatre," he said, "could never accomplish this simultaneous yet separate structure." The film's intensiveness permits such phenomenon in sound as in visual image.

Mamoulian has signed no contract for another film, although Paramount desires him to do another picture. He is waiting until the spring and until he finds a suitable scenario. To find in America a director who thinks, like any other true artist, of one work at a time, rather than of five-year contracts, is itself a discovery of importance. Mamoulian made another comment, a familiar one, on the intensiveness of the film: "Five minutes is an age on the screen." This should have guided him *against* durations of song. But then the movie has a new business: to sell theme-songs. That is another hindrance to the true sound-sight film. But perhaps this will dwindle with the lessening of the domination of the revue film. How far this musical business can go to contradict cinema is apparent in Sydney B. Franklin's production of *Devil May Care*, where the film is divided into acts by means of fade-outs, and the only sensation of legitimate sound is the thud of hooves. Intensification of gesture, physiognomy and voice (even though the principle is not respected in the least) makes what is endurable in the musical play within the proscenium frame, most embarrassing to the spectator of the film.

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A third personage, and cinematically the most important of the three is the German visitor, Karl Freund, who has come to America in the interests of the Keller-Dorian colour process. Freund digressed upon the making of *Berlin*, attributing the inspiration for the "newsreel composite"—as I describe it—to Cavalcanti's *Rien que les heures* and Karl Mayer (to the latter the idea of a Berlin film). He described the difficulty of deciding upon a scenario, how a story was urged upon him—the experiences of a visitor from heaven being one of Freund's idyllic pretexts—and how finally he decided on the "clean" job. To Freund the film ideal is the newsreel, as basis. He has the usual German penchant for the "little irony," for "great happenings from wee causes," e.g.: a dog crosses Broadway, a motor car crashes, a train stops . . . "for the want of a nail the horse was lost; for the want of a horse the rider was lost, etc." German simplism. *Berlin* was one year in the making. Instead of the ordinary scenario a system of index-cards was used—notes—the cards shifted in order as the film evolved its rhythm and design. Freund would like to do a film of one corner of New York—Times Square, perhaps—24 hours; or a Central Park bench; or an American composite. I have in the pages of *Movie Makers* suggested such montage-filming as amateur enterprises. "I would," said Freund, "begin my film with 'Ich berichte': like a chronicler." The Anglo-American poet, John Gould Fletcher, has published in the University of Washington's chapbooks an essay on *The Crisis in the Film*. Mr. Fletcher is the poet appreciating the film. Although mingling in a milieu that disdains the "lively" art, he is able to evaluate it for himself

and enjoy it. He condemns "the attitude of that small minority of intellectuals (more common in Europe than in America) who simply despise the film. . . ." Historically, Mr. Fletcher finds, the film is a by-product of naturalism. He declares the movie camera to be :—

"Even more unselective than the ordinary camera. . . . In order to produce a series of instantaneous pictures which, by being rolled off one after the other, render the effect of continuous movement, it is not primarily necessary that there should be any study of composition, any graduation of light and shade, any definite control of material. Indeed, all these things merely complicate the film-problem. The most common-place news-roll is, as far as film-recording goes, as valuable as *The Nibelungen* or *Caligari*. What makes the difference is the quality of mind at work in the latter, which is unapparent in the former. It is a quality of selection, of unity of purpose, of inter-play of episode, of pictorial composition and dramatic climax: a quality, in short, of art."

As a record, Mr. Fletcher is saying, the thing need be nothing more than a statement of thing recorded; as art, it demands organization.

"The film, therefore, in so far as material goes, is rooted in actuality. What gives it artistic possibility is that it can combine actuality of scene and of event to a far higher degree than is possible on the stage. It can relate each episode of a long story to its appropriate background."

This constant inter-reference is one of the cardinal virtues of Dreyer's *Joan*, which alone separates it from any resemblance to the Comedie Française or the Theatre Guild. Of insistent inter-reference I have spoken continually in *Close Up*. It is the means to philosophy and *inference* in the cinema. "Thus the film solves the problem which agitated Ibsen and most of the great dramatists of the later nineteenth century: how to combine naturalistic fact with

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symbolic significance." This is one of the film problems of Soviet Russia, a problem which overlooks two things: the difference between the symbol and symbolism, the representational detail and the structure; and the error of separating the figure of speech from the content of the film. I refer especially to the iron horse symbol in *The End of St. Petersburg* and the gargoyle analogy in *The New Babylon*. Pudovkin even went as far as giving the horse tears! *Joan* conveys the gargoyle in the Bishop not by analogy but by the structure of the Bishop himself, as his face freezes into immobility. Self-containment is a more disciplined, more integrated, purer structure than the simile, a borrowing from the *language* of the poem or novel. Even in the novel the metaphor is preferable. Fletcher believes "the most impressive films are those in which reality and fantasy are in some way interwoven in the very stuff of the story," but his examples do not prove the case: "*The Nibelungen, Faust, Caligari, Warning Shadows, The Gold Rush, The Kid, Metropolis.*" The fantasy in these films are the weakness of the films, or where the fantasy is amusing it is not important, as in *Warning Shadows*. In this film, a fantasy-film, the fantasy is not strong enough to offset the reality. The truth is, simplistic fantasy, whether a part or all of a film, rejects eminence, and it is not interweaving of reality or fantasy that makes the great film, but the fantasy in the reality. Let me put it this way: fantasy is the conversion of the ordinary into the extraordinary—that is Dostoevsky's definition. The satisfying fantasy of Chaplin is not the fantasy-in-itself of the chicken-episode in *The Gold Rush* or the heaven scene in *The Kid*: it is the suggestion, the reference,

the inference of the personality of Charlie the man of the street, it is the fantasy within the real. The principle is identical with that mentioned above regarding symbolism. As to the symbolic structure, utilizing the human being, the Ukrainian film, *Arsenal*, points to its realization.

Mr. Fletcher finds the major virtue of the German cinema to be its daring. This is an incidental virtue; I have spoken of the chief contribution of the German film (November *Close Up*): it has articulated major principles of the motion picture. The chapbook sums up a number of considerations, which have been treated in more detail in many earlier treatises: the questionable necessity of the musical accompaniment, the scarcity of great films, the incompetence of the practitioners, the conflict between the film-as-art and the film-as-industry. The poet does not accept the whimsical compromise of Jesse Lasky, namely, the film-as-art-industry. The former characterizes the American movie as showmanship, which for him is a barrier to the advancement of the cinematic art. Mr. Fletcher fails to see the deeper-rooted limitation of the American film (refer to my Notes in December *Close Up*). He believes the didactic intention of the Russian film is another barrier. But if the didactic intention is converted into a cinematic structure? If the didactic intention, propaganda, is actually social experience? The Russian film is giving its own adequate answer, or, at least promises to, in a multitude of idioms. Fletcher errs in coupling the Swedish film with the German. The latter has never gone beyond the experience of pathos. The Swedish film transcended pathos. The author repeats the purist declaration that the movie is pictorial and not narrative—it

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is both and more. The failure of the film as narrative has frequently been its failure as art: the failure to convert the material into the form. Fletcher abhors the talkie as non-cinema. I hope he has changed his mind since this outburst: the speech film may need the poet soon.

H. A. POTAMKIN.

A NEW COMMISSION

Close Up readers will be interested to know that a Commission on Educational and Cultural Films has been established, to consider the possibilities of extending the use of the cinema in education, to compile a list of Interest and Teaching films of proved merit and "to examine and certify the subjects of films proposed for importation, with a view to the circulation of foreign films of educational value, and to the exemption of them from importation duty and other restrictions, by negotiation with H.M. Customs."

Though the main concern of this Commission is with the purely educational film, this will include consideration of the two most important difficulties in the way of film societies and the development of amateur films.

One is the censorship. Owing to the regulations at present in force, it is not possible for film societies in England to import for a limited number of showings non-commercial films from abroad. The other is the red tape that makes a

certificate of approval to all intents impossible, for the amateur cinematographer, as, though he may have photographed during a summer holiday abroad, only some particular geological strata, or group of birds, or little known peasant ceremony, it will be impossible for him to get his film on return to England except at the expenditure of hours of labour, and many journeys to different parts of London.

We do nothing, I know, but urge *Close Up* readers to write protests and sign petition forms. But if any relief from the present intolerable condition is to be won, it will only be from organized and repeated action.

Therefore, we want all film societies and all readers of *Close Up*, who object to the present censorship conditions or to the working of the certificate of approval, to write a brief protest to :—

Commission on Educational and Cultural Films,
 Commission Number Four,
 39 Bedford Square,
 London, W.C.1.

As the Commission has naturally little financial aid and has a great deal of material to tabulate and a very small staff to deal with it, please add a note in your protest that you do not expect an answer. Get any friends you can to sign the letter. The main point is that the Commission should be able to record the number of people in England who believe a change in the present methods to be necessary. If you have any other information likely to be valuable to the Commission add it to your letter.

BRYHER.

LIGHT RHYTHMS

After *Caligari* New York felt how nice it was to be a fantastic city. The new alphabets, the film critics, began to learn that A stood for ART. To his eternal credit Mr. Francis Bruguière said, "What the hell!"

It is all so much simpler than *Caligari*, and so much more difficult to think of. Half-a-dozen exhibitions and tea in Bond Street, that is enough to inspire human figures before painted background. It takes a long time to paint on canvas, it took a Mr. Bruguière to see that after all that time the film had not begun to be made, for paint on canvas is not light on emulsion. Work directly with light, made the background of light, keep it moving the whole time: that is what he wanted to do.

In *The New Babylon* there are eruptive scenes of pleasure, girls dance, fans wave in the foreground, and people say how like Manet-Renoir forgetting that the Manet-Renoirs were realists.

Mr. Bruguière would have had something more dynamic; walls and floors moving, in relation to the moving players, and the air above the actors moving.

In *Light Rhythms* Mr. Bruguière shows malleability of light forms; a column of light can be erected and shattered before the workman plasterer has begun to stir in his sleep.

Unfortunately, finance did not permit all the movements desired: the camera, for example, had to stay in one place. Yet, in this film, for the first time light is on its toes, dancing.

Light sweeps the screen slowly. The darkness of the screen expands and contracts: that is another way of looking at it. Light becomes complicated: defined forms merge while pattern is lifted (by light) off pattern. Diagonals and horizontals are at war, are part of a machine working in perfect control. Forms come back and are recognized: light peeps from behind light. That is the first movement of the continuous light movements. Only for a moment is light still, when it pauses, like the brilliant butterfly on the edge of a flower, before darting off to trace fresh arabesques in the crystalline air.

Throughout the rest of the film speed follows quiet, boldness balances indecision. Light takes wings, flutters breathlessly across the screen; light takes the shiny scales of a fish, and swims, in blurs, beneath the sea of the theatre; light is banished from the screen, a small triangle alone remaining, and returns to riot over the black spaces; light becomes thoughtful, building cones and pyramids, stating their outlines coldly with the clarity of a Euclid, then juggling with them like a spangled lady on the music-halls; light is held like a sword, to slash; light becomes rotten, like a medlar, and dissolves in its own sweetness.

Technically, if one must be technical, here is something worth saying: made without actors, sets, or money. Technically, here is a new technique. Close ups are not cut in, a beam of light sweeps them into prominence, leaves a section of the screen hung by chains of its rhythmic swing.

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Cross cutting means nothing when light is a fluid. Scenarios are felt not written, are drawn not written; the roll of film is a rocket to burst in stars in the night. It is something so much more poetical than anything in the concrete cinema; a promise and a fulfilment.

There is a breath of the same spirit in Bruguière's stills, but conception is governed by different possibilities.

Trivially one might finish: I would rather admit there is no end to this question.

O. B.

HERE ENDETH THE FIRST LESSON

The wholly gratuitous insolence with which *Close Up's* petition appears to have been dismissed, merely confirms the suspicion we entertained, as to the existence of a complete contemptuous indifference to a vital problem, on the part of the ineffable gentlemen who are supposed to rule for their good a gaping and acquiescent public.

The public is a somewhat unreliable factor, and if the other side of the medal is shown often enough, may cease to gape and acquiesce. And the other side of the medal, or rather the multiplicity of its sides, comes out so forcibly in the cinema that we are hardly surprised at the cowardly suppression or mutilation of any film worth the name.

It is absolutely essential that there should be retaliation. We suggest quite seriously, as a first step, that some enthusiast should take a loaded revolver to the Academy, and discharge it into the "Birth of Venus" (which, after all, is likely to corrupt those open to corruptive influence), and if he hits a few of the people en route, that wouldn't matter much either. Imagine the hullabaloo, the indignation of the Lieutenant-Colonels in the *Morning Post* and the lonely ones in the *Daily Express*, the universal indignation, and all, or nearly all, based on shocked prejudice. An old master's an old master, damn it. We know what art is, we do. The dirty Bolshevik, the vile cad, who shot, knew very well that we know what art is. He shot to insult US. The one unpardonable crime.

Well, for us, one (but not the only) unpardonable crime is *any* interference by order with the free exhibition of *any* film. *Close Up's* petition, *Close Up's* admirable petition asked for little and got nothing, not even the courtesy of serious consideration. It becomes evident that attempts to compromise with the pigheaded reactionaries, and the consequent shame felt, but willingly endured for a cause so much at heart, are made and suffered in vain. We grudge these corrupters of youth—these conterefters of education, with their polite clean "nature" films (Polytechnic), their gutless animal films (Polytechnic) without copulation (remembering the opening passages of Strinberg's *Corinna*), without death; with their films of how to make grease-paint, toilet paper, ink-stands, matches, bric-a-bac, grease-paint, toilet paper, ink-stands, matches, bric-a-bac; we grudge them the right—no—the power to

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dictate to us what we may see, what our children may see. In particular we resent the intolerable insult implied in the unstated rule (insignificant in itself, but magnificently characteristic of our ethic), that we may see on the screen the breasts of a "native" woman, but not those of a white woman.

Let us change the subject to get back to it. The Film Society is sympathetic, we believe, with the movement to modify the present censorship system. In order to strengthen its position (and we presume in its favour that that is the real reason), it behaves like a good boy, remembers that its foremost object is technical study, and refrains or omits to show certain films which step outside the *quite arbitrarily fixed* limits of the permissible. Now that the futility of fighting the enemy, except by kicks in the buttocks, is apparent, we express our (personal) hope that the Film Society will show only those films which are rejected or accepted on terms, and first of all those which are most liable so to be dealt with.

Mr. Stuart Davis, we may be sure, will not miss the opportunity of showing anything allowed him. Unfortunately the Society have to reckon with their audience.

This would mean something, but it would still leave the main problem unsolved, that of enabling everybody who desires it to see all, instead of one quarter per cent. of the films discussed in these columns, at the ordinary prices without difficulty (and in their integral form), which must be our goal.

The miserable stranglehold exercised by the authorities, as is well known, covers even private performance, and if it did not, their control, as they well know, would speedily vanish, since private societies would spring up in sufficient

numbers to render it illusory. And if that is the position, how do they justify themselves? And if it is too optimistic to suppose that more than a few societies would be born, then why in the name of the bitch's whelps do they refuse facilities, as was done in the case of the Workers' Film Society, a piece of impertinence and unjustifiable discrimination, as well as a cowardly move?

NOTE: We purposely do not refer to the questions of "more" or "less" or "a certain amount of" censorship, these question being in all respects on a level with the hotly debated problem as to the age at which fathers should let their daughters have latch-keys.

And so ends the first lesson.

B. de la V.
H. A. M.
P. R.

COMMENT AND REVIEW

THE KINGDOM OF TWILIGHT.

Why do so many makers of British travel pictures never travel in their imagination? Mr. Alexander Macdonald could have sat on a bench—gazing at one of Osbert Sitwell's London statues—and made up the nugatory story of *The Kingdom of Twilight*.

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The general excuse for the rather second rate performers in such pictures is that one should be interested in the authentic settings. Mr. Macdonald had quite a lot of Australian Bush to film (all of it, in fact) and some exciting caves he discovered himself, but he plays reels of drr-rama in tents and bar rooms. Then, after the bogus story, one cannot help fearing that the natives are bogus.

Pioneers may have the hearts of a schoolboy: there are schoolboys and schoolboys.

The Russians manage exciting documents: example, *The Men of the Forest*. The sturdy little people of the forest, the children who smoke, the women who toil for their diminutive husbands (men feed first, then dogs, then women), the babies who are rocked to sleep so thoroughly with bells on the cradles; the thousand things which the Russians managed in their document, to tell us about the Mongolians; the thousand things which make us want to know a thousand more. Why could not Mr. Macdonald have contrived to whet our appetites about his caves?

Even little Russians do it!

O. B.

EARLIER WORK.

After *New Babylon* critics wondered about Kozintsev and Trauberg: justified, we can go back to *Neiges Sanglantes*.

In the earlier picture they were already trying to make the best of all their many angled compositions. Smoke blown

across a face and the smoke, in beautiful rings, serving as decoration besides atmosphere. A hand of cards : one thinks " like a fan ", then used as a fan. To give a new expression to the cinéastes, filmic concrete idea.

The story set in the time of Emperor Nikolai and Constantine, the Pretender. Violence of the adventures is not matched in the cutting. *Eau de Volga* about says it all, and we hope neatly. Plots and arrests, and a mysterious lady who wants back letters she has written. One notices that a skating rink, with its animation, is a much better setting than a circus, with its rows of seated people. One feels sorry for the Russian actors who have to do so much lying about in the snow.

A torchlight scene is well carried out : people rush so close to the lens of the camera that Vitality is stumbled on. Panics, riots at every corner. Fleeing crowds and tiny dogs bringing up the rear.

Supporters of Constantine are betrayed by a card-sharper ; are betrayed, while in the fortress, into trying to escape down a secret passage (so obviously a secret passage that could not keep its own secret) ; are not shot because they call the soldiers BROTHERS. K. and Trauberg call BROTHER CINEMAGOERS to save their lives ; groups round candlelit tables, and mist.

For some time there has been talk of showing the picture in England under the title *C.B.D.*

O. B.

BIG BUSINESS.

Most comedies are fierce.

Big Business, a Hal Roach comedy starring Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, is full of metaphysical humour.

Some of the experience of the world is in *Big Business*.

Stan and Laurel try to sell a Christmas tree to a householder who wants to be left in peace. Finally, reprisals are taken by both sides: Stan and Laurel look on while the householder tears up their Christmas trees and pulls bits off their car; in his turn, the householder looks on while S. and L. knock bits out of his house. Neighbours and a policeman look on.

The garden path is dug up, the car blown to smithereens.

O. B.

FEATURING OUR OWN CENSOR.

At last we are permitted to tell a story about the gentleman who can be relied upon to provide a good story whenever a worthwhile picture is presented to him.

Some weeks ago he was confronted with Germaine Dulac's *Shell and the Clergyman*.

He said: "This film is so cryptic as to be meaningless: if there is a meaning it is doubtless objectionable."

Another avant-garde picture banned.

O. B.

KNOWING MEN.

Those hot boys! Elinor Glyn's heroine, the heiress pretending to be the paid companion, had hardly entered her auntie's house when the butler, the footman, poppa, and the attractive son of the mansion started to make Glyn love to her.

Life in the upper, Glyn classes: boudoirs, butlers and bedrooms.

This is the true art: almost as good as *The Four Feathers!*

It is a sure winner, and it goes to prove that if you want to make a box-office wow you must engage a director whose mind works that way. What chance of the box-office winner made with brains? Look at *He Who Gets Slapped*, which the Shaftesbury Avenue Pavilion has been reviving at the time of the Glyn trade-show.

Victor Seastrom is quite sweet and simple about the scientist who bursts into the room crying, "I have proved all my theories." There is the lion, straying from the Metro-Goldwyn title and getting mixed up with the drama. Moreover, the moment (unlike grand opera which is so true to life) when all the lights are extinguished in the circus and Lon Chaney's face remains, a radiant speck, in the big, dark screen. Greatest moment—Beardsley dance of the slapping clowns. All these moments upsetting balance: delighting the Blooms-brow while they last and infuriating him when they end, and, if I may be lazy, vice-versa the filmic fan.

Elinor's talkie, *Knowing Men*, is relentless in its tenderness, its Glyness. A clean-up for exhibitors.

O. B.

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Last year we congratulated Messrs. Henry Greenwood & Co. on the current *Photographic Almanac*, the new issue is as splendid a bargain for two shillings.

To pay more would be to buy the right to grumble about some of the illustrations which contentedly repeat what uninspired painters have been saying, still (groans) say, and (pre-talkie groans) are probably about to say. It is kinder to be pleased at the inclusion of one photographic photo than to complain about the sixty-three, and all-for-two-shilling, others. Hiromu Kira's *An Idea* shows a delightful paper bird sitting on a round of wood: it is very delight-making.

O. B.

LONDON-ON-FILM.

The Song of London and *The Night Patrol*, two films by Mr. Norman Lee and Mr. H. B. Parkinson which have many points of similarity, represent an endeavour to strike a new angle in British film production.

The Song of London has been described as Britain's reply to *Berlin*, and was made with that intention. The finished film can in no way stand comparison with Ruttman's masterpiece, but the observer is conscious that all the material is there for a really good documentary film of London. The trouble lies in the organisation and editing of the material,

which is chaotic and without any planned arrangement. In fact, it gives you indigestion.

Like *Berlin*, it opens with shots of early morning workers. Then noon in the City and West End, after which it loses itself until the last reel when it tries to re-organise with night-life stuff.

There is no unifying factor in the film. Everything is jumbled together like an impossible jig-saw puzzle—teashops, one-way traffic, Piccadilly Circus, racecourses, the old lady in Kingsway, Thames Embankment, cabarets, demolished buildings, traffic, workhouses, newsboys. One moment we are looking at a busy week-day scene at the Bank, and the next moment we are rushed off pell-mell to Hyde Park on a Sunday afternoon!

I said there was no unifying factor. My mistake. I forgot the legs. Not one leg, not ten legs, but hundreds of legs, millions of legs, cut in everywhere and anywhere. Camera on the pavement stuff, and generally the same bit of pavement.

The Song of London is a praiseworthy attempt to get off the beaten track, but Messrs. Lee and Parkinson should have done one of two things when they decided to make their film. They should either have forgotten that there ever was a film called *Berlin* or they should have studied *Berlin* for a week before they commenced shooting.

The same lack of system and balance is discernible in *The Night Patrol*. The theme for this production is London's destitute army, constantly increased by the addition of unemployed workers from the coalfields who tramp to London in the hope of finding work. The film, taken entirely

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in the streets, traces the experiences of these men, sleeping on the Embankment or in the casual wards, forced to rely on charity for an occasional free meal, finding it impossible to secure work, and finally returning home.

A document such as this has sufficient human drama without requiring the aid of sensational trimmings to put it over, but the balance of the film is completely upset by the introduction of an extraordinary lengthy "flying squad" sequence. The idea is to show how workers starving in London are exploited by a gang of crooks (a newspaper story provides the basis), but nearly a reel is devoted to the business, complete with burglary, detectives, fight, chase and capture. Result—the equilibrium of the story is destroyed.

Mr. Bryan Langley, the cameraman for both films, has secured some lovely shots, but is inclined to lose himself with stunts and tricks.

No professional actors are employed in *The Night Patrol*. All the parts are played by the unemployed workers among whom the film was made.

The Censor, by the way, has provided us with a good story. He rejected a reel of *The Night Patrol* which exposed how girls from the country are induced by fake domestic service ads. to leave their homes and travel to the Metropolis. He was afraid that if this reel was shown, girls would stay away from London, and then what should we do for servants?

This is nearly as good as the decision of the Board of Trade to reject *The Song of London* for British quota purposes on the grounds that it was a film composed mainly or wholly of pictures of current events!

R. BOND.

FRENCH TALKIES.

We have our talkies, though it is difficult to say much in their favour. *Le Collier de la Reine*, produced by M. Gaston Ravel, is a film that was synchronised only after it was finished.

There are several songs arbitrarily inserted, a mediocre musical accompaniment and towards the end of the film, Mme. Jefferson-Cohn, the star, speaks a few lines. She has beauty and might do good work, well directed.

Then we have *Les Trois Masques*, a film by André Hugon made by the R.C.A. system in London. This is nothing but a photographed Grand-Guignol play. The people speak without ceasing and the public also admire ceaselessly the fact that the lip movements and the words coincide. At least one thinks so, for people flocked to it for more than two months.

But it is really tiresome to have to sit through such beginnings of the new cinematic expression of which we expect so much, when we have the splendid *Mickey Mouse* cartoons, full of rich suggestion.

It will be a struggle to persuade the public driven from the cinemas to return to see good talking films, for what has been shown to it up to the present in Paris is enough to drive it away for ever. Either poor French films or American talkies ruined by the process of re-copying the negative and adding sub-titles for the spoken scenes, sub-titles that are even printed occasionally on the close-up of a face!

New films are announced, including *Prix de Beaute*, that should have been directed by René Clair, and has been made

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by M. Genina, with Louise Brooks as the star. This is now being mounted. There is also *La Route est Belle*, which has been directed at Elstree by Robert Florey, and *La Nuit est à Nous* which Henry Roussell has finished in Germany.

It will be necessary for these films to be infinitely better than those we have seen to date if the French talking film is to exist at all.

JEAN LÉNAUER.

A SOCRATIC FILM DISCOURSE.

A business-like invitation received on the afternoon of February 18th, for the same evening, led us to the " Film Guild of London for projection, production, experiment ", in order to hear Mr. Adrian Brunel deliver (work permitting) " a socratic discourse on film technique "; and also to see " special unreleased films including *Accident* by F. Merner."

Arriving at Foyle's Educational Cinema after a hectic drive through London to avoid missing even one of these words of film wisdom, we found a small group of people waiting despondently outside the locked gates.

We learnt that although Mr. Brunel had *apparently* returned specially from Liverpool to assist the Guild; and that one member had actually had in his possession Erno Metzner's *Überfall* (was this perhaps *Accident* by F. Merner?) they were not allowed to use Foyle's Cinema.

The honorary secretary was awaited but failed to arrive.

and the party adjourned to the Labour Club without their interested but non-political cinéphile.

We have thus missed projection and production but have partaken in one of their experiments.

C. E. S.

“ *Quand les épis se Courbent - - -* ”

Jean Dréville a déjà réalisé *Autour de l'Argent*, un recueil “ d'indiscretions cinégraphiques ”, d'un grand intérêt et qui faisait preuve d'une admirable virtuosité technique, d'une maîtrise cinégraphique digne de sincères éloges.

Son nouveau film, conçu par un jeune Hollandais cinéaste, J. van Canstein, va être prochainement présenté et il mérite qu'on s'y attache. Dréville lui même a fait part des intentions qu'il avait eu en tournant ce film qui se déroule presque entièrement en Hollande : “ Les interprètes? Avant tout le soleil, puis le fermier, la fermière, leurs vaches, leurs poules, les milles choses qui ferment l'horizon de leur vie paisible. Le décor? La grange au chaume épais, les prés onctueux, les champs dorés et les interminables plaines. C'est en un mot la revanche du vrai sur le factice, l'antithèse d'une récente série de films sur la vie trépidante des grandes villes. Puis-je ajouter que j'ai tenté d'obtenir de la photographie le maximum de ses merveilleux attraits et que j'ai mis à contribution les belles mais délicates ressources de la pellicule panchromatique.” Jean Dréville a la réputation d'être un modeste; ses dires ne peuvent nous faire soupçonner qu'une remarquable réussite.

M. M. B.

HOLLYWOOD NOTES.

The Fox Company, despite their financial difficulties resulting from the recent stock market collapse, are preparing to spend twenty millions in picture production during the next twelve months. *The Oregon Trail*, a film of the *Covered Wagon* type, will be one of their most important undertakings. Estimated to cost over a million dollars and to require twenty thousand extra players in addition to an extensive cast, the picture will be made entirely with 70 mm. Grandeur film. Raoul Walsh will direct it.

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The advent of the phono-film threatened at the time to put the Hollywood independent producers out of business. Now, however, with the increased facilities for such production and the lessening of costs, not only are the existing independents again in full swing, but new ones are also coming into the field. Among these newcomers are the Hispania Talking Films Corporation, specializing in Spanish pictures for the South American market; the Teruo Mayeda Company, composed wholly of Japanese; and the Angelus Production Company, Ltd., devoted to exploiting the Rev. Aimee Semple McPherson and her colourful brand of evangelism.

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Ramon Novarro's next picture for M-G-M will be an adaptation of the Spanish romantic classic, *The House of Troy*. The film is being made under the technical direction of Carlos F. Borcosque, of Madrid.

* * *

Dr. Clinton Wunder, of Rochester, has come out boldly as a ministerial champion of Hollywood films. He is not only opposed to censorship, but he also emphatically declares that motion pictures serve as a curb to crime. The screen criminal, he points out, is never painted as a hero; he never succeeds in "getting away with it." As the result of a study of 678 Hollywood films produced during the past year, the Rev. Dr. Wunder presents the following figures: 33.7 per cent. contained no villain and no crime; in 17.4 per cent. the villain was killed; in 33.7 per cent. the villain fell into the clutches of the law and was punished; in 10.3 per cent. the villain reformed, repented and endeavoured to atone for his misdeeds, and in 4.9 per cent. he was vanquished and properly done up by the hero.

* * *

In addition to the twenty thousand human players listed with the Central Casting Bureau of Hollywood, there are five-hundred animal actors of all kinds, nationalities, and capabilities, from common alley cats to sacred bulls and royal Bengal tigers. Among this zoological collection are stars, featured players, character actors, comedians, and extras. Each studio has its special animal-casting department, and dogs, monkeys, seals, lions, elephants, kangaroos, geese, frogs, mice, and all the rest of them are selected for their various rôles with the same care and discrimination as in the case of human actors.

* * *

The doing over of popular silent movies in dialogue versions is steadily on the increase. Among those already

CLOSE UP

thus revived or in course of production are *Seven Keys to Baldpate*, with Richard Dix, *The Spoilers*, with George Bancroft (Paramount), *Three Faces East*, with Erich von Stroheim (Warner Bros.), *Du Barry*, with Norma Talmadge (United Artists), *The Agony Column*, with Grant Withers and Loretta Young (Warner Bros.), *The Sea Wolf* (Fox), and *Oliver Twist*, with Wallace Beery—not as Oliver, however, but Bill Sikes (Paramount).

* * *

One-hundred-and-forty-five men and two women presented themselves as applicants for the title rôle in D. W. Griffith's forthcoming historical picture of *Abraham Lincoln*. From this list Griffith has chosen Walter Huston. One of the women applicants was Lucille La Verne, who a short time ago essayed the rôle of Shylock in a London Shakespearean revival.

* * *

Revolutionary inventions, both forthcoming and promised, are keeping Hollywood producers on the qui vive. Television is already here and will be put into commercial use during the year. Bell and Howell are announcing a new camera with a single lens that will make unnecessary any changing of the camera for close-ups, long shots, etc.; the different range shots being a matter of subsequent laboratory work. Pathé Studios have developed a portable sound-recording device weighing but sixty pounds and operated by dry batteries. E. Mason Hopper, director and cameraman, with seventeen patents to his credit as an inventor, is at work on a projector that will dispense with the need of a screen.

C. H.

BOOK REVIEWS.

Homecoming (Carl and Anna) by Leonard Frank. Peter Davies. 2s. 6d.

This volume by one of the best writers of modern Germany, and illustrated with photographs from the film made from it, will interest students of cinematography and literature alike. For unlike many film stories, *Homecoming* is an interesting study of the conditions and re-adjustments of after war. There is the feeling of space which becomes claustrophobia because of its immensity in the beginning, where the two men, prisoners of war, are left alone with their past lives as the only reality. And when the story shifts to Germany, the streets and slums and the re-building of lives are there in a few words, together with the sense that the present is more important than the past. And this is a fact that few save the Germans seem to have grasped. It is certainly a book that should appeal to all who are interested in the development of modern European literature.

Adam and Evelyn at Kew, by Robert Herring, illustrated by Edward Bawden, published by Elkin Mathews & Marrot, price one guinea.

For the first time in literary history, the film star of the popular moving-picture-press, forgets that brains (like Shakespeare) are suspect of Hollywood, and is rescued by Adam, a gardener, from the pond at Kew into which she had fallen, with less bravery than is usual in a Western, but in perfect English. "She drew herself up, hand on hip, the

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other sprawling like a star-fish on her collar bone. Her left leg was advanced far before the other, thus enabling any casting directors who might be passing to see how she would look in either situation." And Adam had never been to a movie and was distinctly disturbed at finding microphones in the water lilies. Further adventures occur against a never-before exploited background of old ladies, "Mrs. Magnolia, Lady Prunus, Miss Almond", whose histories, like the chance birds of the illustrations, are built up from stray overheard sentences. "They become mountainous rose-trees or larkspur displays, with piled petals of cretonne, foulards and lace—whole flower-shrubs rising from the shiny black tubs of their boots."

And who has not walked down a path in March and watched strange picturesque groups pouring out to greet the sun; fur coats topped with scarlet veils, plush and fur, plaid hanging skirts, buckles. And having no camera has spent the sunlight trying to invent some portable apparatus to be carried in a pocket, pointed through a buttonhole at the solitary occupants of the warmest and most sheltered seats? Whoever has done this will appreciate the drawings by Edward Bawden for they are completely a record of such an afternoon. The illustration particularly which faces page 156, can evoke a whole world.

The montage is excellent and few modern English writers have so true a sense of prose. Our only quarrel with the book is that it is so expensive for the average reader and we hope that a second, cheaper edition will soon be issued. In the meantime, those readers of *Close Up* who cannot buy it, are advised to borrow it.

" Weeping and Smiling Animals "

After months of outdoor shooting, in some of the largest German zoological gardens and in the Neubabelsberg educational studios, Ufa has completed another very interesting animal film, dealing chiefly with the mimicry of animals. The picture reveals that the mimicry of many animals differs from the ordinary mimicry in the human sense, inasmuch as nearly all animals of the lower species, including amphibious animals and reptiles and nearly all birds express their momentary feeling simply by the manner in which they hold their bodies, by shaking their feathers, stretching their neck, blowing up their throats, etc., etc. Mimicry in general is most evident, of course, in all animals with naked faces, especially those of the monkeys, which aside from a number of excellent pictures of wild beasts, take up the largest part of the film. Directors were Dr. Ulrich K. T. Schulz and Wolfram Junghans, while the camera problems were splendidly solved by Bernhard Juppe and Paul Krien.

A la fin du mois de fevrier, le Club de l'Ecran de Paris avait organisé une séance spéciale de critique parlée avec projections, sur " l'Avant-Garde ".

Le programme de cette réunion était le suivant :

Existe-t-il un art d'avant-garde cinématographique ?

S'agit-il bien d'une réalité artistique ou n'est-ce pas plutôt une expression trop facilement applicable ?

Définition du cinéma pur (?)

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Les origines de l'avant-garde et les novateurs.

Les films de Germaine Dulac, René Clair, Fernand Léger, Henri Chomette, Man Ray, Eugen Deslaw, Albert Guyot, Jean Dréville.

Les " Jeunes ".

Les films absolus de Walter Ruttmann.

L'avant-garde aux Etats-Unis : les tentatives de Robert Florey.

La fameuse querelle soulevée par le film de Luis Bunuel : *le chien andalou*.

Divers films furent projetés et discutés avec passion, à savoir : *La Maison Ensorcelée*, féerie de 1905, *Au Bord de la Mer* de O. Blakeston, *Marche des Machines* de Deslaw, *Entracte* de René Clair, *Rhythmes d'une Cathedral*, par Landau !

M. M. BESSY.

A.S.F.I. Productions of Wembley announce in their programme for 1930, that John Grierson is to direct for them *Smoke and Steel*, a film telling, so they announce, of the spirit of youth and comradeship in British Industry.

In *Close Up* of last November, John Grierson wrote concerning *Drifters*: " If you can tell me a story with a better crescendo in energies, images, atmospherics and all that make up the sum and substance of cinema, I promise you I shall make a film of it when I can."

I think that there are several such. But A.S.F.I.'s announcement is good news because it means that not only

has Grierson found one, but that he has been given a chance to work at it. The news is good, moreover, because in Grierson's work there is a promise of truly national characteristic in British Films.

Smoke and Steel is to be made multi-lingual. And it will be additionally interesting, too, to know how Grierson will use sound, to weave together blast-furnaces and construction foundries into a complete pattern of an iron works.

HAY CHOWL.

Mr. Joris Ivens has been invited to lecture in Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev on cinematography. He is taking with him his own films, *The Bridge*, *Heien*, *Skating*, and the *Works at the Zuider Zee*, *Rain*, and *Brandung*, made by Mr. H. K. Franken and himself, *Jardin du Luxembourg* by Mr. Franken, *Stad* by Willem Bon, and *Film of Crystals* by Von Mol. The exchange of films and opinions between the Dutch avant garde and Russia should prove of value on both sides.

Mr. Ivens' film *Rain* has been shown recently in Paris at the Studio 28 with much success.

Alexandroff, Eisenstein's assistant and co-director of the *General Line* (which recently had its triumphal premiere in Berlin) has just completed an avant-garde sound film in Paris.

CLOSE UP

“ *When the ears of corn bend over . . .*”, a new film made by Jean Dréville together with the young Dutchman J. van Canstein, is described above by Dréville as follows: “ The interpreters? Firstly the sun, then the farmer, the farmer’s wife, their cows, their fowls, the thousand details which set the horizon of their peaceful life. The décor? The barn with its heavy thatch, the lush meadows, the golden fields and the interminable plains. In a word, it is the return of truth in place of the factitious, the antithesis of a recent series of films on the tremorous life of the big cities. May I add that I have attempted to obtain in the photography the maximum of its wonderful allurements, and that I have added to this contribution the beautiful but delicate resources of panchromatic film.”

Mr. Joris Ivens has recently gone to Russia, to lecture there on the avant garde in Holland. On his first lecture in Moscow so many people had to be refused admittance to the hall on account of lack of room that he was obliged to repeat the lecture a few days later. Pudovkin introduced Ivens on this occasion, and then three films were shown, *Rain*, by Franken and Ivens, *The Bridge* and *Works at the Zuider Zee*, by Ivens. These were received with great enthusiasm. Mr. Ivens will lecture to many groups in Moscow, including the School of Cinematography and may also visit Leningrad and Kiev.

The Artkino Guild of Boston arranged several showings in February of *The Einstein Theory of Relativity* and announce *Ten Days* by Eisenstein, and Dreyer's *Joan of Arc* for March. Both these films will be shown for a number of performances. Curiously enough, it is in the United States that the gulf is widest between people who go to the movies and those that reject the cinema. It is, therefore, of great importance that such associations as the Art Kino Guild are making it possible for students of cinematography to see the best European and American films.

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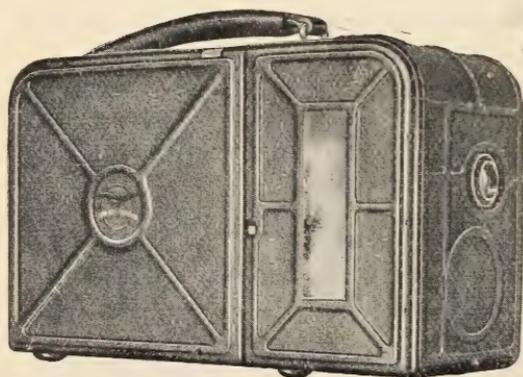
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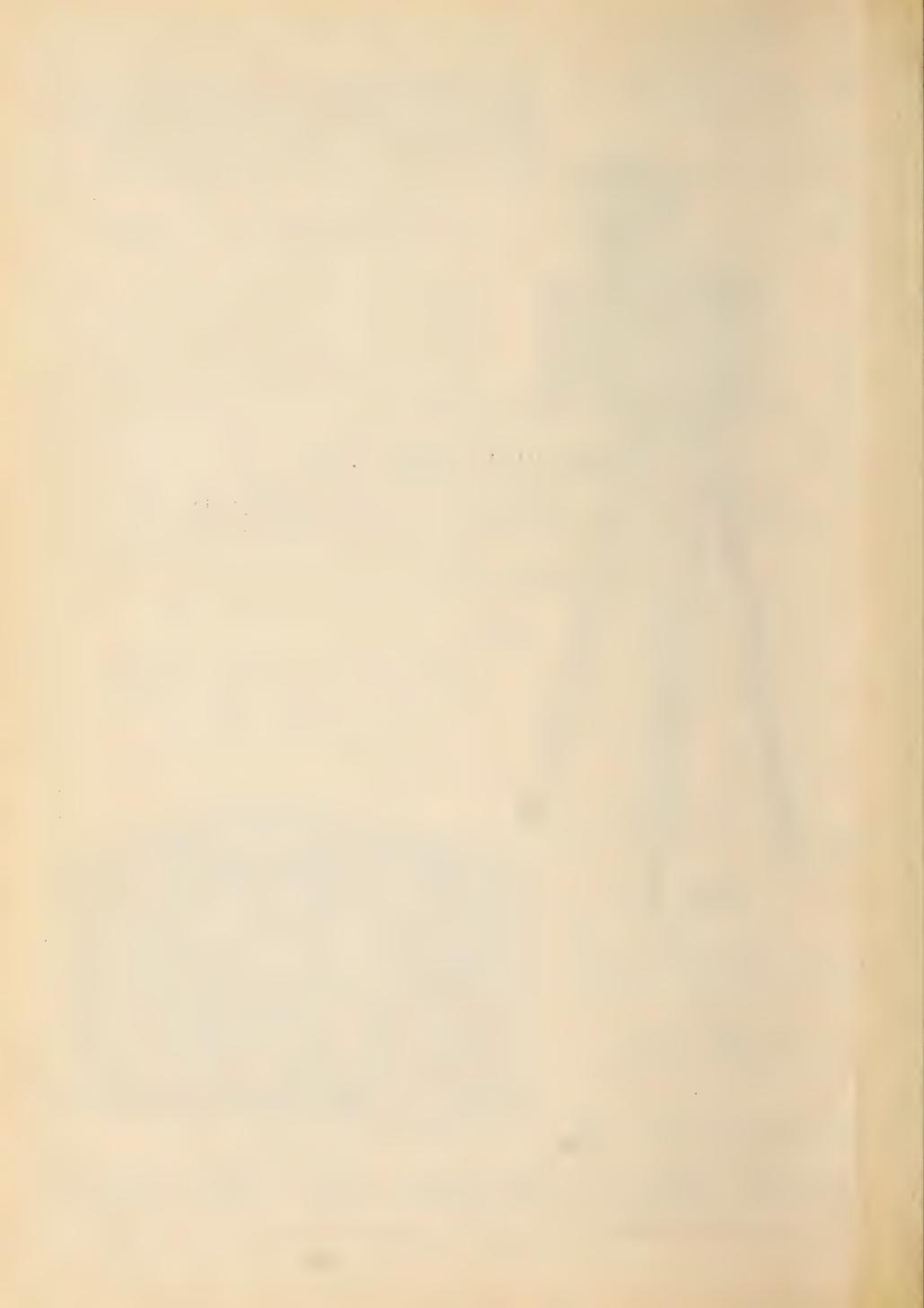
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OF IMPORTANCE TO THE EPICURE
OF THE FILM

THE
LOVE OF JEANNE NEY

by

ILYA EHRENBURG

Translated from the Russian by

HELEN CHROUSHOFF MATHESON

7/6 net

Ilya Ehrenburg, whose works are appearing in practically every European language, is one of the most conspicuous of the younger post-revolutionary school of Russian novelists. "The Love of Jeanne Ney"—of which the "pirated" and inaccurate film version caused something of a sensation last year—is a rapidly moving novel of Bolshevik intrigue, the action of which takes place in Russia and Paris.

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CLOSE UP

Vol. VI No. 4

April 1930

AS IS

BY THE EDITOR

It is unnecessary to review here the various events of the battle against the present censorship conditions. Several articles in this issue, will give the main facts of the position this spring. But one surprising point has emerged and this in the general press: the automatic reply to the word "censorship" is to ask for a tightening up of the restrictions rather than for their remission.

Are the Swiss less moral than the English?

There is less crime in Switzerland (a few outlying districts apart) and far less political agitation than in England. But the cinemas show *Mother* and *Storm Over Asia* freely. Nothing has happened. Yet these same films in England are forbidden to be shown, as likely to cause a breach of the peace. (Ambiguous term; are undue applause or sleeping through a dull film listed also under this heading?) Why should English people be considered less responsible, less fit to look after themselves, than people abroad? For this

and this only, is the actual fundamental meaning of the restrictions.

Then it is useless blaming vulgarity on the Hollywood film alone. It is perhaps impossible to make a film under the *present censorship regulations* without resource to it. For serious consideration of any problem affecting life is practically forbidden.

Two thousand people crowded to *Turksib*. How many thousand are there in England, starved for want of good films? Some will reply: but the Avenue Pavilion, in the centre of London, could not attract enough people to keep it going. But they showed there few of the Russian or even German *universal* films. We are not against avant garde experiment. Through such experiments has cinematography progressed. But they can interest only the technician and the few. They are for the film societies and the school. What people need throughout England are films dealing with construction and life as it actually is. *Turksib*, the construction of a railway, *The General Line*, the primitive village and its contact with modern machinery, *Menschen am Sonntag*, the average Sunday of the average individual, even the scientific film, it is for these that there is a waiting audience.

Instead, what do the English studios give us? A few exceptions apart, reels of men and women doing incredibly stupid actions in order to achieve marriage, when they might just as well have married in the first scene of the picture. But the real consideration of any problem is barred by censorship regulations. And as they have themselves stated, if they

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cannot understand the meaning, then it must be unpleasant.

Close Up readers must be weary of exhortation. We would remind them, however, that they have themselves been the pioneers of this movement to oppose the censors, that now includes an active commission of forty members of Parliament, who are trying to obtain freedom for film and educational societies to show the films they desire. But the fight is not yet over. Will those readers who have five minutes and a postcard to spare, write to the member of Parliament for their district, asking him to support the commission. We shall only get the freedom accorded to people in other countries by continual requests, petitions and commissions.

KENNETH MACPHERSON.

THE FOURTH DIMENSION IN THE KINO

PART II.

Is the method of over-tone montage an irrelevant method, artificially inoculated into cinematography, or is it simply such a quantitative accumulation of one attribute that it makes a dialectic leap and begins to figure as a new qualitative attribute?

In other words, is over-tone montage a consequential dialectic stage of development of the general montage system of processes and does it stand in gradational succession to other forms of montage?

The formal categories of montage known to us reduce themselves to the following :—

1. *Metric Montage.*

Has as its fundamental criterion of construction the *absolute lengths* of the pieces. It joins the pieces together according to their lengths in the formula-scheme. They are realised in the repetition of these formulae.

Tension is obtained by the effect of mechanical acceleration by means of short abridgements of the length of the pieces under condition of preserving the formula of the mutual relation of these lengths (“double”, “triple”, “quadruple”, etc.)

Primitive of the method: Kuleshov's three-quarters, march-time, valse montages ($3/4$, $2/4$, $1/4$, etc.)

Degeneration of the method: metric montage with a metre of complex shortness ($16/17$, $22/57$, etc.)

Such a metre ceases to have a physiological effect, since it is contrary to the “law of simple numbers (relations)”.

Simple relations, which secure clearness of impression, are for that reason a necessary condition for the maximum effectiveness.

And, therefore, they are always to be found in healthy classics of every description:

Architecture: colour in painting; a complex composition

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of Scriabin—are always crystal-clear in the relations of their constituent members; geometrisation in *mises en scène*; precise schemes for rationalised state-institutions, etc.

A similar example is afforded by Vertov's *11th*, where the metric module is so mathematically complex that it is only possible to discover the law by which it is governed "by means of a yard measure", i.e. not by the *impression* received, but by *measurement*.

This by no means implies that the metre must be recognized as the impression is received. On the contrary, though it is not recognized, it is none the less an indispensable condition for the "organization" of the sense impression.

Its clearness brings "into unison" the "pulsation" of the thing and "pulsation" of the auditorium. Without this there can be no "contact" between the two.

Too great complexity of the metric relation produces a chaos of impressions, instead of a distinct emotional tension.

The third case of metric montage lies between the two: this is metric experimentation in a complex alternation of pieces simply in respect of their relation to one another, (or vice versa).

Examples: *Lezginka* in *October* and the patriotic manifestation in *The End of St. Petersburg*. (The second example may be regarded as classic in the domain of *purely metric montage*).

As regards the intra-cadre side of such montage, it is wholly subordinate to the absolute length of the piece. Therefore, it adheres to the broadly dominant character of the solution (possible "synonymity" of the cadre).

2. *Rhythmic Montage.*

Here, in determining the actual lengths of the pieces, the intra-cadre content becomes a factor possessing equal rights to consideration.

The scholasticism of abstract determination of lengths gives place to the flexibility of the relations of the *actual* lengths.

Here the actual length does not coincide with the mathematical length assignable to it according to the metric formula. Here the practical length of the piece is determined as the derivative length from the specifics of the piece and from the "theoretic" length allotted to it according to the scheme.

Quite equally possible here are the case of complete metric *identity* of the pieces and the obtaining of rhythmic figures exclusively through the combination of the pieces according to their intra-cadre characters.

Formal tension by means of acceleration is obtained here by the shortening of the pieces not only in accordance with the formula of shortness of the fundamental scheme but also in violation of this scheme.

Best of all, by the introduction of material more intensive in respect of the same tempo attributes.

The Odessa Steps is a classical example of this. There "the rhythmic drum" of the soldiers' feet as they descend the steps violates all the conditions of metrics. It makes its appearance outside the intervals prescribed by the metre and in each time in a different cadre resolution. The final increase of the tension is afforded by the transition of the

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rhythm of the footsteps descending the staircase to another rhythm—a new type of movement—the next stage of intensiveness of the same action—the carriage rolling down the steps.

Here the carriage acts in relation to the feet as a direct gradational accelerator.

The descent of the feet passes over into the “rolling down” of the carriage.

Compare, by way of contrast, the above-mentioned example from the *End of St. Petersburg*, where the tensions are resolved by the cutting down of *each and every piece* to the minimum montage length.

Metrical montage is utterly suitable for similar simplified march solutions.

For more complex rhythmic problems—it is inadequate.

Its forcible application to such cases results in montage failures. This was what happened, for instance, with the religious dances in *Storm Over Asia*. Effected on the basis of a complex metrical scheme, not adjusted to the specific content of the pieces, this montage could not produce the necessary rhythmic effect.

And in many cases it excites perplexity in the specialist and a confused impression in the ordinary spectator. (Such a case may be artificially amended by a musical accompaniment, as it was in the example cited).

The third form of montage I should describe as :

Tonal Montage.

This term is employed for the first time. It expresses the next stage after rhythmic montage.

In rhythmic montage *actual transposition* was adopted as intra-cadre movement (either of an object in the field of the cadre, or movement of the eye according to the guiding lines of a motionless object).

Here, in this case, movement is understood in a wider sense. Here the conception of movement embraces *all the forms of agitation* resulting from the piece. Here the montage proceeds according to the characteristic of the *emotional sound* of the piece— of the dominant sound. The *general tone* of the piece.

If, from the point of view of impression, it is characterized by the emotional tonality of the piece, i.e., it would appear, by its “ impressionistic ” measure, then this is simply error.

The characteristics of the piece can be measured here, too, with as much exactitude as in the most simple case of “ yard measure ” estimation in plain metrical montage.

But the units of measurement are different here. And the magnitudes of measurement themselves are different.

For example, the degree of light-fluctuation of the piece as a whole is not only absolutely measurable by means of a selenium light-element, but every gradation of it is perceptible to the naked eye.

And if we designate a piece, conditionally and emotionally and in accordance with the preference for light, as “ more gloomy ”, this designation can be successfully replaced by the mathematical co-efficient of the simple degree of illumination. (Case of “ light tonality ”).

In another case, where the piece is described as having a “ shrill sound ”, it is perfectly easy to collate this designation with the immense quantity of acute-angled elements in

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the cadre, as compared with the elements of other shapes (case of "graphic tonality").

Play on the combining of the degrees of soft focussing or of different degrees of shrillness is the most typical example of tonal montage.

As mentioned above, this case is based upon the *dominating* emotional sound of the piece. As examples may be instanced: the fogs in *The Port of Odessa* (the beginning of the mourning over the dead sailor in *Potemkin*).

Here the montage is based exclusively on the emotional "sound" of the different pieces, i.e. on the rhythmic fluctuations, not producing spatial transposition.

Here it is interesting that, side by side with the fundamental tonal dominant, there is also operating, as it were, a second, accessory *rhythmic* dominant of the pieces. This is, as it were, a connecting link of the tonal construction of a given scene with rhythmic tradition, the furthest development of which is tonal montage as a whole.

Like rhythmic montage it is a special variety of metric montage.

This secondary dominant is expressed in barely perceptible transpositional movements, as the agitation of the water; in the slight rocking of the anchored vessels; in the slowly rising smoke; in the sea-gulls slowly descending into the water.

Properly speaking, these too, are elements of a *tonal* order. Movements—transpositions according to tonal and not spatial-rhythmic characteristics. Here spatially incommensurable transpositions are combined in accordance with their emotional sound.

But the chief indicator for the assemblage of the parts remains wholly in the domain of the conjunction of the pieces according to their fundamental, optical light-fluctuations. (Degrees of " haziness " and " illumination "). And in the organization of these fluctuations is revealed the complete identity with minor resolution in music.

Moreover, this instance furnishes an example of *consonance* in the conjunctions of the movement as *transposition* and the movement as *light-vibration*.

The increase of the tension here, too, follows the line of insistence upon one and the same " musical " attribute of the dominant.

A particularly clear example of such an intensification is furnished by the scene of the " belated harvest " (*General Line*, part 5).

As for the construction of the picture as a whole, so also in this particular case, its fundamental constructive process has been adhered to.

Namely: the conflict between the *subject-matter* and its *traditional form*.

The pathetic structure is applied to non-pathetic material. The stimulus is removed from its native situation (e.g. treatment of eroticism in the film) to paradoxical tonic structures. The industrial " monument " is revealed as a typewriter. The wedding as that of a bull with a cow, etc.

Therefore, the thematic *minor* of the harvest is resolved by the *major* of the tempest, of the rain. (Yes, and even the harvest—the traditional major theme of fecundity in the blazing rays of the sun—is taken for the resolution of a theme that is minor and, in addition to that, damp with rain).

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Here the increase of tension proceeds by way of internal reinforcement of the sound of one and the same dominant chord. The growing "oppression before the storm" of the piece.

As also in the previous example, the tonal dominant—movement as light-fluctuation, is accompanied here, too, by a second, rhythmic dominant, i.e. movement as transposition.

Here it is expressed in the growing violence of the wind, embodied in the transition from currents of air to torrents of water (rain). (Absolutely analogous with the transition from the soldiers' footsteps to the carriage).

In the general structure the rôle of the rain and of the wind are here a completely identical bond between the rhythmic rockings and the reticular—afocality of the first example. The truth is: the character of the mutual relation is quite different. In contrast with the consonance of the first example, we have here the reverse.

The gathering of the skies into a black, motionless mass, is contrasted with the intensifying dynamic force of the wind and the solidification implied in the transition from currents of air to torrents of water—the next stage of intensiveness of the dynamic attack on female petticoats and a belated rye-harvest.

Here the collision of the tendencies—the intensification of the static and the intensification of the dynamic gives us a clear example of *dissonance* in tonal montage construction.

From the point of view of emotional impression, "the harvest" is an example of the tragic (active) minor, in distinction from the lyrical (passive) minor of *The Port of Odessa*.

It is curious that in both examples the montage is in accordance with the first form of movement following upon movement, as transposition. Namely, according to "colour".

In *Potemkin* from dark grey to misty white (life analogy—the dawn).

In *Harvest* from light grey to leaden black (life analogy—"the approach of the tempest"), i.e. along the line of the light variations increasing in frequency in the one case and diminishing in frequency in the other.

We have a complete repetition of the picture of simple metrical construction, but taken in a new category of movement—a category of higher significance.

The fourth category of montage we may quite justly designate as :—

4. *Over-tone montage.*

As we see, over-tone montage, described at the beginning of this article* is organically the furthest development along the line of tonal montage.

As is indicated above, it is distinguishable from it by the collective calculation of all the appeals of the piece.

And this characteristic removes the impression from that of melodically emotional colouring to direct physiological perceptibility.

I think, that this too, is a stage in the relation of one to the other.

These four categories are *methods* of montage.

* See *Close Up*, March issue.



From an animated cartoon film, *The Poste*, made by M. Tsehanovsky,
for Sovkino,



Another design from *The Poste*.



Two photographs from a film for children, *Fritz Bauer*, made by V. Petroff, for Sovkino. It is a pity that our educational authorities do not organise a special congress of films from different countries that have been made particularly for children. Commercially, they have practically no chance of being screened in countries other than that of their origin.





Photo: Prometheus Film

When camels ruled the landscape. Another photograph from *Turksib*, the Vostok-Kino film, directed by V. Turin, that has been shown recently with such success by the Workers' Film Society in London.



Photo: Prometheus Film

Another aspect of Turkestan. From *Turksib*.



Photo: Ufa

The return of the victorious troops from the new Ufaton film, *The White Devil*, directed by Alexander Wolkoff. A Bloch Rabinowitsch production. See article in this issue by A. Kraszna-Krausz.

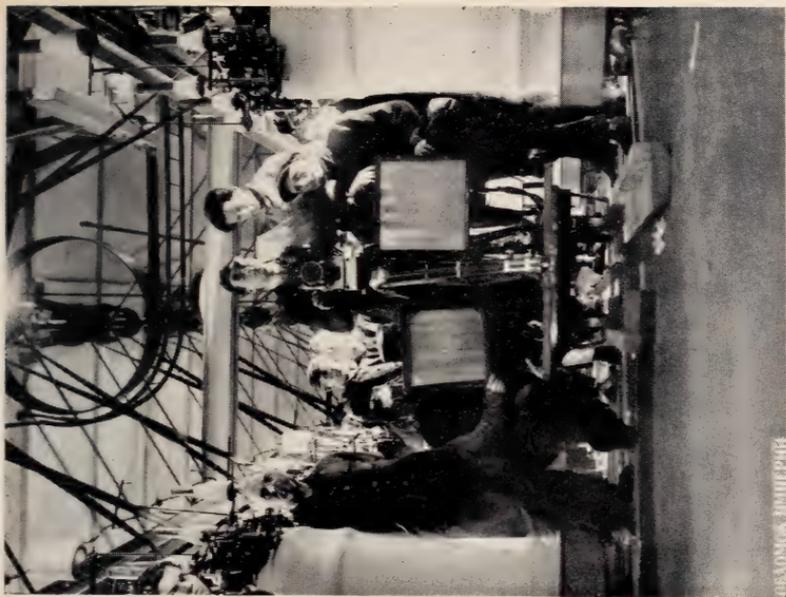


Photo: Ufa

From the same film. The hero, played by Mosjukine, in front of the Czar. An example of the "super-set" well-planned.



Photo: Prometheus Film
From Mutter Krausen's *Fahrt ins Glück*. See
article in this issue by Trude Weiss. A Prometheus
film directed and photographed by Piel Gutzi.



A Work-photograph from *Stumpf of an Empire*, a
Sovkino film directed by F. Ermier.



Photo: Prometheus Film

A marriage feast in a Berlin tenement. From Mutter Krausen's *Fahrt ins Glück*.



Photo: Prometheus Film

Mutter Krausen's daughter dances with the prostitute's friend.



Two more photographs from *Mutter Krausen*. The daughter and the workman she is going to marry.



Photos: Prometheus Film



From *The Earth*, the eagerly awaited new film by Dovjenco, whose recent film, *Arsenal*, has established him in a high place among the outstanding Russian directors. A Vufku-film.



Another interesting study from *The Earth*.

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They become montage *construction* proper when they enter into relations of mutual conflict one with another (this occurs in the examples cited).

In this, by the scheme of mutual relations, repeating one another, they proceed to a more and more strongly defined variety of montage, each organically ensuing from the other.

Thus the transition from the metrical method to the rhythmic came about as a staging of the conflict between the length of the piece and the intra-cadre movement.

The transition to tonal montage as the conflict between the rhythmic and the tonal principle of the piece.

And finally, over-tone montage, as the conflict between the tonal principle of the piece (dominant) and the over-tone.

These considerations afford us, above all, an interesting criterion for the appreciation of montage-construction from the point of view of its "picturesqueness". Picturesqueness is contrasted here with "cinematographicality", aesthetic picturesqueness with physiological reality.

To engage in argument concerning the picturesqueness of the cadre in cinematography is naïve. It is typical of people possessing a fair aesthetic culture but absolutely unqualified from the cinematographic standpoint. To this type of reflection belong, for instance, the remarks concerning the cinema made by Casimir Malevich. The merest novice in cinematography would not think of analysing the "kino-cadre" from the point of view of landscape painting.

I think that the following condition should serve as a criterion of the "picturesqueness" of the montage-construction in the broadest sense of the term: that the conflict should be resolved *within* one or other category of montage, without

any conflict arising between the different categories of montage.

The real cinematographer begins where the collision of the different cinematographic modifications of movement and agitation begins.

For example, the "picturesque" conflict of the figure and the horizon (whether in statics or dynamics is all one). Or the alternation of the differently illuminated pieces only from the point of view of the conflicts of the light-fluctuations, or of the form of the object and its illumination, etc.

We must also define what characterises the action of the different forms of montage on the "psycho-physiological" complex of the person receiving the impression.

The first category is characterised by the rude motive force of the action. It is capable of exciting the spectator to make actual outward movements.

For instance, the hay-cutting in *The General Line* is mounted in this way. The different pieces are "synonymous"—illustrating the single movement from one side of the cadre to the other; and I laughed heartily when I saw the more impressionable members of the audience quietly rocking themselves from side to side at an increasing rate of acceleration according as the pieces were shortened. The effect was the same as that of a drum and a brass band playing a simple march tune.

The second category we designate as rhythmic. It might also be termed primitive emotional. Here the movement is more subtly calculated, for emotion is also a result of the movement, but of a movement that is not mere primitive external transposition.

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The third category—the tonal—might be termed melodic emotional. Here the movement, which had already in the second case ceased to be transposition, passes over distinctly into an emotional vibration of a still higher order.

The fourth category—a new outpouring of pure physiologism—as it were, repeats, in the highest degree of intensiveness, the first category, again acquiring a degree of intensification by direct motive force.

In music this is explained by the fact that, from the moment of the entry of the over-tones parallel to the fundamental sound, there enter also so-called beats, i.e. a type of oscillations which again cease to impress as tones, but impress rather as purely physical “displacements” of the impression received. This refers to strongly pronounced timbre instruments with a large preponderance of the over-tone principle.

They achieve the sensation of physical “displacement” sometimes almost literally: very large Turkish drums, bells, organ.

In some places *The General Line* has succeeded in constructing tonal conjunctions of the tonal and over-tone lines. Sometimes even they collide with the metro-rhythmic as well. For instance, the different “knots” in the religious procession: divers under the ikons, melting candles and gasping sheep at the moment of ecstasy, etc.

It is interesting that, in the course of selection, we quite imperceptibly furnished a proof of substantial equality between rhythm and tone, establishing this gradational unity

much as I previously established a gradational unity between the conceptions of cadre and montage.

Thus, tone is a stage of rhythm.

For the benefit of those who are alarmed at such gradational reductions to one, and prolongation of the properties of one stage into another for purposes of investigation and methodology, I will recall one quotation concerning the fundamental elements of dialectics:—

“ Such are the elements of dialectics. Evidently it is possible to present these elements in greater detail as:—

(1)

. . . . (11) An endless process of deepening men's knowledge of things, of phenomena, of processes, etc. from phenomenon to reality, and from the less profound to the more profound reality.

(12) From co-existence to causality and from one form of connection and of mutual dependence to another, a deeper and more universal.

(13) Repetition in the highest stage of known features of lower properties and

(14) Return to the old”

Lenin's synopsis of Hegel's *Science of Logic*.

Lenin's Collected Works, 9, page 277, pub. 1929.

After this quotation, I think, no objection will be made either in connection with the following category of montage, which may be described as a still higher category of montage, namely, *intellectual* montage.

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Intellectual montage is montage not of roughly physiological overtone sounds, but of sounds and over-tones of an intellectual order.

i.e. conflict-conjunction of intellectual accompanying effects.

The gradational quality is here determined by the fact that there is no difference in principle between the motion of the rocking of a man under the influence of elementary metric montage (see example of hay-cutting) and the intellectual process within it, for the intellectual process is the same agitation, but only in the dominion of the higher nerve-centres.

And if, in the first case, under the influence of the "jazz montage", the hands and knees rhythmically tremble, in the second case such a trembling, under the influence of a different order of intellectual appeal, occurs in identically the same way in the tissues of the higher nerve systems of the thought apparatus.

And though, judged as "phenomena" (appearances), they seem in fact different, yet from the point of view of "essence" (process), they are undoubtedly identical.

And this, on the application of experience of work along lower lines to categories of a higher order, affords the possibility of carrying the attack into the very heart of things and phenomena.

Thus, the fifth category was the case of the intellectual over-tone.

An example of this is furnished by the "gods" in *October*, where all the conditions for their comparison are made dependent on the exclusively class-intellectual (class, for

though the emotional principle is universally human, the intellectual principle is profoundly tinged by class) sound of the piece relating to God.

These pieces are assembled in accordance with a descending intellectual scale. And they degrade the idea of God to a stupidity.

But this, of course, is not yet the intellectual kino, which I shall soon have been proclaiming for some years.

The intellectual kino will be the kino which resolves the conflict-conjunctions of the physiological and intellectual over-tones (see "Perspectives" in the periodical, *Iskusstvo* (*Art*), Nos. 1—2).

Having composed a completely new form of cinematography—the insertion of revolution into the general history of culture; having composed a synthesis of science, art and militant class-feeling.

As we see, the question of over-tone is of vast significance for the future.

All the more attentively should we study the questions of its methodology and conduct its general investigation.

Moscow—London. Autumn 1929.

S. M. EISENSTEIN.

THE ENGLISH CENSORSHIP

Something is being done over the film censorship in England at last. I have just come from an informal non-party meeting in the House of Commons. And though it is as much as I can do not to see Shaw v. Shortt as another Laurel and Hardy comedy, this is strictly a report.

The Lord Chamberlain banned *Mother*. Plenty of other Russian films have been banned before, but it was unprecedented for the Lord Chamberlain to intervene over the showing of a film to a private society. The Masses Film Guild, however, was not thought to be sufficiently private because its rate of subscription was only a shilling! No account of the fact that the Film Society's lowest subscription of twenty-five shillings cannot be afforded by many of the really earnest film-goers was taken. Simply, *anyone* could get in for a shilling, and so it really was not private. Then, also, Mr. Shaw had written a letter (not to the *Express*) about the censoring of *The Night Patrol*, and a number of members met in a committee room at the House of Commons to discuss what could be done. Someone had also stirred up a little fuss about the showing of *Storm Over Asia* by the Film Society, with the result that the wretched Tivoli management found itself threatened with removal of licence

if any disturbance was caused; this, as they were then showing *Happy Days* (but o such gloomy nights, if you went to it) would not have mattered so much, but we did all behave, probably much to the dismay of the new party (sic).

Ivor Montagu explained the facts which make the present form of censorship so odd; how it arose out of an act which sought to protect audiences against fire, and above all, how film societies are denied the freedom allowed to play societies. Vernon Clancey added that the ruling in 1913 that a hospital was a public place, had meant that schools, colleges and anything not a private house was held to be a public place, with the result that scientific films intended for scientific audiences, were strangled at the start. Films can only be licensed for public showing, Adult or Universal. Harold Lloyd's last film is Adult. These are the two most important facts; the crippling of the development of the scientific film in England, and the fact that films have not the freedom allowed the stage. Plays can be performed by societies without interferences, and it was remarked that when various members of the audience at the Interlude Players complained about some of the plays, the Lord Chamberlain said he could do nothing about it, as it was a private society. But try and show a film he doesn't like . . . ! Try and show an anti-imperialist film, just to keep the balance with an imperialist one like *Disraeli*, and you raise hell.

The conservative member for West Belfast added a protest against the vicious anti-social propaganda allowed in the displays of lust and luxury in American films and added that there was undue Catholic predominance on the board, instancing that *Luther* was objected to, but several films, including

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Chaplin's, in which fun was made of other sects were allowed. Also a little beside the point was Mr. Oliver Baldwin's assertion that nothing could be done while we still had a Tory Lord Chamberlain, even if we had a Socialist government for a hundred years.

A committee was appointed, with Mr. Fenner Brockway as chairman, and Miss Ellen Wilkinson, Mr. Allen (West Belfast), Mr. Strauss (for five years on the censoring sub-committee of the L.C.C.) and others, and it was resolved before approaching the government, to send a deputation to the Lord Chamberlain and the L.C.C.

If only something results! And if only the public will back it up! Ivor Montagu's shilling pamphlet on Political Censorship, published by Gollancz, will help to an understanding of the anomalies of the whole thing. As to which anomalies, let it be said that Mr. Shortt's reply is "at present I am not bothering my head"; he is perhaps wise, there are heads and heads. He also retorted to Mr Shaw's allegation that far too many indecent films are shown with the sublime plea that "until we had installed reproducing apparatus in the Board's viewing theatre, it was very difficult to prevent occasional mistakes." On which the only comment is the old jest about the tables . . . they are too damned frequent.

Miss Rosamund Smith, chairman of the Theatres and Music-halls Committee of the L.C.C. delivered herself of the statement that "We have not seen the film. We always follow the censor's opinion. We feel that as members of the Guild pay only a shilling to join it is almost equivalent to showing the film publicly."

And why not show *Mother* publicly? And why not, if ban we must, ban *General Crack*, *Rookery Nook*, *Paris*, *The Cock-Eyed World*, *Piccadilly*, *Our Dancing Daughters*? Why not catch up with the rest of Europe? Why NOT?

R. H.

“IT RESTS WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES”

“ Which I wish to remark—
And my language is plain—
That for ways that are dark
And for tricks that are vain
The heathen Chinee is peculiar ”.

But not half so peculiar as officials of local authorities in England who (woe is me !!) have to do with films. Unfortunately Bret Harte was unacquainted with these nit-witted gentlemen or he might have given us a masterpiece of satirical prose.

Let me relate the sad story step by step. Three months ago I was instrumental in forming in the Midland industrial town where I have the misfortune to reside, an amateur film society. It was decided that one of the objects of that society

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should be to exhibit to the members, what I will call for want of a better term, "unusual" films, or, if you like, films which have been known to cause activity in the grey matter of people witnessing them.

As secretary, my first task was to find which cinema in the town would charge least for a Sunday afternoon or evening performance, since we had no other place where we could show these films and the funds were almost non-existent. After receiving several quotations from cinema managers, which caused the treasurer to cry out in agony, I at last discovered a house in a suburb of the town whose fee for such permission would not place the society in a state of insolvency almost before it saw the light of day.

My next job was to find "unusual" films, the cost of hiring which would not be prohibitive. Mr. Stuart Davis, manager of the Avenue Pavilion, which is now, alas, squawking with the others, supplied me with a list of all the films which have been shown there.

Then began an extensive correspondence course with the renters. I found that most of the charges for a single showing of these films were much too high for our slender resources, but after a great deal of worrying I presented my society with the choice of three films which would cost two guineas each, plus carriage. These were *The Marriage of the Bear*, *The Postmaster*, and *The Nibelungs*. It might have been much better, of course, but you can't call much of a tune when you haven't the money to pay the piper.

As few of the members of the Society had ever seen a Russian film—some, in fact, when first we gathered together, were unaware that Russia made films at all—it was decided

that we should hire *The Marriage of the Bear*, and, if possible, Ruttmann's *Berlin*. The combined cost of these films added to the hire of the hall—about £7—gave the treasurer a heart attack, from which he only recovered when I told him that no sacrifice was too great for art's sake.

However, we were very keen and we decided to carry on with the show. Now the Watch Committee in this town had previously acquired an unsavoury reputation by banning *Dawn* and *Dangers of Ignorance*—no doubt Mr. Macpherson will say "And a good job, too" in the case of the latter—and knowing that mere mention of the words "Russian film" are calculated to cause most municipal authorities to call out the police to quell an imaginary revolution, I thought it best to make a few inquiries to see how we stood with the authorities.

Accordingly I wrote to the Acting Chief Constable—one must give them their capitals—explaining the objects of the society, telling him what we wished to do, and asking if it would be necessary to apply to the Watch Committee for special permission.

In this benighted spot, you see, Sunday cinema performances are only allowed for charity—despite the unimportant trifle of a few score giggling youths and girls who walk the streets every Sabbath for want of something better to do.

For some days there was an ominous silence and then one afternoon a portly individual in leggings, who looked more like a farmer than a plain clothes officer, whose duty is to make inquiries for the information of the police and august justices, called to see me.

He began in a very cheery way by informing me that he

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did not think my application stood much chance of being granted. He explained at great length that the justices were very particular about Sunday cinema shows and that they had no desire to set precedents. Oh, Precedent, what sins of Prohibition are committed in thy name!

I told him that my letter was not meant to be an application but simply an inquiry to find out the lie of the land, and took the responsibility of adding—though I shuddered at the thought of what the treasurer might say—that if it would ease the troubled consciences of the justices at all the society would make a donation to some charity.

The word "private" seemed to trouble him greatly. I tried as patiently as possible, though his abysmal ignorance almost drove me frantic, to explain what the objects of the society were, enlarged on definitions of "unusual" and "artistic" films without making the slightest impression, and assured him that we had not the least desire to break the laws—though goodness knows some of them need smashing to atoms.

After further interminable discussion he went away, not at all sure that we were not a gang of bloodthirsty Bolsheviks plotting a revolution, but generously assuring me that he would do his best to get us permission for the show, though he was very doubtful.

Two days passed and then I was called on the telephone by the cinema manager whose house we had arranged to hire. He told me that he had been approached by the Acting Chief Constable, who had had the nerve to suggest to him that he should withdraw his offer to the Society to save the trouble of bringing the matter before the justices!

Manfully I controlled a savage desire to ferment a real revolution and decided to pay the Acting Chief Constable a visit to try and knock into his thick head a little sense. Believe me or believe me not, the very first thing he asked me when I set foot in his office was whether the Society intended to try and show indecent films!

Restraining a desire to knock his head off, I compromised by promising to obtain a synopsis of the film which he could present with all confidence to his justices. That satisfied him that at all events we were not criminals.

I wrote to the renters explaining the position and asking for a synopsis. They did not send one, but I received a letter stating that the film had been cut and edited (horribly significant words!) for England and had been passed by the Board of Film Censors.

This letter, together with a formal application for permission to hold the performance, I sent to the Acting Chief Constable, fervently praying that my troubles were at an end.

A few days later I had an offer from the cinema manager to combine the society's performance with one which he was giving for a charitable cause. He said he would hire *The Nibelungs*—*The Marriage of the Bear* being hardly likely to please the average cinema audience, particularly on a Sunday evening—on condition that the Society would guarantee him a certain number of seats. This would save us any further trouble with the authorities as well as a good deal of expense.

The proposal was put before the Society and was accepted. For some time I waited for a reply from the cinema manager confirming the performance and I eventually got into touch with him only to learn that the charitable institution had

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decided to postpone its show until the house was equipped for talkies!

Ye Gods! The things I called that manager and his charitable institution! We were back where we started.

Next, a new Chief Constable was appointed and I received from him a letter asking if we proposed to sell tickets to the public for our show, and I had already told them it was private. I replied that tickets would be printed but only given to members of the Society and their friends so as to ensure that no members of the general public would be admitted to the cinema, and run the risk of being demoralised by the film. (Needless to say, I didn't put in the last bit!)

Some days later I received a reply saying that as the exhibition would be private there was no need for the Society to apply for permission and that it was up to us to arrange matters with the cinema manager!

For crying out loud! I did. And how! After all the messing about to be told that we didn't need permission after all, despite the fact the Johnny in the leggings had told us we did. I ought to have known better than believe anything he said.

There the matter rests at the moment. The Society was formed in December. When I received the last letter from the Chief Constable it was March. I am hoping that by next Christmas we will have had one private performance. Perhaps.

LESLIE B. DUCKWORTH.

ACTS UNDER THE ACTS

Friends and foes who feared (or hoped, as the case may be) that after the rejection of the *Close Up* petition nothing more would be heard for some time about the Film Censorship in Britain, will rejoice (or curse) in the knowledge that this question has suddenly become a storm centre of heated discussion and fierce controversy.

So numerous and involved have been the incidents of these last few weeks that it will do no harm to get some little order out of the chaos.

Act 1.

It is now well known that in November 1929 the London Workers' Film Society applied to the London County Council for a licence to exhibit privately uncensored films on Sunday afternoons. The application was summarily rejected without explanation or reason despite the fact that the Film Society had long enjoyed these same privileges. The Workers' Film Society said that the L.C.C. decision was actuated by class bias; that they were not far wrong will shortly be seen.

In January 1930 the Workers' Film Society again applied to the L.C.C., this time for a permit to show *Potemkin* on

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one specified occasion to its members. The L.C.C. replied saying that the Council had decided that under no circumstances could *Potemkin* be shown in any Cinema licensed by them under the 1909 Act. Back went a letter pointing out that *Potemkin* had been exhibited by the Film Society as recently as November 10th, 1929 in premises licensed by the L.C.C. under the 1909 Act. Would the L.C.C. please explain?

No explanation was forthcoming. Another letter was sent. This time the L.C.C. replied dealing with another matter altogether and strangely enough completely omitting any reference at all to *Potemkin!*

Act 2.

The Film Society announces that it will show *Storm Over Asia* at the Tivoli on February 23rd. Great sensation. The Lord's Day Observance Council is very upset and calls on the L.C.C. to prohibit the exhibition. The audience at the Tivoli is assembled. A copy of a letter received by the Tivoli management from the L.C.C. is flashed on the screen. Fearing the worst, and straining our eyes we read:

“ Clause 8 (a) of the Rules of Management, etc., etc.

“ No cinematograph film shall be exhibited which is likely to be injurious to morality or to encourage or incite to crime, or to lead to disorder, or to be in any way offensive in the circumstances to public feeling or which contains any offensive representation of living persons.

“ I am to add ” (proceeds the letter) “ that should any disorder occur at the premises during the exhibition of

Storm Over Asia the Council will hold the licensee of the premises responsible.

“ I am Sir,

“ Your obedient servant ”.

The Film Society laughed. So would a cat. But can you beat it?

Act 3.

The I.L.P. Masses Stage and Film Guild announces that it will show *Mother* in a London cinema on March 2nd. An application for the necessary permit is confidently sent to the L.C.C. A week or so before the date of the proposed exhibition the Council in full session assembled rejected the application.

The Masses Guild then says that it will show *Mother* in the Piccadilly Theatre, a theatre licensed by the Lord Chamberlain.

Theoretically, this was possible. The L.C.C. has no control over this theatre, and the Lord Chamberlain, it was assumed, had no authority to prevent any film being shown in one of his theatres on a day when his licence was not operative.

But prevent it he did. Nobody seems to know why, and it would appear that the Chamberlain himself is not very sure of his grounds for it is expected in some quarters that he will lift his ban. By the time this article appears he may have done so.

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Act 4.

Meantime, Miss Rosamund Smith, Chairman of the Theatres and Music Halls Committee of the L.C.C. has been giving the low-down on the whys and wherefores of the decisions of that remarkable body. It all boils down to the fact that the minimum subscription to the Film Society is twenty-five shillings, whereas anyone can join the other Societies on payment of one shilling. Which means, according to Miss Smith, that *any* member of the general public can join these latter societies. You see, if you pay twenty-five shillings to the Film Society, you are not a member of the general public.

Class bias? Oh, no! Anyway, the combined entrance fee and subscription to the Workers' Film Society for a season of eight performances is 13s., which is just about half that of the Film Society, so when is a member of the general public not a member of the general public? Answer—twelve bob!

Act 5.

These extraordinary events, following so rapidly one upon the other seem at last to have convinced various people that the British censorship and its attendant licensing regulations are the most reactionary in Europe. It takes a long time to get some people moving, but an all-Party Committee has been organised and has promised to raise the whole question of the censorship in the House of Commons and in the L.C.C.

The first step of this Committee of M.P.'s was to arrange for a deputation to the L.C.C. to ask for a change in the regulations governing private societies.

For this meeting the Theatres and Music Halls Committee of the Council prepared a special report. From this it appears that they asked the Board of Censors whether in its opinion the films *Mother*, *Potemkin*, *Storm Over Asia* and *Modern Babylon* are provocative or likely to cause a breach of the peace if shown (a) publicly, or (b) privately. "The Board's opinion is definitely in the affirmative", we are told.

Well we all know the Board of Censors. (The Company controlling *Modern Babylon* recently re-submitted it to the Censors who rejected it on account of its "constant alternation of brutality and bloodshed, with scenes of licence in many cases", and "indecentcy".)

The Committee recommended to the full Council that no permission be given for the private exhibition of *Mother* and the report was couched in such terms as to suggest that the Film Society itself might have its privileges withdrawn.

The reference back of the Committee's report was defeated by 69 votes to 38!

So there you are. Comment seems quite superfluous; it is quite painful enough merely to record such events as these.

One other thing. A certain film critic on a London newspaper, who is famous for his admiration of Russian films and for his complimentary remarks concerning Russian film directors, professes to see the whole business as part of a "well concocted scheme" to undermine the censorship. Almost a Bolshevik plot, in fact, with Ivor Montagu as the chief conspirator and villain of the piece!

This gentleman rushed in to assure the great British public that (1) the cinema industry is perfectly satisfied with the present system (which may or may not be true, but

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has nothing to do with the case), and (2) that if Moscow's propaganda films are rigorously excluded, their directors may eventually be persuaded to make films of a " more commercial and entertaining character ".

Which, when you come to think of it, is a very significant remark. What a pity that our friend is going to be disappointed.

R. BOND.

PARIS HEARS EISENSTEIN

It was nine o'clock in the evening. In a small lecture hall at the Sorbonne University in Paris, nearly two thousand people are crowded together to witness a private filming of *The General Line*, and hear S. M. Eisenstein lecture on the *Principles of the New Russian Film*. The occasion is given under the auspices of a group of austere academicians ponderously named, *Groupe d'Études Philosophiques et Scientifiques pour l'Examen des Tendances Nouvelles*.

The atmosphere is severe. Many learned men of France have been heard in this same room before. The problems of Intuition and Kantian Transcendentalism as well as other burning questions of the day have time and again been discussed here by copiously bewhiskered professors before bored young students of the University. In a few minutes our

beloved Eisenstein will be sitting on this same platform. We have never seen him before, but *Potemkin* still lives in our minds and the tempered-steel quality of *Ten Days* has not been forgotten.

Eisenstein appears on the platform. The atmosphere of respectable behaviour is immediately broken as his wide smile announces a friend, a comrade. Loud applause. But he does not seem to like that and he motions to the audience to stop.

In the meantime, something has happened. Whispers in the audience. The chairman announces that the Parisian police has forbidden the showing of *The General Line*. Faintly he mutters a few words about “. . . hindering the spread of knowledge . . . shameful . . . liberty.” No one is satisfied, and the audience starts a demonstration that lasts for fifteen minutes. Eisenstein seems to be pleased with all this. The prohibition of the film has been a powerful boomerang. No Russian film that I have seen has ever succeeded in arousing so much bitterness against the powers that be as was evident in the crowd that night.

The commotion subsides and the speaker is introduced. He does not “lecture” nor read from a prepared paper. His French is slightly tight, but his accent flawless and delivery fluent. The words he cannot remember he describes with characteristic gestures that *everybody* understands.

“I am sorry that you cannot see my film. . . This makes my task much harder, as I will have to make up for what you cannot see with my limited French. . . When I am thru speaking you may throw questions at me and I will try to answer. . . A sort of friendly ping-pong game. . .

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But I beg you not to ask me the whereabouts of General Koutepov or what salary I earn in the USSR, for if you do I am certain that my replies will not satisfy you. . .”

And thus, after he has won the confidence of everyone in the audience, Eisenstein proceeds to a broad outline of his subject. He begins by drawing a clear differentiation between the conception of the film in the Soviet Union and in the capitalist countries. The destruction of the rotten dramatic trilogy and the raising of the film to an educational and cultural level, he says, was the first task of the Russian directors after the Revolution. He tells of the concrete problems which confront the Soviet movie in regard to the education and political enlightenment of the formerly oppressed national minorities; the establishment in Moscow and Leningrad of the first cinema universities in the world for the purpose of training permanent scientific and artistic cadres.

“ We are working to draw broad masses into the production of our films. Criticisms of our work by the workers and peasants is most valuable to us. Indeed, only their needs and opinions are important, as we are working with and for them. They discuss the value of scenarios in their factory committees and are quite frequently very critical of our work. In the Soviet Union the director and his cameramen play a comparatively secondary rôle. They are only called in when the ideological importance of a certain theme for a film has been decided upon by those for whom the film is produced.”

Eisenstein then gives a brief résumé of the Russian directors' achievements in the technical sphere of the movies.

“ The importance of our method lies in the fact that we have discovered *how to force the spectator to think in a certain direction*. By mounting our films in a way scientifically calculated to create a given impression on an audience, we have developed a powerful weapon for the propagation of the ideas upon which our new social systems is based.

“ We have discarded the professional actor for ‘ the man in the street ’. We are convinced that this has brought us a step nearer to life. When we require an old man in a film, the actor who rehearses three days before he can play the part can never do it so well as a real old man who has been rehearsing for say—sixty years. This method has its difficulties, of course, but so far it has proven its advantages over the old way.”

This does not all sound like music to many highly-paid movie actors in the audience, but in Eisenstein’s case, “ first came the deed,” and those who have seen his films acted by real sailors, real workers and on authentic locales, are well convinced that the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Cinedialectic. The making of Marx’s *Capital* into a film. The cinema of the future!

A lot has been said and written recently about Eisenstein’s so-called “ new principle of the film ”. Distorted translations of his articles and vague interpretations of his new theory have appeared in the press. The author now speaks for himself.

“ My new conception of the film is based on the idea that the intellectual and emotional processes which so far have been conceived of as existing independently of each other—art versus science—and forming an antithesis heretofore never

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united, can be brought together to form a synthesis on the basis of *cinedialectic*, a process that only the cinema can achieve. A spectator can be made to *feel-and-think* what he sees on the screen. The scientific formula can be given the emotional quality of a poem. And whether my ideas on this matter are right or wrong, I am at present working in this direction. I will attempt to film *Capital* so that the humble worker or peasant can understand it."

Our scepticism means but little, for we are before a man who has succeeded in making people weep at the sight of a milk-separator in *The General Line*. Moreover, the organization of human feeling on the basis of a correct *understanding* of reality is nothing new to the Marxian. Incidentally, the famous French physiologist, Claude Bernard, had the same problem in mind when he said more than sixty years ago, "Can we speak of a peremptory contradiction between science and art, between sentiment and reason? I do not believe in the possibility of this contradiction."

Eisenstein is making a concrete approach to this problem which is obviously not an academic one. As he tells us, it was born out of the necessity to teach economics to workers and peasants.

"If we succeed, it will have been Russia's great contribution to the general history of the arts."

And in conclusion :

"Our cinema has developed in the midst of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Its birth and development cannot be dissociated from the great aim of our country, the building of Socialism!"

The lecture is over and Eisenstein calls for questions.

Sound? Stereoscopy? Colour? The speaker is bombarded with questions from all sides. Some are bitter and unfriendly, but Eisenstein never weakens.

An actor shouts : " Will the speaker please tell me whether it is possible for an actor who is an individualist in his art and in his philosophy, to exist in the Soviet Union? "

Eisenstein : " Stay here young man, you will find Parisian soil much more fertile than ours ! "

In answering questions on sound, the speaker again expounds what he and his co-workers had to say a few months ago in the official statement issued by them.

" Every fact optically perceived has its corresponding value in sound. As far as I know, only the Japanese Kabouki Theatre has employed sound-sight in this way. For example, while an actor is *seen* committing hari-haki on the stage, the tearing of silk is *heard* offstage. The Mickey Mouse sound cartoons have also come very close to this method. It is the only justification for sound in the movies. The present usage which establishes a naturalistic coincidence of image and sound is nonsense."

Eisenstein believes that in the near future the black-and-white film will disappear to be replaced by the colour film, of which, he says, he has seen some fine examples.

" There will remain only a few isolated enthusiasts who will crusade against the colour film in the name of the black-and-white principle."

He further emphasizes that none of the recent discoveries in the cinema, (colour, stereoscopy, wide film, etc.) will create revolutionary changes. He understands, above all, the commercial significance of all these innovations.

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And so Eisenstein leaves us amidst a tremendous acclaim.

We have not seen *The General Line*, but two hours in presence of its genial creator have been ample compensation to us.

The greatest movie director in the Soviet Union is at present working in the Tobis Sound Studios at Epinay, near Paris, where he is experimenting with a German sound system. This in the midst of a conspiracy of silence on the part of the French movie press and an active boycott by the official cinema circles of Paris.

Out of over two hundred people present at a dinner tendered in honour of Eisenstein and his assistants by the Friends of the Soviet Union, not a single soul from the French movie world was present.

I cannot help agreeing with Leon Moussinac on this matter: "Jealousy and envy are one of the forms of the petty-bourgeois mind. Cowardice is a form of decadence."

SAMUEL BRODY.

THE PERSONALITY OF THE PLAYER : A PHASE OF UNITY*

The actor or player cannot be viewed apart from the film. The "star" system exaggerates the performer above his place as human-instrument and thereby damns the film. The University of Washington Chapbooks, edited by Glenn Hughes, offers an example of this exaggeration in an essay by Edward Wagenknecht : "Lillian Gish, An Interpretation." It is an unqualified panegyric which I can epitomize in the following quotations :

"Miss Gish is not, in the ordinary sense, a versatile actress. Her temperament is not naturally and obviously dramatic, as that of Pola Negri, for instance, is dramatic; and she always claims the right to make her rôles over to suit Lillian Gish. Yet she has come to be accepted as the outstanding serious artist of the screen, the authentic, incomparable interpreter of the drama of the shadows. As far back as 1920, Mr. John Barrymore declared that Lillian Gish was an American artist worthy to rank with Duse and Bernhardt, a

* I speak here in the main of the "egocentric" film, as contrasted with the film of mass-entities. Yet the former can be educated by the latter. If the individual performer should observe the integration of personalities—"types"—of a film like *Potemkin*, he would see exactly what is meant by submission to the unit-structure.

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girl who had equalled if not surpassed the finest traditions of the theatre . . . each of her portraits is an individual achievement." Mr. Wagenknecht anticipates an objection: "he who feels or who pretends to feel that her Mimi and her Hester Prynne are the same person, or that her Angela Chiaromonte is not an essentially different girl from her Henriette Girard, is surely completely blind to any other than very elementary and wholly obvious distinctions: fine shadings in art are not for him. Versatility, in the usual sense, is comparatively easy for the character actor: he presents, one after the other, wholly different *types*, and he has all the resources of make-up to sustain the illusion."

What the author fails to recognize is that cinema performance is a detail of a structure, and the actor must become that detail.† If, as Wagenknecht says, Gish's "Hester

† Wagenknecht says that he is "not trying to absolve" the performer from fidelity to the play, he is—he explains—"simply suggesting that in acting itself there is a larger creative impulse than is commonly supposed." Before this he said: "If acting is in any sense among the arts, why should we not grant to the actor this same privilege—to re-character his material in terms of his own personality—which we impose upon the poet as a duty?" It is probable that when Shakespeare said, "The play's the thing," he was attacking this same presumption. Wagenknecht calls the characterization of acting as "interpretative," cant provoked by obtuseness. Well, I have avoided this epithet in the recognition of acting as an instrument and portion of a structure. When critics call for choreographic performance, this is what they mean or should mean: the unit-structure determines the stylization of the single performer. Stylization is not only fantastic playing a la *Caligari* or *Beggar on Horseback*; it is the structural conversion of the ordinary! This means much in the theatre, but a thousandfold more in the film where absolute historicities are taboo. The clue is in "intensification," which even as casual an observer as George Bernard Shaw has recognized for an innate quality of the cinema.

Prynne is not precisely Hawthorne's Hester, she is Lillian's Hester," he must answer the question: "Which of the Hesters belongs to the film by Seastrom?" Ostensibly, Hawthorne's. Lillian Gish's performance stood in the way of this realization of a structure which coincided with the director's temperament. This temperament would have created a film of strong indictments, whereas the result, because of Gish, was compromise. To say that the fault lies with Seastrom does not recognize the hindrances a director meets which should not be his problem. Murnau once said that between the pliable actor like George O'Brien and the assertive and more creative player like Jannings there can be no gradations. Gish lies between and what lies between is counter-cinema. Assigning, as the author of the chapbook does, poetry, "lyrical colouring," to Gish is a sentimentalism that agrees with the enthusiasms of Hergesheimer and George Jean Nathan. To this lyricism Wagenknecht adds, "dramatic intensesness." The lyricism and intensesness are nothing but mincing cuteness and mincing pathos. If, on rare moments, Lillian Gish seems to have achieved genuine condensation of power, that is simply because her habitual mincing acting has coincided with the necessities of these moments. There was such an instance in *The Enemy*, when she is informed of her husband's disappearance on the battlefield: her clipped movements, timed to the surimpression of the soldiers' march, appear ready to explode with compressed anguish.

The fault of Gish is traceable to the fallacious standard of performance set by David Wark Griffith in his Biograph days. Mr. Griffith's worse trait is sentimentality, expressed

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in the platitudes of social criticism that makes his compositions more grandiose than grand, and in his penchant for a spurious refinement or restraint. Samuel Goldwyn, in "Behind the Screen," says that Mary Pickford ran away from Griffith because she felt she was losing her individuality. She has never really run away from him. Nor has the American film. Movie acting in America, save with comiques like Langdon, has never sensed the meaning of structural stylization, which alone determines the validity of the particular condensation or restraint. And the particular stylization is determined by the structure of the particular film. The structure of the film is determined by the director.

Has the player a will of his own? Mr. Wagenknecht has this to say: "Without great personality, great art simply cannot exist, for it is in personality that the highest expression, the ultimate manifestation of life comes. This truth has long been recognized in connection with the other arts: it has been obscured only with regard to acting." To confuse the category of an art like acting with one like painting is an evidence of a failure to recognize the *submissive* character of the player: he is an instrument! Assuredly he is an instrument of greater importance than the mechanical instruments of the cinema, because, in a film of human content, he is also the content and the final experience. That is just where the will of the player enters. Either he must be pliable in his submissiveness or intelligently receptive. In the latter case receptivity becomes the expression of a conception of acting. In the expression of the conception lies the understanding of the structure of the experience

of the character. The structure of the character is his place in the structure of the film.

John Grierson has said in an American newspaper that the most fitted player is the untrained person who moves through a film without self-consciousness. This sort of player makes the American film the cheerful entertainment it frequently is. It also works against the creation of a structural American film. Self-consciousness is essential to the understanding of the self, the character, in the unit of the film. Witness the playing of Werner Krauss, of Asta Nielsen, of Catherin Hessling, of Fritz Kortner. Each of these has a conception of performance very recognizable, as it should be, in each rôle enacted. Call this a personal idiom, or a personality, if you wish. But recognize it as highly versatile in its applications, which admittedly the idiom of Lillian Gish never is. Contrast the self-conscious idiom of Jacques Catelain with the self-conscious idiom of Harry Langdon. A flippant New York reviewer called Catelain's lovemaking Langdonish. This is not erring criticism. Catelain's idiom is restraint without reference to the structure of the character he is assuming: Langdon's always is.

Character acting does not satisfy this demand of versatility, since it is mimetic in its intention rather than structural. It may be put this way: cinema performance is the structural transfiguration of character acting. That describes this maligned but singular player, Catherine Hessling. Hessling's idiom of compressed and choreographic playing—the stylization of the quotidineal—is permanent and defined. Her make-



From a new film by J. Shige Sudzuky with the provocative title, *Why She Must Done*. We await further information from Japan, as to the meaning of this title.



A Tungghuss from the Kenicher river, from a film directed by Bolshintzov, for the Siberia-Kino. Russians are making a careful record of hitherto little known tribes which should be of immense value.



From an anti-alcoholic film, *For Your Health*, a Meshrabpom film, directed by Dubrovsky.



From the Sovkino Film, *A Firm Character*,
directed by B. Jurtzev.



Another illustration from the cultural
activities of the Russian cinema. This
photograph is from an educational film,
Malaria, directed by I. Nuss.



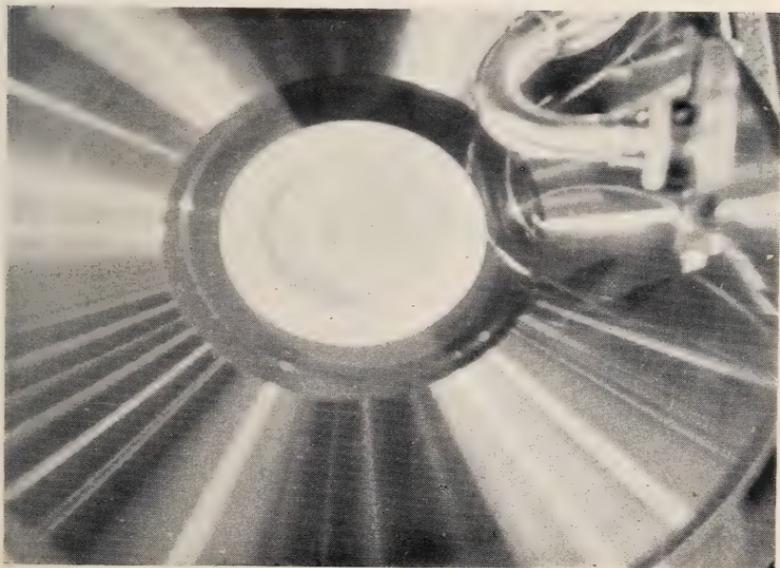
The soul of a political discussion. One of the ministers (see the illustration below) falls asleep and sees his opponents together with their arguments flitting through the benches as dancers. One of the most brilliant moments of one of the finest films ever made, *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*, by Jacques Feyder. These two photographs are reproduced by permission of Terra-United Artists, who control the German rights of the picture.



Could anything be more apt than the translation of pre-planned political speeches (as shown in this photograph) into the set ballet movements portrayed above?



Two illustrations from a film by Germaine Dulac; *Disque 957*, an experiment in visual music from a prelude by Chopin.





Two further examples of rhythmic design from *Light Rhythms*, by Francis Bruguiere and Oswald Blakeston, recently shown in London at the Avenue Pavilion.





From *Menschen Am Sonntag*, the film made by the Berlin Studio 29, which has been rousing the Berlin audiences to enthusiasm.



An interesting study from the *Blue Express*, by Trauberg. A Sovkino production.



Two further illustrations from *Menschan Am Sonntag*, of which an account is printed in the article by Mr. A. Kraszna Krausz.



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up is patently always the same, but the relation of her hair to her head, her head to her body, her body to her walk, re-articulates the idiom in each instance. Where she minces she constructs herself in the environment of the film. It is not idle mincing. Her refinement is a commentary upon the meaning of the character in the arrangement. Surpassing her in profundity, if not in agility, is Asta Nielsen: she is a monument that frequently builds the film. This is no condemnation of her, but of the failure of the director or the theme to attain to her. Of this I have spoken in my article, "Kino and Lichtspiel," in the November *Close Up*. We have often heard speak of "wasted acting." We know of the false theatrical standard which will let the actor "carry the play." Wagenknecht says: "The very great—*Hamlet*, for example, are never completed. *Hamlet* is no longer Shakespeare's exclusively, but the world's, and it will not really be finished until the last great actor has presented his conception of it." Again the vulgar persistent histrionic error: Hamlet the character is more important than Hamlet the play. Scholars as well as actors have argued the meaning of Prince Hamlet to the neglect of the significance of the poetic drama itself.

There are two poles of statement in performance: litotes and hyperbole. These are structural as well as critical (i.e. commentary). Elizabethan drama is a complete study in the structural-critical uses of under and overstatement. Griffith and film directors in general, betrayed by a spurious restraint, avoid hyperbole. Yet hyperbole is the *test* of performance and the test of direction. The control of the hyperbolism

of Jannings in *The Last Laugh* through the structure of the film accredits Murnau with directorial distinction, and the failure of Fleming and von Sternberg in *The Way of All Flesh* and *The Last Command*, respectively, is the complete criticism of their films.

Emerson and Loos in their popular manual, "Breaking into the Movies," assail a New York reviewer to whom there is no such thing as movie acting; to him it is posing before a camera. The authors find in film acting the most refined and intricate of mediums. The camera, being permanent and voracious, demands, so they believe, an intensely (read "restrainedly") realistic acting. And with it an ease of unawareness (of camera) which means freedom of all feeling of acting. This description agrees with Grierson's and the practice in America. Certainly it is preferable to the horrid pretense of mimicry indulged in by Dolores del Rio (griefs of the river!). But Emerson and Loos have not spoken of an ideal performance, they have merely interpreted, by recording usual practice. The camera is demanding. It acts as the immediate instrument of the director. The performer must be conscious of this instrument as he must be conscious of all the instruments—setting, etc.—including himself. But it is not of himself, the person off the set he must be conscious, but of himself, the personality, the form within the form. This means the loss of the non-theatric or non-cinematic personality—himself—for the theatric or cinematic personality, the rôle. With this as a critical viewpoint, the critic can reduce the value of a Maurice Chevalier or a Raquel Meller and fully appreciate the contribution of a Werner Krauss or an Yvette Guilbert. These are differences in

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self-consciousness which amount to opposite categories. Relevant self-consciousness brings intelligence into the performance of the player. For without intelligence there can be no structural modification, no control of one's self, for the needs of the unit, no appreciation of the directorial intention.

H. A. POTAMKIN.

IN THE OLD DAYS

(PART ONE).

About sixteen years ago a friend of mine excitedly pointed to headlines in a newspaper which read something like this—SOCIETY GIRLS WANTED! BECOME A MOVIE STAR! APPLY THOMAS INCE STUDIO! CHANCE OF LIFETIME!

Can you imagine any film company soliciting in this manner to-day? One would be more likely to read—NO SOCIETY (OR OTHER) GIRLS WANTED! FAT CHANCE TO BECOME MOVIE STAR! DON'T APPLY ANYWHERE (FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE)! NOT A CHANCE IN TEN LIFETIMES!

But sixteen years ago the movies and we (alas)! were young and they did so advertise. We read on, palpitating. Routine

of ordinary life was boring. The simplicity of overnight stardom appealed to us. In company with a man who was fresh from a vaudeville failure and whom we had met casually at a party a few nights before, we headed for Inceville in my friend's father's automobile.

By Inceville, I do not mean Culver City. I mean a collection of flimsy shacks beside the sea, beyond Santa Monica and the other side of a smelly Japanese fishing village.

The vaudeville failure requested to be allowed to take the wheel. It may not have been the first time he had made such a request, but I think it was the first time it had ever been granted. I sat on the back seat with his derby hat for company. It and I changed places several times and at last, after a painful journey to the roof of the car, I came down directly upon it. I plucked it out from under and noted, without regret, that it was too far gone for even a comic turn.

When not piloting, Robert McKim was a kind and gentle soul. But all his later success on the screen was achieved as a villain. It was no doubt in the course of a motor drive that Thomas Ince discovered this latent talent.

Arrived miraculously at Inceville, we tottered to the casting office. The casting director was a nice man by the name of Allen. He was also business manager and, it seemed to me later, rather a number of things. Jobs were not so specialized in those days.

Millie and I were at once signed on for a boarding-school picture featuring—not us—but Bessie Barriscale and Lewis Cody. Bob was engaged for indeterminate extra work.

Millie drove home while Bob worked vainly over his hat and I tried to think of some clever way to break the news to

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the family. To-day there is a chance of such tidings being received with general rejoicing—but not then.

Both Millie's family and mine behaved badly. But we were determined to be movie stars and our relatives were powerless to detain us. They were, however, in a position to refuse us the use of the family cars. "If," said they with admirable accord, "you wish to be common little movie actresses, you can *be* common little movie actresses and you can arrive at your chosen place of work by means of street-car, bus and foot."

This was, indeed, a cruel blow. We were due on the lot ready for work at eight-thirty of the morning. The journey (street-car, bus and foot) required at least an hour and a half. The terrible rising hour was a blight that never grew less. Once in awhile we managed to sneak off with one car or the other, but this was rare and the results painful.

Ince had provided buses to meet the Santa Monica street-car at its terminus. These vehicles possessed a sort of light sprightliness which would have been delightful on a smooth road. But the road between Santa Monica and Inceville was not smooth. The Japanese fishing village stank hideously and the drivers hurried perilously to come out on the other side. We never happened to be in a bus that overturned but it did occur and the imminent possibility added to the general thrill.

We felt, that first day at Inceville, as though we had been transplanted to a strange planet. There was an air of ease and at-homeness about the "regulars" that made us feel awkward and shy. Most of them were friendly but we did

encounter a dash of superiority and amusement on the part of some which was rather upsetting—even a suggestion of resentment here and there. There were a few new hands like ourselves who had been lured in through the advertisement. Everyone but us, I think, realized that it was not so much startling fresh talent that was being sought as suitable clothes for the fashionable boarding-school picture. Actors in those days had not the facilities for proper costuming that exist now.

Millie and I shared our dressing shack with another "society" girl. We did not like her and would rather have had an old-timer.

As we did not work the first day we were free to wander about and get our bearings. Yellow, dusty hills ran down to the sand, and then the glitter of ocean. The group of shacks that formed Inceville lay at the feet of these dusty hills. To us it all seemed glamorous. We found the lunch room most fascinating of all. Just another wooden shack fitted up with plain board tables and benches—BUT—herein congregated the STARS, and took nourishment—not always prettily, to be sure—but such details did not matter to us. What did matter was that here were Bessie Barriscale and Lewis Cody and Bessie's husband with the beautiful, too sensitive face and Louise Glaum, VAMPIRE—and others. We saw too, although we did not know it, stars of a later day in the making. Charlie Ray was there, a shy, long-legged, gangling youngster. Alice Terry, with whom we at once made friends, whose name was Taafe in those days and whom everyone called Taffy. She was very poor and very Irish and very simple and nice—and very plump—and

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nobody thought she had a chance. SHE COULDN'T ACT. Well . . . Rex Ingram taught her to do that.

The day was so stifling that Millie and I were obliged to cease exploration from time to time and seek shelter in our dressing-shack, which did not afford very much at that. We had several male visitations, two of which I recall clearly. The first told us dirty stories and we were shocked. The second seemed to be a nice fellow and interested in helping us along. He said, "Now, lookit here girls—take a tip from me. Yuh just can't *overack* for the camera. If you don't exaggerate fierce you'll come out blah on the screen. Now, Westy's gonna direck this film picshur an' he's sore about you sassiety girls bein' rung in on him. He's intrusted in a coupla babies of his own an' he's gonna try an' crab yuh. So don't pay no attention to what *he* says. Yuh listen to me—an' don't yuh fergit—*ack like hell!*"

We thanked him gratefully and the next day had the opportunity of putting his advice into practice. The "school girls" were duly assembled and Millie and I were rather surprised when Westy placed us in the foreground of the collection. We concluded, however, that this must be orders from higher up. We were all told to "register astonishment". Millie and I registered it abandonedly. We called into play muscles that had never before been used. We dropped our jaws and forced our aching eye-balls forward. Remembering the words of our mentor, we were quite prepared when Westy pointed us out and yelled "For God's sake! I said look *astonished*—not as if you had *lockjaw!*"

Forewarned, we exchanged superior smiles and continued to facially writhe. Westy became more frantic. Inspired,

I whispered to Millie, " Tone it down for rehearsal, and then when the camera goes, we'll really *act!* "

This was highly successful. Westy, satisfied with our phlegmatic rehearsal, devoted his attention to Bessie during the actual shooting. Other scenes were accomplished in the same manner.

Our fellow school girls had stayed docilely in the places assigned to them during rehearsals, but the moment the camera began to click, Millie and I found that we needed all the brawn we possessed to defend our places of prominence. There was a general surge forward, and not a kindly one. Our ribs were elbowed and our shins were kicked. But we fought so spiritedly that, added to our vigorous " acting," was a certain amount of genuine facial movement. We felt, pleasantly, that whatever happened we should certainly not register " blah ".

One of the charming features of primitive Inceville was that even the extras might go at will into the projection room when part of a picture in the making was pieced together and run off. Millie and I excitedly took our places for the first of these showings, thinking complacently of the delightful surprise in store for the great Ince. Wouldn't Westy be furious when he learned how we had tricked him!

We sat in darkness for some time, our excitement growing with the delay. At last a hiss from the projector—silence. Impatiently we bore the preliminary doings of Bessie alone. Then Bessie with " Pinky ", Allen's wife. Neither had any interest for us. Then . . . there were we, registering astonishment! We stared, horrified, dimly aware of groans and some suppressed tittering. Were it not for the evidence

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of our own clothes, we would not have recognized our counterparts. They tossed their heads, as though with some fatal affliction, bared their teeth, rolled insane eyes. I saw my ears move as I have never been able to move them since.

A terrible voice clove the darkness.

"Who," it demanded hoarsely, "Are those two ***! ***! ***! monkeys?"

We fell onto our hands and knees and under cover of the kindly gloom crept to the door, flung it open and dashed out.

I do really believe in some benevolent providence for it happened that this was one of the few occasions when we had been able to make off with a family car. As we drove away, a hysterical yell came after us, delivered in Westy's well-known and powerful voice.

CHARLOTTE ARTHUR.

(*To be continued*).

MECHANISMS OF CINEMA. III

DOCUMENTARY FILMS.

One can think of two distinct types of the documentary film. Type first, works to a scenario more or less . . . the *Round Africa with Cobham* kind of thing . . . and there is the other type. *The Document of Shanghai* belongs to the latter. China! . . . political tension . . . the unaccountable

mind of the Chinese Commander. Any damned thing may happen . . . something is pretty sure to happen absolutely *not* to schedule. And does. No "put-up-jobs" here: just plain eye-witness stuff.

Fiction is ruinous to this kind of film, however harmless. You remember: "One morning at Cape Town looking through the binoculars we were surprised to see strangers on the seaplane. (Long shot of 'plane . . . binocular mask) . . . and we hurried there by motor launch with memories of souvenir hunters." (Shot of motor launch. She is off, sailing towards seaplane). Half a mo'! Hi! you've forgotten the camera! (Nevertheless, Debie got there first!)

Of course the strangers turn out to be harmless girls who have been invited by one of the passengers. Oh! what a really *nice* surprise for Sir Allen! Wind off reel with girls bathing from seaplane.

No, no, no, . . . we go to see facts and we expect facts . . . fiction is as out of place here as a monkey wrench in the wind bag of a harmonium. You see there is a vast difference in the documentary film between the spontaneous and the scheduled.

Just think of Shanghai! You have waited . . . then things blaze up. The barricades . . . you shove up the camera quickly, keeping cover from the hail . . . wind like hell! Then very probably run like hell! Afterwards visit the scene of a recent Chinese looting expedition and wind off twenty or thirty feet of fire brigade stuff together with subsequent executions (which you know the censors will delete, anyway.)

When you have collected all your reels together, start

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cutting. Don't stop too soon. And you have to be clever to make head or tail of such a confusion. More so to make a "stinging indictment". You have to possess a scenario mind as well as a camera . . . you construct *with* the camera as the matter develops. There is no time to get any pre-conceived ideas. Admittedly, this is the most exacting branch of constructive cinema, and is the ideal training ground for young producers.

Crowds running before a bayonet charge are the most wonderful actors on earth. The young producer studies them as he winds. A few months back I yearned for a camera, a camel and Jerusalem!

Of course, back in the laboratories (if you are in Germany) you select suitable material from about two miles of film, and build up your composites, mixes, and fades, by the "chemical mix" method. You cross-cut action . . . you might even "throw back" not more than once. This practise makes the scissor fingers slick! Indeed, there is nothing to stop you making a most thrilling, stinging, staggering indictment, except the censor (bless him!)

When you have sobered down to projection, you will probably find far too much camera angle of the wrong kind. Facing a camel charge, or mixing in with the *mélée* is not conducive to the vertical camera.

The mode of composition and technique are really the same as for the scenario built, but here the scenario is presented to you in dress rehearsal, so to speak. You must become an automatic camera man, absolutely at the dictates of that non-stop, non-repeat scenario reader, Destiny.

But my! how your parts act!

COMEDY.

I have purposely left Comedy to the last, because we have finished with camera technique. Forget it all. Comedy has little or no use for it. Excepting only comics of the type which employ the " police-man and steam-roller " technique. The policeman is, of course, rolled up afterwards like a strip of wallpaper. I have seen this classic idea extended, or rather, distended. A bicycle pump re-inflates the cop who forthwith joins in the chase after the runaway steam-roller, is it? or is it after the old gentleman with the ignited bomb? I forget which.

When this failed to raise a laugh (I imagine it was about 1914) serious thoughts were expended on improving the class of comic entertainment. Funny men (?) were employed to make suggestions during actual production. By as early as 1920, feature comics were being turned out.

But really, I must speak with more solemnity. We are now in the presence of the mighty. Chaplin, Keaton, and, er, that other one.

Having stepped down from highbrow technique as a platform of discussion what am I to do with these fellows hanging about? (And yet Chaplin started the whole thing with his *Woman of Paris!*)

Where now is camera angle? Where are the travelling shots? (except in exteriors, chases, etc.) Who ever saw a " mix " of Keaton shot leaving a room peering at Keaton shot from outside? Or a balanced action composite of a Chaplin rounding a left corner on a right leg, and a Chaplin rounding a right corner on a left leg? No doubt Keaton

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would provide the necessary solemnity . . . Chaplin's art lies largely in the direction of a " get away " from a pursuing cop, which is about as confusing.

But we were not discussing Chaplin's art. It just came in automatically. It is something which is greater when treated the more simply. His humble meal has to be shown plainly . . . like the bread which he eats. He nibbles and sucks a boot nail in the frozen North, like no one else on earth . . . like nothing else on earth. (No! it is not like rabbit, or chicken, or pheasant, that hob-nail bone . . . no use using imagery here . . . it is simply delicious hob-nail from a meal of boot, to one who has not fed for weeks.) Chaplin is an image only unto himself. The truth is he is employing imagery of the subtlest kind all the time. Each hiccough is a cast back to a meal of boot! When he is ' well off ', he is the living image of all the well off images one can ever call to mind, satirised . . . every movement subtle, suggestive. A plastic human cartoon who caricatures human nature, Chaplin uses motion and expression with a thousand and one inflexions.

His is the act within the act. The ordinary picture Chaplin is not really very funny. A still of him is quite devoid of a giggle even. It is his act for the policeman whom he is fooling that is comic.

His pepper and salt, which he insists on having with stolen hot dog, boiled boot, and any old meal he can " wangle ", is a constant recurrence. I would like to see him in a predicament: an excellent meal . . . Chaplin well off . . . but no cruet! Nothing the camera can do will ever improve on his pepper and salt act.

Keaton, on the other hand, is funny to look at, but there is no doubt he is rather an acquired taste . . . subtle and somewhat indigestible to the beginner. His directors are to blame for holding back an ability which might even surpass Chaplin's (although I hardly think this is innate in him).

The entire lack of cheapness about his comedy elevates him perhaps a little too high . . . a trite camera technique would certainly crush the fun out of this art.

L. SAALSCHUTZ.

OUR LITERARY SCREEN

Critics get very angry when they believe that the cinema is borrowing too much from the stage, but they become rather jubilant if they think that the cinema is borrowing from literature. They ignore the fact that *the eye of the brain is very different from the physical eye*.

Praiseworthy and perfectly legitimate in poetry, it does not follow that verbal tricks can be lifted into a film; for the physical eye is so much more bound up to the things it actually sees than the mental eye. In writing it might give colour and force to a description to say that a man ran like the sea, but Anthony Asquith's use of this image, in *The Cottage on Dartmoor*, gives a diffused impression.

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Towards the climax of Asquith's film the convict decides that liberty and life are vain without the woman he loves (bless us); he starts to run back to her, deliberately exposing himself as a target for the warders' rifles. Shots of the man running are cross-cut with shots of the sea, getting larger and larger, more and more oily, with each repetition. And, at another crucial point of the picture, visual metaphor is employed; the flashing of two guns on the screen before a madly jealous barber decides to slit his rival's throat.

How delighted the critics; Mr. Asquith has realised that such things are possible, that the film need not follow religiously the words an actor is speaking, or the action a plot manufacturer has devised. Readers of *Close Up* have been on speaking terms with visual wit and visual simile for many years; the difference being that they take it for granted that literature has given only the titles to these optical analogies.

It is no longer enough to do this sort of thing, one must do it well.

A cinematic image should be pulled from the scene itself. To look far, for a filmic image, is to confess failure; the best image is the one on the door-step.

To take refuge behind the names of Eisenstein and Pudovkin is natural and (naturally) cowardly.

It would be a nice vision if Russian cutters announcing that they would work by inspiration of the sonnet, lead all the amateur-professionals and the professional-amateurs into using the rigid laws of poesy for fixing the lengths of consecutive celluloid strips.

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On the other hand an Eisenstein might make something beautiful and austere with these simple rules.

“Cinema,” as our friends in Paris tell us, “must be cinema.” (Bless them.)

A director or film star can make a success with the critics without exploiting true cinema (knock three times); take the strange case of nearly all the famous comedians. They are funny, not their films; on the circus or the music-hall they would be amusing. Who has seen a picture in which the film itself was funny?

Now the sea idea might have been retained, by Mr. Asquith, and turned into CINEMA by a flowing use of abstract shapes, shapes suggested by the landscape. That would not be asking too much of the physical eye: a man, of any sensitivity, is accustomed to observing significant form beneath the objects he sees in everyday life. The abstract outline behind the concrete is no jar, but a falsely transcribed, literary symbol calls for the agility of the eye of the imagination.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

PRODUCTION, CONSTRUCTION, HOBBY

BERLIN, February.

Time is in a fever; troubled and nervous. It is, by the same token, scarce. Something ought to be done. But nothing is done. One is weary of silence.

Suppose that one does not want to speak of talkies. . . . And why does one not want to do so? Because everything that can be done with the sound-film to-day is too premature, too simple, too self-evident. There is so little to discuss. Only to act, to act, to act. To put brick on brick in this way or in the other. First to see if it is possible at all. One practices, proves one's power and takes a run. First sketches cannot be roughed out yet, nor can worthy tasks be invented nor definite aims sought.

But sorrows of yesterday are more urgent than sorrows of to-morrow.

What about the *other* film? That we praised as "100 per cent." for years and now blame as "silent"? I do not want to side either one way or the other by putting this

question, neither rhetorically nor provocatively. It is a matter of events only and one's own belief. I ask: Are we pumped dry definitely? Is there no going on? Lost?

Anyhow. . . . There are three films showing in Berlin's pre-release movie-theatres. Three non-talkies. Each of them intended seriously, from a different point of view.

Can one also take them seriously?

Certainly.

Can one make a positive judgment about them?

Partly.

Can one also find them interesting?

Let us see:—

Der Weisse Teufel. (The White Devil).

The Ufa still dares, sometimes—to plan a film on a large scale. Such a thing is possible by means of international combinations. The narrower staff of production is then occupied by Russians. It is striking that one is rooting on nationalistic ground and that the indigenous artists have not got anything to eat. But that cannot be held up against commercial realities.

Pre-supposition, centre, hope of the film is the star, Mosjoukin. Formerly he was sympathetic, and more than that. Masculine. Fine head, sharp lines. With tight, aimed, spikey movements. Full of fancy. The eyes strained, so that the look bounces forward violently and elastically, so that it flashes up. Jumps like a stallion. Threatening, jerking, cold. There are ice-cold looks which

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boil. Not always, in truth. Someone is threatened and nobody is frightened. Slung looks can miss their aim. There is not always fancy behind rhapsodic movements. Spiked is not spikey; short not tight. But being a star easily means stiffness.

Round the stiffened star, because of him, out of him, for him—there are Mosjoukinish villages.* Also palaces, landscape, uproar, adventures, pictures. They worked at it for months. With ambition and qualified labour. Many hundreds of thousands were spent. For a monument to Kitsch. White silk uniforms. Close ups. Hits. Once a jump on horseback across the enemy that fitted well. The memory stiffens before the dying man's eyes—there was life in that. When four Caucasian riders and the Russian outpost stamp in front of the falling sun—we have a romantic moment.

The rest; grand, thick, and beautiful. Beautiful for hours and that is too much. Especially as music and songs were synchronized to it and now everything, large or small, has to be set in pace—a rather slow one—and then always wait till everybody has ended the songs and the last sound has died away. It lasts. What lasts? Something, that ought to be there and is hardly existent. A microscopically thin thread of sense is drawn through pompous plains and lengths and dares not get involved.

* Mosjukinish villages: translation of "Mosjukinische Dörfer" which is an analogy to "Potemkinische Dörfer." There was a Russian general, Potemkin, and when he stated his intention of inspecting the country, they quickly built several villages in order that there should be something for him to see. (Ed.)

Der Kampf um die Erde, (The General Line).

It took S. M. Eisenstein years to make the film. In between he had to construct a film in celebration of the Soviet jubilee. Anyhow one suspects duration, trouble, expense and quarrelling. Because of incidental complications? No; rising from principles involved.

Russia says: variations about man and woman, another man and another woman are not up-to-date, they are effeminate, intoxicating. Merely social problems are and have to be interesting. The young epic, dramatic, cinematic impulse is rooted in them, demanding formation. If ever and anywhere, it is there that new rhythms can be seized. Where gods have been overthrown. Where a continent is being levelled. Where nations change their systems of life. Where reason is dictated to the masses. Theories of Marx. Rationalization. Machines. These are plots. Captivating, important, comprehensive. Embracing fate and not the *fates*. Mankind and not men, the play and not the players.

Now someone undertakes to film the play, mankind, fate. Or at any rate a slice of it. A slice of the cosmic, of the root principle, of the salvation, the *arkhé*. A slice of abstraction. How is it to be done? By taking the idea and filling every picture with it. By focussing every picture until it becomes the image of the idea. Eisenstein photographs from below, from above, always slanting, never just directly, never objectively;—capriciously, subjectively, from too near, from too far, so that the object is subjectivised. Opinion has always had a distorting effect. An incidental;—the corpulent farm-owner mirrors, of course, disgusting selfishness.

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Another incidental;—the squint-eyed priest typifies stupefying hypocrisy. Another incidental;—the conscious proletarian woman is, of course, the consequent revolution.

Why? Because they are never persons; not even where they play the chief parts. They are merely examples. Examples for some statement, some abstract assertion. If the statement has to be asserted with special distinctness, increased in value and effect, then several examples are used. More heads, more close ups. Connected and connecting by the similarity of expression, attitude, distortion, tendency. Tendency that is like life and blood. It connects picture with picture, scene with scene, sentence with sentence.

Till the whole sentence stands there: "Individual farming brings misery and pining away; collective farming brings civilization and good fortune." A comparatively simple sentence, certainly. But literally spelled syllable by syllable. By the shortest way, with the greatest possible tranquillity, with the scantiest gestures. These pictures of movement like to be stills. But ready to unfold the third speed, the highest elevation, to appear like a hymn, if it is a matter of critical questions, if one must convince decisively. Then a breeding-bull becomes a classic monument, mewing becomes music with a sport-like swing, milking a decorative play of cascades, and a tractor a symbolical parade in this film of play-antithesis, of sober didacticism, which ridicules ornaments, despises beauty, limits art.

A manual has been made here. New and clever. That is what experts say. Others will find it charming and easy, others who have to learn from it; who want to learn or who must learn, but the rest: the majority will shake their

heads before so great an amount of power and they will read rather Edgar Wallace, or even André Gide. Eisenstein's *The General Line* is epoch-making, full of genius, masterly. He has subdued his material; though he has not subdued Europe.

Menschen an Sonntag (People on Sunday).

One can imagine them sitting there. Round a table in the coffee house. *Seeler, Wilder, Schuefftan, Siodmak*. Young according to their years or to their thoughts, which is about the same. People who say frequently: "one ought to". Perhaps it was on Sunday. Someone has just addressed a girl. Whereupon they determined that one ought to. Surely this is a thing for filming. Reality, people, Sunday, Berlin. It does not cost anything, Raw stock only. No actors. Everything in the open air. In the streets and squares, with the tram on the Wannsee. A day-studio at most. That was, or could have been, the origin of it.

The story of a Sunday. On which some people have appointments. Drive through Berlin. Bathe and cook. Are happy and angry. Finally love. Toddling home. Have no money. Curse the week. Will perhaps meet again or perhaps not. Millions spend it like that. The vast town. Only the one has got a wry nose, while the other is losing his hair. That has to be shown. That they are altogether ugly like the houses in which they are living. But that each of them has got something nice, apart, for himself. At all

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events heart. Also a "cold mouth,"* certainly. That there are desires. No, only one desire, mine. That everything is much more complicated than one believes, and also much simpler. One can hardly unravel it, only see it. Best, on a Sunday.

Four little people show it to us. A girl, who is a seller, a driver, an extra, a traveller. They do what they would do anyhow. Self-evident, common-place, narrow-minded. The camera is only present, so to speak. Then it digresses, digresses roguishly, if something happens which would be shocking to look at. Digresses also, digresses dutifully, if something is going to become boring. Then it catches suddenly something *apropos*: runs after it, winding through streets, quickly casting a glance over a heap of things—like a child who has just been running away. Wannsee, quickly, all the vehicles are studied. Laughter, then we want to see everybody laughing. Afternoon—one must compare Siegesalle, Hausvogteiplatz, and Mulackstrasse. Photographer on a beach—you cannot imagine how some people have their photographs taken.

There is a nice way out. A way out. Like the description of nature. One does not know whether it amuses the author or whether he is just making lines. Metres. Nowadays such a thing is called reporting and passes for a virtue. That is right. That is right here. One must see the scenes which were not turned in the open air, but in the light of the studio. Mimic, uncertain, embarrassed.

* Literal rendering of a German expression, meaning a rough insensitive being. (Ed.)

CLOSE UP

This film and the power of its kind of film ceases with the limits of the surrounding world and where the fiction ought to begin. I must add: fiction is interpretation. Fiction is consolation. The world is indistinct. The world is dim. *People on Sunday*. Melancholic observation. Not less, not more.

* * *

Three new films. Non-talkies:—

The beautiful star-picture with expensive features.

The Cultural film, a masterpiece of suggestive tendency.

Casual reporting about men, who really exist.

In case someone should ask whether we are check-mated and the pictorial play dead—reply immediately: the film is not dead, merely some directors and their systems. Merely those, who knew all methods, and possessed all means. Means consisting of talks and acceptances. Which are no more dealt in to-day.

A. KRASZNA-KRAUSZ.

MUTTER KRAUSEN'S FAHRT INS GLUCK*

Slums in the North of Berlin, workmen's quarter, endless rows of grey houses, all alike, hundreds of narrow windows, behind which hundreds of men, women and children are

* Mother Krausen's Journey to Happiness.

CLOSE UP

struggling for their scanty, joyless lives, all alike. The oasis in the monotony of the place is some trees on a dusty square, benches on which the old ones are sitting, chatting in the sunshine. Or a feast, rough contrast to their everyday-lives, where they unfold movement, rhythm and colour on giddy swings and whirling merry-go-rounds.

But the tragedy of the people living there is that they are crowded into narrow flats, families and strangers together, always seen by the others, always being disturbed.

“ Mutter Krausen ” lives in a small kitchen with her son and daughter ; to earn money she has let the one and only room of her flat to a man, with his friend (who is a prostitute) and her child. This man is what they call “ Ganove ” in Berlin, that is to say, his trade is obscure, one never sees him at work and till the end of the film one does not know what it is. Mother Krausen lives by selling newspapers, she is one of those very, very hard-working, straight and honest women, you often find among such people.

Mother Krausen’s son, Paul, is an honest man too, but one day he is sent to collect the money for the newspapers, for his mother, at the end of the month, and being a weak character it is quite natural that his comrades induce him to go with them to a public house and spend a large sum on beer. Mother Krausen waits for her son, he does not come : she looks for him, finds him drinking and singing, the money is spent, and she is desperate. The next day she must deliver the money, the newspaper keepers won’t wait, if she has not got it, they will denounce her to the police.

Erna, Mother Krausen’s daughter, is a pretty and gay girl.

At a fête she had made the acquaintance of Max, a young workman. He represents the type of the class-conscious, intelligent proletarian, joining the labour-movement, who is also interested in the theoretical side of it and tries to learn as much as possible by reading. He loves Erna and they are soon engaged.

The prostitute's friend wants to marry her, "to make her honest". And the wedding-party of these two is perhaps the best and most ironical scene of the film. They wanted to make as splendid a feast as possible, and have obviously spent all the money available on it. The bride, in white frock and veil, with a care-worn face and rather showy make-up, sits with all the family and neighbours around the table; they throw themselves with vivacity upon every dish which is newly brought in, trying to get as much as possible on their plates and eating it up with terrific speed. The bridegroom, who had seduced Erna one day, when nobody had been at home, behaves rather intimately towards her, to which Max, the young workman to whom she is engaged, naturally objects. When told that another man had had her before him, Max is surprised, furious and leaves his girl in distress.

But later on he talks matters over with his friend, who tells him that it was the seducer's fault, and that he could not blame the girl for it. So they are reconciled.

Paul does not dare to come home, and tries to get money for his mother. At last he is persuaded by the prostitute's friend to join a burglary. They break into a pawnshop, police come and Paul who has had no experience, is seen

CLOSE UP

by them. He escapes to his mother. She is happy when she first sees him, he can just mutter a few words "but . . . mother, I just wanted . . . to make things all right again". Then the police come and lead him away.

Mother Krausen knows that she is going to be imprisoned, too, as her son has been. She lays the table, makes coffee, carefully puts on her best clothes. Then she opens the gas-pipe and lies down upon her bed. And the child of the prostitute, who is sleeping in the same room, she takes with her, for "what could life give to that child?"

This film, one of the finest German films I have seen lately, was done after a manuscript of Heinrich Zille, the famous German painter of the proletariat, who died recently, and is dedicated to him. It is a Prometheus-production, directed by Piel Jutzi and reminds one of a Russian film in the realistic way in which it has been made.

(Most of the shots were taken in the workmen's quarter of Berlin. They worked in the studio only when it was necessary.) Impressive, the film is free from sentimentality, with subtle and ironical features. The acting is exceedingly good and simple.

TRUDE WEISS.

NEWS FROM THE PROVINCES

PARIS, February 1930.

Really, I feel somewhat apprehensive, as if I had been sent to the provinces. That Paris is the centre of the world has been said often enough. But I am beginning to believe this to be a legend that applies no longer. For if Paris is really the centre of the world, how is it that we are shut out and ignorant of so much that is happening now?

Russian films, a few exceptions apart, are forbidden. And those exceptions have been carefully chosen and are mediocre. For mediocre films are made in Russia, the same as anywhere else.

American films are diluted. The quota annoyed the Americans so much that they invented the "talkie" by way of revenge.

How Europe grumbled! What, silent art was to be abandoned for this imitation of bad theatre? Even art was not to be sacred to them! Terrible. For years Europe had struggled to make super films of unequalled pretentiousness and stupidity. Now all would be ruined. For mechanical music had killed art. Always this talk of art. Producers spoke about it. Directors, actors, musicians, all spoke about it. The picture was complete at last.

CLOSE UP

European thought was in danger. (But where is it hidden that it is never discovered?)

There have been manifestations against the talking film. Whistles, for it seemed amusing to whistle even though one's neighbour had come full of enthusiasm for this or that voice, unreal, and so new, which might teach so much. Fox Follies was spoilt in this way, with the aid of incompetent musicians together with the news gazette in sound, that might have seemed extraordinary proof of the value of the new discovery. Thus a provincial public thought to fulfil an intellectual duty.

But one must not linger over this alone. *La Nuit est à Nous* is a first attempt to give movement back to the camera, and although French, was whistled off and hissed. *La Route est Belle*, a film in the worst taste, and of a vulgarity difficult to imagine has triumphed. As its publicity states, this film beats all records. Russian films, King Vidor, Stroheim and other Americans, Pabst and Dreyer, all are beaten. *La Route est belle*.

That you may realise my uneasiness further, I must explain that after the first whistling off of American films, many firms are presenting talkies in a silent version. None of the directors of the "salles specialises" has had the inspiration to open a cinema for American talkies. Only Monsieur Mauclair, director of the Studio 28, had the courage to show a bad "talkie", *Black Waters*, in his new cinema, the Alma Palace, but on a reproducing system that made the voices a series of groans, utterly unlike human speech. The courage of this performance was really immense. Not only did they find for it the least interesting

talkie available, but they risked permanently alienating the public, already fully critical enough.

In fact, had it not been for intelligent initiative of the publicity head of Paramount, Monsieur Darbon, we should know nothing of what is going on. But he had given a special weekly performance for journalists only of talking films. Through this arrangement it has been possible to see *The Dance of Life*, *Behind the Make-Up*, *Close Harmony* and *The Wolf of Wall Street*. Of course, one cannot say that these films bring formulas as yet. But at least now and again we realise that experiments are being made. I liked the way sound was used in *The Dance of Life*. Hal Skelly and Nancy Carroll dance. During their dance they talk. And their sentences break softly from the background of the music. A trifle, you might say. But alas, how little we dare to expect now.

People complain as well that American talkies have always a scenario built around the music hall. Although, what else do they do in Europe? Usually bad theatre. For myself, I prefer the music hall to the theatre. Often the banality of a subject compels American directors to experiment. Whereas in Europe, M. Dupont is satisfied to have made *Atlantic*, which has pleased many American critics, but which is only a very poor first attempt at a talking film.

But we must not be unjust either. We have some pleasure left. As the wife of Mr. Walter Ruttmann said to me the other day, we must look for our enjoyment in the "Beiprogramme". First of all in the news gazette where so many unexpected things happen. Certain involuntary inflections, that cannot be cut out owing to the continuity of

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the sound, are revelations! Ridicule and wonder mingled surge before us.

Or *Mickey Mouse*. The marvellous "Skeleton Dance". One breathes, forgets for a little the bureaucratic spirit which envelops and against which rebellion seems vain.

Whilst in America frantic researches are taking place, full of a youthfulness which is always a pleasure to me—if the intellectual Americans are not displeased by this statement—we quarrel here. Sound film or talking film? A hundred per cent. talking or fifty-three-and-a-half per cent? The oldest possible theatrical plays are being disinterred.

How much longer must we suffer from this narrowness of outlook? For myself I am so weary of it. Its pretentiousness is equalled only by its lack of power.

JEAN LENAUER.

L'HORLOGE MAGIQUE

Tout récemment, un bon vieil horloger de Carouge, Mr. Cottier, rendit le dernier soupir. Le brave homme aurait sans doute été ignoré de tous s'il n'avait eu l'originale idée de construire de minuscules automates, qu'un mécanisme soigné douait des mouvements les plus divers. Singulière occupation que celle-ci, diront certainement les gens de sens

pratique. Mais l'on devine l'intérêt que pouvait prendre à ce jeu un esprit inventif : créer des bonshommes, les animer, leur donner presque une âme, au moyen de ressorts, à grand renfort de vis, cela n'est pas donné à tout le monde. Et la joie que prenaient à les voir s'agiter, les spectateurs de tout âge, ne compte-t-elle pour rien ! Un petit film avait r'euni ces êtres lilliputiens, pour qu'une fois cassés les savants rouages, disparu l'artisan, il reste quelque chose de l'éphémère existence de ces objets qui contrefaisaient les hommes.

Starévitch, lui aussi, consacre ses loisirs à enfanter de semblables marionnettes. Son HORLOGE MAGIQUE est peuplée de fées, de lutins microscopiques qui, par la faveur du verre grossissant acquièrent les proportions d'une normale humanité. Un spectacle pour enfants ? Mon Dieu, oui' et pour tous ceux aussi qui conservent une âme où l'imagination est demeurée ce qu'elle était jadis : le plaisant kaleidoscope du rêve et de la fantaisie. Une conte de fées . . . et l'on croit feuilleter les beaux albums sur lesquels se penchaient, prodigieusement intéressées, nos jeunes prunelles. Mais tout cela s'agite, évolue, l'image s'anime et les corps aplatis, couchés sur le papier, se sont pour de bon redressés et arpentent la grande feuille rectangulaire de l'écran. Les fleurs, elles aussi, ont une physionomie, il est vrai curieuse, intrigante ; elles se penchent vers le passant, gnôme ou preux chevalier, et lui chuchotent un secret à l'oreille. Le drame, car il en faut un ici aussi, est terrible, mais les recettes des sorcières pallient à tout et le vilain ogre devra lâcher entre les deux doigts de sa main, le petit corps flasque de l'héroïne, qui tombe auprès d'un étang enchanté. Starévitch

CLOSE UP

peut continuer, ses poupées sont si parfaitement expressives, son talent si sûr que la loupe n'y découvre pas l'artifice. Illusionniste, le cinéma dans les mains de Lotte Reiniger et de Starévitch, dispensateur de joie, et, faut-il sottement le dire, statuaire et conteur exquis à la fois.

FREDDY CHEVALLEY.

OBITUARY

The unmixed pleasure with which we hope every film-goer received the news of an event, which a ludicrous convention forbade him to celebrate, namely the death (as a signal of possible modification of control) of a President of the British Board of Film Censors, is more than counter-balanced now by the premature demise of the Avenue Pavilion as a silent house.

The blow was not entirely unsuspected. Already the essentially avant-garde framed announcements of coming attractions, which must have given low-brows and high-brows alike a thrill of anticipation, had dwindled alarmingly in number, and the inclusion in the programmes of such wretched films as *Auld Lang Syne* and *S.O.S.* (was this an effort at humour?) might have indicated to that frictional character and cinematic counterpart of the law's "reasonable

man"—“ the discerning patron ”—for whom, be it recorded, (since the memory of man is so short), the Avenue Pavilion existed, and whose refined sensibilities it endeavoured to flatter, that all was not well in the allied camp. The exceptionally discerning might even have found in the regularity with which programme succeeded programme on the duly appointed day, a hint that the spirit of adventurous activity so evident at first, had received some unhappy check.

The house fulfilled two very necessary functions. It gave revivals of films some of which were shown triumphantly to have stood the test of time, while others could be judged as departures from existing standards of production, without demanding more. And it enabled people to see films which otherwise would never have been brought into the country at all. Another classification would be : Ancient German and Modern French. And the mention of nationality calls to mind that the most serious grouse we had, was over the almost complete omission from the programmes of the Swedish film, the only specimens shown being *Gösta Berling* and *La Charette Fantome* (if we exclude *The Jackals* by a German and *The Golden Clown*).

Modern Russian films were not shown, but the position there was different. The Censorship of course proved an infernal hindrance, and its latest victim was Germaine Dulac's film, *The Seashell and the Clergyman*, banned presumably for fear it should offend the men of the church. There was a fuss, too, about a film called *Martin Luther*.

It would be interesting to try to discover what features of the Avenue Pavilion's career gave the most satisfaction.

CLOSE UP

Answers would vary considerably, but we hope that some would assign first place to the exhibition of *all* Stroheim's best work as Director, except the *Merry Widow*, re-issued and shown generally, and *The Wedding March*, generally released. Others will remember *The Love of Jeanne Ney*, and *The Student of Prague* and *Finis Terrae, Cinderella*, and *The Waltz Dream*. And others will not be able to remember anything but the hard fact that London's only specialised cinema has thrown in its lot with the bootleggers and cabarets, that *The Mystery of the Chateau du Dé* will give way before the practical, common sense, but somewhat nasal utterances of yet another worn-out stage actress.

Was *He Who Gets Slapped* another effort at humour? The *salle spécialisée* which becomes a talkie house. The scientist who becomes a clown. It appears he was, too, too funny, since everybody shook with laughter, except those who saw the film, who, of course, were thinking what a wonderful circus talkie could be made with Lon Chaney as the clown and "Vesti le Giubba" as the theme song, the late Caruso's voice serving as double—SEE Lon Chaney and HEAR Caruso. Even *Masks of the Devil* was better, despite a chorus of sneers from the newspaper critics.

Hope at the moment seems to rest entirely with the Film Society and the London Workers' Film Society (treating the latter as representative of the Workers' Film movement). You get the extraordinary position that while everywhere the talking film has swept all before it, the two bodies who are concerned primarily with the cultural and not the commercial value of the film show silent film after silent film, a signifi-

cant comment not so much on the merits of talkies as on the backwardness in matters of cinema, which apathy, carefully fostered by censorial suppression has induced.

So once more Death to the Censors! One day we hope to be able to write their obituary. Then 20 vocabularies will not suffice to express our loathing.

H. A. M.

COMMENT AND REVIEW

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

An American friend writes to tell us a few of the titles, chosen by the leaders of the small art cinemas, for America's intelligent public. *La Chapeau de Paille d'Italie* was considered more attractive when titled *The Horse Ate the Hat*; *Alraune*, of course, had to become *Unholy Love*; *The Student of Prague* rather tamely (when one remembers that *Husbands and Lovers* was the American translation of *Nju*) was transformed to *The Man Who Cheated Life*; Anna May Wong's *Show Life* became, most oddly, *Wasted Love*; *Die Hose* was turned to *Royal Scandal*; and *Therèse Racquin* blossomed into *Shadows of Fear*. And the point is that these are mild adaptations for art lovers.

O. B.

A NOTE ON TRAILERS.

Trailers deserve special criticism. The day will come when we will say, "I don't care very much for *Ben Hur*, but I do like the trailer."

Everyone goes mad on the production of a trailer, which is another way of saying that people seem to do what they like when engaged in making up the snippets of coming attractions. In the background shapes whirl round and round; futuristic curtains fall in front of the dramatic scenes; the cutting is of advanced inconsequence.

Sooner or later the geography of the film map will be changed: one of the trade papers will commend trailers to the literati and Mickey Mouse will be relegated to the Arctic regions, and his frivolous obscenity (a subject deserving solemn treatment) will be banished from the equator line of Wardour Street.

O. B.

NEW GERMAN BOOKS.

The show of German publicity photographs, at the Camera Club, was not so hot for those who have been following the German books.

New books, published by Anton Schroll, are presenting advanced photographs, not as stunts, but as illustrations. They include: *Frankreich* by Roger Ginsburger, *Russland* by El Lissitzky, and *America* by Richard J. Neutra. Again,

there is *Katzen* by George Müller : a clever text interspaced with most expert portraits. The technically irreproachable illustrations for Walter Saxe's *Aus dem Bilderbuch Der Natur* are too sub-pretty. Those for *Wilde Blumen*, in *Die Blauen Bücher* series, are excellent.

O. B.

EXHIBITIONS.

Mr. Laurence Irving has been exhibiting, at the Architectural Association, costumes and settings for the motion pictures.

Of course, Mr. Irving was designing for the black and white cinema : we can understand why he was so half-hearted about his thin reds, blues and yellows. The people inside his costumes appear to have resigned themselves to look like their dresses.

Ian Campbell-Gray, the art director of Mr. Asquith, exhibited, last month, paintings at the Gallery of Messrs. Tooth.

His is another slight gift. We are reminded that the sea is still blue and that the sky can be mackerel once more. *Storm in a Wood* might be a deliberate Elephant and Castle drop, just as the pink ladies, of *Cimon and Iphigenia*, are deliberate after-and-about Rubens. The jaundiced might think that "after the Elephant school" meant nothing left.

One picture is inspired by the studio ; a study, during production, of *Underground*. Blurring to put over "work."

O. B.

MEN WITHOUT WOMEN.

A little rough, sir; but we overlook that, you understand? When a man can't walk up the gangway, after shore leave, we know he's all right. As fine a pack of fighting men as you will ever meet, sir.

We deplore.

John Ford's film, *Men Without Women*, tells of a crew imprisoned in a floundered submarine. One man, the youngest of the lot, makes a little ship, from a block of wood, and sails it in the rising water.

The model shots are well done; the sound is well done; some of the acting is overdone. The men talking of the girls whom they have left behind; the he-men getting tearful and shaking hands. Yet, many times more exciting than the about-to-snow *Atlantic* (you don't understand, sir, she is going to have a child).

John Ford has managed not to go down with the ship.

And no officers wasting time in pulling harsh faces.

O. B.

BOOK REVIEWS.

How many young film actors could write a serious essay on Oxford?

Don't tell me. I would not be interested. I do know—knowing film actors—that precious few could turn out anything as impressive as the work of Mr. Greenidge (*Degenerate Oxford*. Chapman & Hall. 7s. 6d.)

The ubiquitous use of the cinema for parallelism is suggestive. We learn, too, of the impression *The Street* made on the Aesthetes. And we are given the dirt on the original cinema club at Oxford, which Mr. Greenidge founded.

Wise words are plentiful: wise sentences on every wise page. An admiration for Douglas Fairbanks imparts a boyish touch, and there are verbal high spots freckling the philosophy.

Monica Ewer, for many years the film critic of the *Daily Herald*, has, also, won laurels in literature. She has published a book (*Insecurity*. Gollancz. 7s. 6d.) with lots of ha-ha stuff about film critics and film reporters. The heroine, all whose dream lands are sea-girt, is charming, her adventures amusing and new.

O. B.

PANORAMA DU CINEMA. Editions KRA.

G. Charenzol vient de publier sous ce titre un livre bien utile. Il arrive, sans que cela soit ennuyeux un instant, à nous faire un tableau très complet du cinéma.

Cet ouvrage intelligent servira beaucoup les amateurs de cinéma; les professionnels y trouveront maints renseignements utiles. On pourrait peut-être regretter que Charenzol se soit généralement effacé derrière son sujet, ce qui donne à ce livre un ton d'impartialité mais lui ôte aussi une certaine force que nous aurions aimé y trouver.

CLOSE UP

Seul le chapitre qui s'occupe du cinéma français est ému de ces accents où un véritable amour du cinéma se révèle.

Les pronostics sur le cinéma parlant sont intelligents et sympathiques et nous souscrivons entièrement à l'opinion de Charensol quand il dit :

“ Il semble qu'avec le film à la fois sonore et parlant toute convention artistique se trouve éliminée; en apparence, le cinéma devient uniquement un instrument de reproduction de la vie. En réalité, l'expérience, si récente soit-elle, démontre déjà que la nécessité de transposer se manifeste plus impérieuse que jamais.”

JEAN LENAUER.

A review in English of this book appears elsewhere in issue.

BOUQUETS TO THE CENSOR.

Mother Goose Rhymes. (Published for The Non-Censors by Alfred A. Knopf, Ltd., London. Price 2s.).

To non-censorists (I coin the word for fear of infringing on the author's witty name) *Mother Goose Rhymes* should afford, if read but once, five minutes excellent entertainment.

It is “ Dedicated to The Censors, who have taught us how to read all kinds of meanings into harmless words ”.

Thirty well-known nursery rhymes deprived of their harmless words. A suggestion that “ u-m-m-m-h ” be substituted

for the missing words. An example and the postscript will suffice to explain.

JACK AND JILL.

JACK and Jill went up the hill
 To —————;
 Jack fell down and broke his ———
 And Jill came tumbling after.

And the Postscript: “ ————But even more important than jingle or nonsense is the clear demonstration made here of the effect of censorship upon anything it touches ”.

Substitute Pabst and Jehanne for Jack and Jill and the meaning becomes cinematographic.

The little book is simple though not trivial, but remains powerless unless, of course, the Censor *really* censors it.

C. E. STENHOUSE.

PANORAMIQUE DU CINEMA—Leon Moussinac (Au Sans Pareil).

PANORAMA DE CINEMA—G. Charensol (Kya).

Leon Moussinac's book is an odd compilation and very much less panoramic than the other. It pivots on some dozen articles, on some dozen films, good, bad and indifferent, which can be read with interest, since they come from the pen of a serious critic, and there are in addition,

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several chapters of more general import. But we look in vain for enlightenment, stimulus. We agree or disagree sulkily and leave it at that. And we are shocked by some disconcerting omissions as well as by the seemingly arbitrary fashion in which attention has been parcelled out.

The stills are excellent, and many of them unfamiliar. Assiduous film-goers will recognise, among others, striking scenes from Lupu Pick's *Wolves of the Underworld* (*Casemate Blindée*) and *Living Image* (*Vertige*) of L'Herbier.

Charensol's panorama is an admirable condensed summary of the main achievements in the cinema to the end of the (French) year 1929. The method adopted approximates to that of the least discursive chapters in Miss Iris Barry's *Let's Go to the Pictures*. His judgments are summary, generally incisive, sometimes provocative, without being self-consciously paradoxical, occasionally unacceptable. Almost everything finds a place. In short, an unpretentious book and a valuable one. Hats off. And besides, how could we grumble at a critic who already years ago found the courage and confidence to write: "Peut-être le jour est-il proche où après avoir détruit le théâtre, le cinéma supplantera la littérature"?

H. A. M.

THE AVANT GARDE IN RUSSIA.

Heien, New Architecture and *The Works at the Zuider Zee*, by Mr. Ivens, *Crystals* by Mr. M. Mol, and *Rain* by Mr.

CLOSE UP

Franken and Mr. Ivens, have been bought by Russia. Holland will be well represented in consequence on the Russian screen.

Two films by Monsieur Eugene Deslaw, *La Marche des Machines* and *La Nuit Electrique*, are being shown in all the *Wufku* cinemas in Russia, where they have provoked much interest and discussion. It is evident that the experimental film will have an appreciative audience there, which will do much to encourage those who have feared that small experimental films must cease with the coming of talkies.

* * *

We regret that owing to the misplacing of an " and ", a notice in the March *Close Up* gave the impression that *Works at the Zuider Zee* had been made by Mr. Franken and Mr. Ivens, whereas the film was made, of course, by Mr. Ivens alone.

An audience of nearly 2,000 people gave a wonderful reception to *Turksib*, when the Workers' Film Society gave it its premiere performance at the Scala Theatre on March 9th.

Victor Turin, the author and director of this astonishing document, came specially to England for the presentation, and personally supervised the editing, and the arrangement of the musical score. He also addressed the audience on the

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theory and practice of the modern Russian Cinema, receiving an ovation.

John Grierson was responsible for the English titles of *Turksib*, and his work has received the highest praise. The rhythm of the titles is the rhythm of the film.

The Workers' Film Society also screened the first Workers' News Bulletin made in England, a four-hundred foot strip of the unemployed demonstrations in London on March 6th. Expense prevents the Bulletin becoming a regular feature as yet, but others will follow as occasion and opportunity permit.

R. B.

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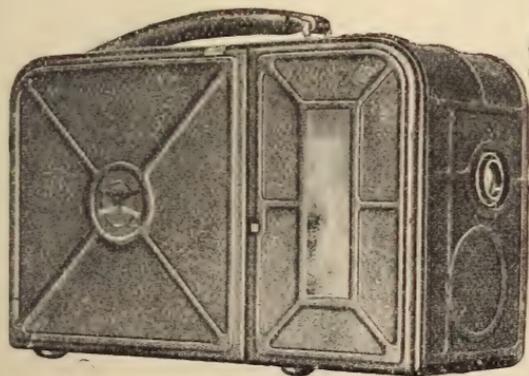
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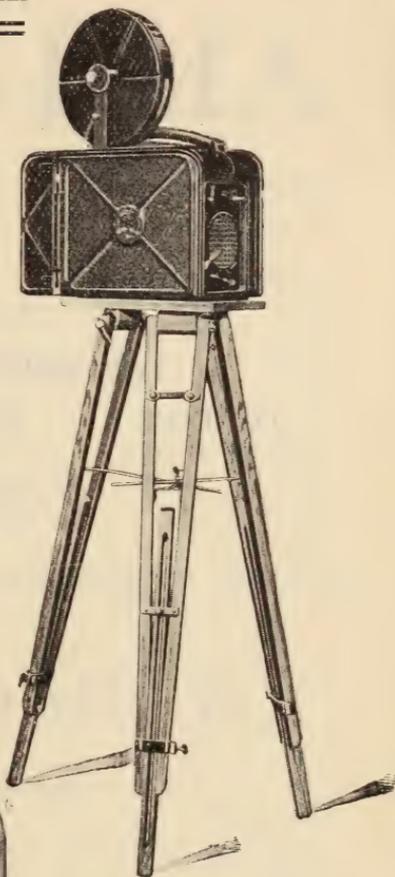
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AS IS

BY THE EDITOR

“All our theatres are smashing home to big grosses.” There’s a pert vigour to that way of speaking—which is any showman’s—that must sober the riling, weary wail of those in search of a Higher Plane of Consciousness. Theatres, you have to realise, are built to smash home to big grosses. Expressing it that way infuses into the notion some of the quality of ecstasy that the Russians have been able to infuse into films which in other lands stencil anaemic passages in the gaps between fat women diving in slow motion and slightly less fat women trying to look dignified in what Paris is wearing this Spring. Smashing home to big grosses is like winning the Schneider trophy or any other consummation of an exact science. It is, as all the Selfridges’ assistants on ten-day tours abroad now say, happy-making. It is positive, and therefore in some way creative. It is climatic to original intention, and carries a

decent purpose to a happy-making end. There is something Dionysic about it.

And talking of Dionysic, which is apt to make you think of Nietzsche, a new Nietzsche—and, what is more, a Nietzsche of the cinema—has . . . you can hardly say risen, for he has been with us long . . . has come, then, into the ascendant with a book of the most profound, the most valid, the most revealing, the most Olympian grandeur: a book that although derived from, influenced by, and quoted from Nietzsche, out Nietzsches Nietzsche in a manner that is more startling than that in which this same genius has already out-Napoleoned Napoleon.

He is a strange being, this Gance, this man whose very dog, we hear, answers to the name of Waterloo, who blushlessly can turn from his paean to the vulgar little Corsican to the rôle of Christ in his film that is, and may perhaps be, *The End of the World*. Gance has a beady, darting furtiveness in his look, that wounded, sour sensitiveness of the near-great that would have given him the big NO from any casting-director's office where the somewhat Easter-card, though thoughtful head of H. B. Warner as the King of Kings had stamped a precedent. Fortunately this difficulty did not have to be encountered. He chose the part as fit and worthy, matching up, no doubt his features to the blood-stained image of the sacred Sidone from that Turin coffer. Perhaps the Russian posters showing Christ stalking swashbucklingly to Calvary with the workers carrying his cross may have been advance publicity, though it seems unlikely. Remembering *Napoleon*, you would say Gance is something of an historian, if a showy one, and

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whomever it may have been that bore the cross, Christ it was who went on it. Gance on a cross, by the way, does occur. There was that "still" (was it in *Pour Vous?*) with the man clad civilizably even to waistcoat and tie, but minus his trousers—shapely as to naked nether limb, and doubling for the legs of the voice of the master of Waterloo.

Prisme is the name of the new wonder book. Herein we read wisdoms and philosophies without number, poems, deductions, cocky judgments, french sophistries of the de Musset wanness and period "My laughter at this moment surprises you? I do not always weep with my eyes" The constantly recurring words *guérir, larmes, pleurer, mentir, sanglots, hélas, pleurer, pleurer, pleurer, amour, femme, Rudyard Kipling, Nietzsche, hermaphrodite, hélas* Twenty years of thought, or thoughts, and nearly all of them coquettish. Some of them are actually concerned with cinema, and personal health, about both of which in (apparently) 1918 Monsieur Gance was worried. "Will I not wear out what remains of my strength trying to teach to all a language that I can only stutter myself?" This doubt was occasioned when in September, 1917, he received an offer as artistic director for the *Film d'Art*. In a paragraph preceding "20 November," (otherwise undated) much later in the book, he is perking up a little. "The tempest and the end of *Napoleon* in triptich, are for the first time the music of the screen. But how tragic to be at once the composer and grammarian to create oneself the scale and the instruments of one's orchestre," On the following page, lamenting the state of Belgium, he says: "I scribble these notes on a wooden table of the *Trois Suisses* (though he must

have copied them down afterwards) while the King, the Queen and the Court are arriving at the cinema where the premiere of Napoleon is being given. I should make a speech and I have only tears (sanglots) in my heart."

"I cannot," says Gance, still talking of Napoleon, "and will not at any price make a similar attempt". Why, think you? ". . . where I have fought against the french mills of misunderstanding, selfishness, paltriness and jealousy."

"En route," says he. And we.

En route to where? To the smashing home of big grosses that he is frank enough to admit is his goal.

For those in search of art and heart at its source, *Prisme*, a Librairie Gallimard nrf edition, is a worthy evening's hunting ground.

KENNETH MACPHERSON.

STEREOPTIMISM

I suppose it is rather a waste of time to study rationally the pros and cons of stereoptical films when almost everyone has agreed, without troubling even to discuss the matter, that a three-dimensional picture is the ideal goal. The austerity of the few who would oppose this auxiliary without compromise encourages me more than the avidity of the many who would grab at it without first being sure of what they are going to do with it.

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I do not say that nothing can be done with it. Rather I think that more could be done with it than its enthusiasts are likely to do with it. That is because they will not look their gift horse in the mouth. You must think of me, however, less as a dentist than as a treasure-hunter; for if at first I appear to be throwing out a few bad teeth I am also in search of valuables deep inside.

Before trying to improve the present form of photograph, it may be as well to make certain what an improvement would be. There is a quality about pictures which conduces to that peculiar power of the screen for passing in experiences to the mind with facile, penetrating and conclusive realness. Briefly, it is the distinction between stage play and screen play, between matter and image, even if comparison be made during the course of one straightforward scene. To make our screen scene suddenly corporeal is to bereave an image from the mind, standing it elsewhere, detached and motiveless.

The power of the picture to move up to the mind. Is this a psychological question? I suppose it is, by the time you have done with it. Every question is. Yet consider first a strange material influence here. You may move a scene up to your mind by moving it up to your eye. The eye has to be persuaded that the only immediate experience on earth is in the spectacle presented to it. The motion picture does this partly by appearing under the cloak of the dark, concealing from us the visible witnesses of its artifice; and I believe that its preponderance in the area of vision has something to do with the result, since the isolation of a small

screen is marked enough to make the mind uneasy. The stage's vision is more obstinate. Ensure verisimilitude in its scale and disposition, remove its footlights and darken the auditorium, but it is not thus moved up to the mind. The only possible way I can think of for accomplishing the result is to look at the stage through a connecting instrument, such as a short piece of tube. It is then up to the eye, and so up to the mind.

Whether the stage scene moved up to the eye could continue to convince the mind as the moving picture does is another question. An open question. To what extent does the corporeity of the players and properties limit them to corporeal (that is, natural and credible) appearances? It is too large a task here and now to analyse particularly: that is an investigation of all that is cinema. I am endeavouring to examine this perplexing relationship between percept and image only insofar as the factor of solidity may be influential.

Allowing that our mind insists on estimating to some extent the depth of a subject from the two dimensions already defined in the picture, it is by no means certain that our mind requires the full contents of actual solidity. At least, not when it is more attentive to the subject's emotional contents. It is probable then that a good deal of the gross bulk of the spectacle is distilled into the purity of mere perspective; or, to approach from the opposite angle, a good deal of what we call solidity may be perceived for no purpose other than that of immediate physical necessity. If this is true it follows that a pictorial representation would mould

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more fluidly with the mind's concept than a substantial form would do; hence it would operate with less impediment in a play of dramatic incidents, not to say a play of imaginative forms and conceptions.

If I am discrediting that goal the stereoscopists have in mind, I am not yet discrediting stereoscopy. This brings us to the problem of what stereoscopy is. To put it explicitly, at what point between matter and image should we place the product of a stereoptical reproducer? If you are as ignorant as I am that question will puzzle you for years.

As if to obscure what is already vague there are uncertainties in even the mechanical aspects. With great innocence I am going to plunge into the technical controversy for a moment. You will see the purpose when I emerge.

So far as I can sort things out, the innumerable processes for reproducing depth-sensation in a photograph may be boiled down into two main groups—*True Stereoscopy*, respecting a binocular function, and *Quasi-Stereoscopy*, respecting a monocular function. It is generally accepted that for a natural perception of solidity two pictures are needed, one seen as by the left eye, the other seen as by the right eye, the brain combining these two images into one impression. There are many systems of recording a pair of such images mechanically—by twin lenses, by lens (or camera) oscillation, by mirror contrivance, by colour-filter superpositions, and so on. The greater problem for the cinema is how to redirect both of these divisional aspects naturally to our eyes. Properly we should look at the duplex pictures through an analysing instrument, the sight

of each eye being conducted separately to its correlative image. Corresponding differences occur in the mode of analysing, since there are lenses, mirrors, bicoloured spectacles and revolving shutters at the inventor's command.

So far so good. Had the public thought it worth while to gaze at the screen through an apparatus, stereoscopic movies would have been here long ago. The public presumably did not think it worth while. Is it altogether a question of discomfort, do you think, or has drama's need for an element of audience-intercommunication something to do with it? But that is a by-issue; and so far as the condition of inconvenience alone is concerned there is no telling how the public impulse will one day incline. Cinema-lorgnettes may suddenly become a craze, like crossword puzzles and talkies. Then we shall speak glibly of the Peepies.

The aim of most inventors, however, has been to contrive a system of analysis at the source, a screen or projection system that will reflect to each eye only that image which is intended for it; else a screen that can of itself combine the dual projections into a proper synthesis of vision. Strict stereoscopists, however, only laugh at all this, although they have allowed that it is possible to devise such a screen for the accommodation of one observer alone—a slight enough achievement and one seventy years old at that.

Amateurs and adolescents in the field of invention make bold to evade the principle (hypothesis, they call it) of binocular vision altogether. Like the seekers of perpetual motion they believe that optimism must ultimately prevail against impossible-ism. Nevertheless, the governing prin-

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ciple of parallax sometimes creeps in again, because the eyes when moving with the head receive in some degree an impression similar to that attained by the fixed inter-pupillary space. Photography of motion revealed that a continued shift of viewpoint gives the spectator a better appreciation of roundness, witness the effects in many "running shots" of a film, especially in such lateral transports as those photographed from the side of a slowly-moving vehicle. Besides these definite locomotions, either of observer or of subject, enabling the eye to "get round" each object, there are motions of the eye in its socket, and beyond that incalculable nervous movements of the eye in focusing. Many years ago, Theodore Brown—if I remember aright—proposed photographing these minute focal adjustments through a series of planes.

Needless to say, the factor of light and shade has been well explored in experiment. Another mode of "binocular representation" concerns illuminations of left side and right side intermittently. Tiny lenses studded over the screen and even lens-shaped molecules on the film itself, are among the miscellaneous ideas. There are innumerable screen systems patented, many of them simply childish. There is also our old friend the concave screen, shaped according to a scientific formula. The chemicular conversion of the light-grades of a film image into actual relief form was a peculiar idea worth recalling to mind.

Often an accidental result sets us thinking. A photograph or a painting included in a film scene takes unto itself an appreciable if slight impression of relief. Or view a picture

by looking at its reflection in a mirror, not necessarily a concave glass, although that, of course, gives the superior effect.

Another diversion is to look at the picture with one eye alone. A short piece of tube or a lens held to the viewing eye makes the illusion better still. Why is this? Perhaps because the sight is less confused. If the brain is accustomed to co-ordinating two dissimilar images into one impression, the eyes when looking at a flat picture are compelled unnaturally to accept the coincidence of two identical aspects. By closing one eye; therefore, we shut out a superfluous, obstructive duplicate of the other eye's image. The vision is still short of natural vision, yet what there is of it is in a congenial and conciliatory form.

Even if there were no mechanical hindrances it would still be difficult to achieve the reproduction of actual vision, because scientists still have much to learn about the exact laws and processes of natural sight. The binocular principle, if not entirely challenged, is often questioned regarding the particulars of function. In fact, as with many other scientific subjects, the more discovered the more concealed there seems to be.

These cramped observations on the technical side serve well enough to remind us that stereoscopy is a somewhat elastic term. I ought to warn you further, that the Spoor-Berggren process, like the Vitaphone process in sound, is only the first dislodgment of an avalanche. Worse, because a state of audibility is unmistakable even to a child; a talking picture is decidedly a talking picture, however good or bad

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the quality of tone may be. A stereoscopic film, on the other hand, may be a stereoscopic film simply because its sponsors call it that. A couple of mirrors wobbling on a hair-spring somewhere around the projector may be cause enough to float a company (Rotund Motion Pictures, Inc.), while exhibitors consider an increase in the price of admission. Unless some optical association, equivalent of Western Electric, protects the prestige of "natural vision films" by an autocratic regulation.*

ERIC ELLIOTT.

* Some such protection was needed during the waves of popularity of still-stereoscopy, if contemporary accounts are to be believed. Every time the vogue declined some blame was put on to the inferior, even spurious, specimens of the stereograph then in currency. An additional danger for the motion picture concerns eyestrain in viewing. Even if innocent, the cinema is hardly likely to escape from persecution on these, or any other, grounds; and when you consider further that the devotees of still-stereoscopy have already admitted the risk of fatigue in their own comparatively religious practices with the stereogram, together with a scientific doubt (hence irritability) about the whole affair . . . well, one thing and another it's as well not to bank *too* much on the public squinting through an eyeglass, isn't it?

GEOMETRIC CRITICISM

The talking picture squawks, and having squawked, squawks on. This is an 'orrible oral age, with an ineradicable rhythmic rage. And the wages of sin is death.

Which, after deducting the first number we thought of, leaves us in the position of a British film producer who, on adding up his profit and loss account, realises what it means to dip into the red, to tinker with the vermilion, to tap the claret, to slither into the roseate soup, or otherwise tell his right brain what his wrong hand is doing.

Let us consider criticism. There is sweet music here which softer falls than Esses from pet film stars on the screen; or raspberries and self-slaughter between brawls with irate coppers on the village green.

R. Bond suggested to me during the month that I made as my next article for *Close Up* the evolution of the raspberry in the talking picture.

No one, maintained Bond, had my qualifications for writing on such a subject.

Silently suffering the criticism, and realising that full many a gem of fairest ray serene the dark unfathomed vault of the Workers' Film Society bears, we deliberated upon the subject.



From the Georgian film, *Open the Eyes*, directed by Kelatosoff, scenario by S. Tretiakoff.



Assaku in *Open the Eyes*. Below, another photograph from the same film.



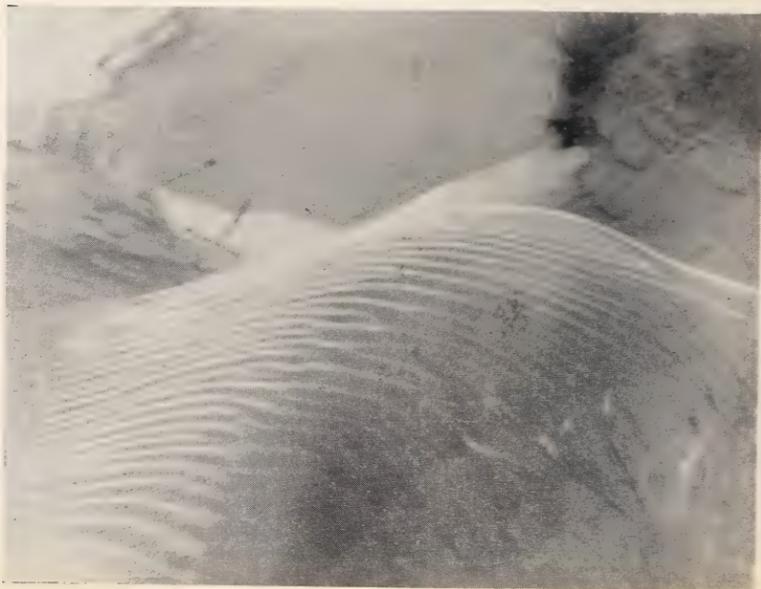


Two vigorous studies of Paul Robeson, famous negro singer and actor, in *Borderline*, a film at present being turned in Switzerland for *Pool-Films*, directed by Kenneth Macpherson.



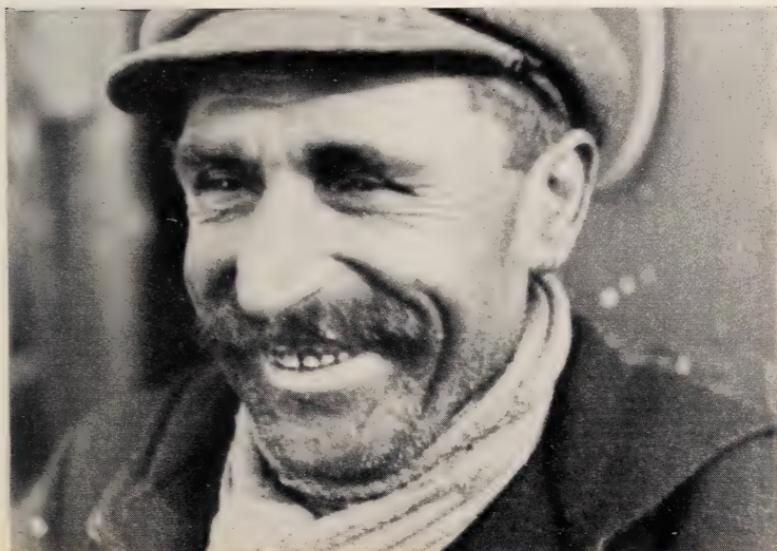


From *Images d'Ostende*, a short document made by Monsieur Henri Storck on the aspects of this port, the sand and the sea. Monsieur Storck writes that he has tried to collect in this film the many impressions gathered during long walks in winter, "when things seem vital with a life at once so strange and yet so close to humanity that it is impossible to avoid capturing the intimate aspects of the town." It has been shown recently in Ostende and at the Palais des Beaux Arts Studio, at Brussels.





Another view from the same film. Below, a fisherman from a second short document by Monsieur Storck, *Herring Fishing*.





Two further photographs from Mr. Sudzuki's interesting film, *Why She Must Done*. It deals with problems of modern Japanese life.





From *Hands of China*, an animated cartoon film, by Merkuloff. The bottom photograph is another example of the animated cartoon in Russia, and is from *The Post*, made by Tzechanovski, for Sovkino.





A first and exclusive still, sent by Monsieur Eugen Deslaw to *Close Up*, from his film study with robots. No illustrations from this film have as yet been published. Below, a photograph from *The Silent Don*, the new Sovkino film by Preobrashenskaya, who directed the *Peasant Women of Ryazan*, with E. Zessarkaya, whom many readers will remember in the *Peasant Women*.



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The raspberry. . . . Victor McLaglen. Victor McLaglen the raspberry. On my right, Mr. Freud, on my left, the domestic raspberry. They will now fight for the Phallic Belt, the " b " being silent as in ruddy.

The raspberry-mix, the new form of *montage*. Papers at the London Film Guild.

The raspberry-Bond, the new form of psycho-analysis.

Having given credit to the gentleman concerned for giving me free, gratis, and for valour, an idea out of which he himself might have created a masterpiece, we come, as the tourist guides say, to the Limehouse business. Film criticism.

You see its connection with the evolution of the raspberry?

There might be said to be three sorts of film critics. Those who think they can, those who really can't; and the film trade.

Film criticism is anybody's game these days. Hence my desire to train all aspirants for the ranks. A knowledge of films is not necessarily the first consideration for a critic. Read the papers. The qualifications necessary are an understanding of the word " unsophisticated " and an idea that the word " montage " is something which isn't mentioned in polite society. Add to these the ability to crack jokes about Clara Bow and you have the perfect film critic.

Within the confines of his cage the critic can indulge his fancy. It is an enjoyable hobby and should be taken up by all and sundry. Just as journalists are the only people left nowadays who don't write for the papers, film critics are about the only people who need not criticise films.

The evolution of the raspberry. . . . To razz or not to razz, that is the question, whether 'tis nobler of the one and

two's to suffer the cries and anguish of outrageous passion, or to take arms against a sea of close-ups and then by razzing end them.

By the time the critic has become wise to the game he carefully chooses pictures to review which mould themselves to his pen.

To razz, to razz no more.

That, children, is the first lesson in this valuable correspondence course; never review to suit the picture, review to suit the pen.

The raspberry is a berry smaller at one end than the other. It is also red.

Single out the premieres, and if the title of one seems to suit your particular pen, go to't. Put the gag in your first paragraph and you achieve fame as a scathing reviewer. The week after remind your one and only reader—yourself—that you cracked the gag last week. You can then demand a doubled pay envelope, and if you don't get it resign and become a gigolo. That is the quickest cut to big money as a feature writer.

There we have the secret of successful film reviewing, given away free with a packet of hair-pins and a book on the time-space situation of the raspberry.

The raspberry was first discovered by Eve, who handed it to Adam and got slung out of the Garden through an affaire with one of the lesser animals.

Remember, as a potentially successful critic, that a film is only justified inasmuch as it allows an individual to express his personality when writing about it. Otherwise why do producers make pictures which allow reviewers to start off

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with the inspiring words, " Sand . . . sãnd more sand ? "

The raspberry ranks with show life as the most important industry of America.

The really resourceful critic, when glancing with terror through his list of trade show invitations, singles out the one with the promising title. It is no good, for example, going to see *The Time, the Place, and the Girl*. A two line epigram dragging in the name is rather over the head of the average writer. " Damned " would be the perfect title for a critic's picture.

Psychologically speaking, the raspberry is significant of iconoclastic defiance, directly connected with the same group of nervous disorders which find an outlet in full moons and spring poets. For the underlying cause read any work by Havelock Ellis, or any text-book on paper-hanging.

Directly connected with the hobby of film criticism is the study of audience reaction. Audiences, this is axiomatic and one of the fundamental principles of this course, never react. Wardour Street imagines they do.

There are, however, certain external signs, such as fidgeting, which are popularly taken to pre-suppose either interest or lack of interest in any given picture.

It is an alarming thought that the motives which prompted Hamlet to defy the Censor in his advice to Ophelia were the same as those which cause a film director to add a raspberry to his comedian's stock-in-trade.

For the purposes of general convenience audiences are divided into sections. Films are then classified as applying to particular types of audience.

An understanding of the various varieties of motion picture

audiences is necessary if a critic is to appear conversant with his subject.

The raspberry might be said to vie with jazz as the supreme expression of American life and manners.

Perhaps the best way to appreciate the different audiences with whom the critic has to deal, and the cinematic institutions with whom he must cope, I append definitions which must be carefully studied before breakfast.

Regarding the fundamentals of the art, and the things connected therewith, the matter is simple :

(1). A film can be cut any number of times without hurting the picture.

(2). A Censor is an animal which exists for the approval of elegant pornography.

(3). A montage is a form of film production not favoured in places where they make money.

(2) can be divided into (2), Sub-section 1, and (2), Sub-section, 2 :

(2), S.I. An " A " is a Certificate meaning adult juveniles can only see a picture placed in such a category when accompanied by juvenile adults.

(2), S.2. " U " is the Certificate given a film so full of innuendo the Censor thinks it is perfectly pure.

Institutions connected with the trade can be dismissed simply :

(A). An exhibitor is a gentleman in evening dress who dies in a dickey.

(B). The Box Office is understood to be a place where the man always pays.

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(C). A trade show is a gathering of the public in search of free entertainment.

(D). The trade is a set of shirkers in whom hope springs eternal from the double breast.

(E). The studios are understood to be places where films are made. (Joke).

(F). A renter is anyone who tells funny stories in the Trocadero American Bar.

(G). The Quota is understood to be the ghost of a Big Idea.

(H). The Avante Garde is the title given to anyone who can't make a living out of films.

(I). A publicity Man is one who sneers, with raspberry laden tone, at any show but his, all talkies but his own.

In connection with (C) there is the following sub-section, (c), 1 :

(c), 1. A dead head is a person who occupies seats reserved for the Press at trade shows. The species has the highest birth-rate in the community.

Classifying the various types of audience we find that :

(a). A popular audience is any audience which does not include the critic and his friends.

(b). Discerning patrons are the critic and his circle.

(c). Better class audiences, see Golders Green.

(d). Golders Green, see uncritical patrons.

(e). Showman's proposition; a film for hand-holders, which see.

(f). Uncritical patrons; audiences who cannot appreciate British pictures.

(g). Hand-holders are understood to consist of popular audiences, critical patrons, uncritical patrons, and discerning cinema-goers, which see.

(h). The Public. You, but not me.

Certain simple equations, involving the usual after-school ignorance of algebra, are evolved by the critic, who can thus definitely place a film as suitable for a certain category. By taking the diametric opposite of his conclusion the reader can judge something about the picture.

Catch phrases, without which no critic could possibly send his deputy to sleep through a picture, have been taught in places where one sees film since time begun. They are too numerous to mention here, and, anyway, why cast pearls before popular audiences?

As a general rule, however, any British film can be taken to be faithful, sincere, beautiful, astonishing, satisfactory, gripping, gigantic, or even stupendous.

Of two films, one American and the other English, if they are equally as bad the English one is assumed to be 100 per cent. better.

Of two films, equally as brilliant, if one is English and the other Russian, the Russian is assumed to be revolutionary.

Of all possible close-ups the Union Jack is accepted as the most artistically satisfying.

An iris in a British picture causes more joy in Heaven than three quick cuts in a Russian film which needs no repentance.

The raspberry has the shape of a partially deflated Rugby football.

HUGH CASTLE.

CINEMA CIRCUS

1

There has been no paucity of circus-films. No one can say that. They have all felt the lure of the naphtha, Ronald Colman, Janet Gaynor and Murnau's merry men, Lon Chaney, Mary Philbin, Jacqueline Logan, Mr. Charles Chaplin and Norma Shearer, and hundreds of Poverty Row people. Even Florence Vidor, the lady of the screen (didn't you know?) had knives thrown round her, like Anna May, in a film where Clive Brook, bound, escaped from a barrel. Buddy Rogers is the latest. Germany, of course, fell hard—the circus still counts abroad, and Krauss, Liedtke, Albertini, Jenny Jugo, Helm in *Alraune*, all followed up Jannings in the film which started it all, *Vaudeville*. There is a film called *King of the Circus*, with Vilma Banky plumply opposite Max Linder, and since one knows that Marie Dressler at fourteen stone, and in the late forties, is given to high-kicking, one can imagine Jetta Goudal as an equestrienne, and Pola and Gloria doing a sister-trapeze. Anything might happen when one considers who has made circus-films, but it seldom does. For instance, no circus-film achieves a cinema realisation of circus. Not circus-atmosphere, I don't mean that. Tent-ropes and spangled

balls and a row of lights over the ring. But circus-architecture. None of them have got that. They all concern themselves with the circus-troupe, not with the reason why that troupe exists; what is it that all these people do, training from generation to generation, in doing their tricks.

The architecture that a circus makes is profound and obvious. You miss the profundity the first time. It is only when you seek for reasons at being seriously amused, at elderly ladies swinging on ropes, stout young men from the Argentine standing three abreast on a horse, and an elephant doing a fox-trot, that you hit on it. And you don't hit on what you expect. You don't, for instance, hit on any justification of such a use of the human form. You don't learn how to approve such flamboyant defiance of the laws of what is appropriate, the laws of nature and equilibrium; such defiance, if that was the end, would have to be more quiet. And how explain the perpetually unfunny clowns, the clowns who so cynically think it isn't worth trouble to make you laugh? You don't reach satisfaction in finding it right that, if a man does with his body what human form usually prevents, an elephant is in honour bound to show it can do a fox-trot. But there IS something about a circus, even if it doesn't attract you. It's not like a Sunday play society or the book of the month—it does get somewhere. And what it gets, where it arrives at, is an achievement of form. A quite transient form, which vanishes in the making, the base has gone before the sides which are to rest on it have been reached, but the form is there, nevertheless. It is in your mind, a geometric imprint, which remains there as you wonder why you go, why you

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like it, why you take long journeys to all the circuses in London and Paris, and move on to the next village if there is going to be one there, why you get there at the impossible hours circuses always start, to sit through the impossibly long time circuses always take, and as you doubt, debate and wonder you find your doubts blowing like winds through the scaffolding of the construction which already, as you have been thinking about it, has risen out of what was an imprint, and is now a scaffold, a globe, a hangar, in your mind, a feat.

Circuses are feats. They insist on that. Every turn says so. "I am the most this and that feat there has ever been". No one turns a cartwheel more slowly than I do, or no one turns more of them at greater speed. The Rastelli Negro turned a hundred and eight somersaults when I saw him this year at the Crystal Palace, and swore in French delicately while doing it, which made it more of a feat—his record is in the four-hundreds. The Asgard troupe at the New World's Fair somersaulted to four high, which is a record, a feat. All the turns are feats, but you rather miss in the plethora of them the fact that the circus they build up is itself a feat; the architectural framework, which can only be reached by having a woman riding round the ring in a ballet skirt, and a family climbing up over it, and swinging on ropes, which they let down into the ring again, which rope is the rope that leads on a bear, not literally, of course, but in visual connection.

Consider. You have the ring. Round. The grand parade cuts straight across it, the array of implements, and radius. Then there is either a horse turn, just one

horse and a rider, which further impress the ring-shape, or a group of jugglers or trampoline men, who on the base of the ring raise up a perpendicular. So. Then the next ring turn is flat again, but takes up more space, the equestrienne, perhaps, does more peculiar things, and there are more horses, or they waltz. Tight-rope next, or balancing on a ladder, or a strong man holding up weights, of which the point is that you think they are held really much HIGHER than you would think possible. The ring turns pile round and round and get more solid, and the vertical turns get higher and more precarious, until you are ready for the final ascent of acrobats in to the roof, who whirl there, completing the cylinder by the long ladders and ropes they let down and draw up. The turns have come to this, erected a cylinder of energy, and the acrobats, in their red or pale-blue tights, are tiles, pale-blue or red tiles, roofing it in as they fly. And while this is going on, they are building the cages for the lions down below, more lions than have ever been in the ring before, the final turn which covers the ring-space irrevocably; nothing more can fill the ring after the spectacle of sixty lions and one tamer, and you go home, the cylinder intact and vanishing.

That is circus. That is why it is different, and does something different from play and ballet and dirt-track racing and flying stunts, which are the nearest, perhaps. It gives us a new dimension, and a new shape which is built as we watch and is no more there after. It is a feat. And that is where the cinema fails to hit circus in its circus-films. How altogether wrong are the circus films, even superficially, you may tell in seeing the pains they take to have the right

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traditional garb, whereas now, at circuses, the trampoline men wear flannels or plus fours, and not tights, and the bathing two-piece is the new model in the trapeze wardrobe. You may also feel how wrong they are by the feeling of flatness they give; save in "*Dangerous Curves*" there is none of the all-roundness of the ring; which is shocking for the cinema to miss. Instead of giving this, it busies itself with setting the camera on swinging bars and following a man along a slack wire, and makes the tricks seem so smooth and able to be watched and almost done by a second person actually there, that we lose the idea of Feat. Then, they over-stress the crashes of turns, when the point of the feat is that it may crash, but this time won't. A circus depends on its turns, and a circus-film goes wrong at the start by being built not on circus but on one turn in it. We don't get the architecture of the thing their patterns construct; we get spangled balls and dogs with ruffs, and a clown with a funny nose . . . the things with which they do it, not what they do. We get the trowels and the ladders, but not the going up the ladder with a hod of intangible bricks, not the plumb-line of the thing even. And the reason why film gets the clowns, who are the worst part of any circus, is that they are not circus. The real circus transmuted into terms of cinema is already there, in the cinema. Filming circus only reproduces circus, and what is real cinema, transmuted circus would show up all wrong against that. Just as the "speaking likeness" of a person is not the good picture of that person. The good circus of the cinema is not the actor who has made circus-films, but the films of Harold Lloyd, some of Keaton, some of Raymond Griffith,

and Charlie Chase. Some of Bebe Daniels before she became a pseudo *tertia-donna*. And Mickey, who traces his pattern like all the circus-turns combined. All the work of Walt Disney, Ub Iwerks and Carl Stalling is.

2

And Laurel and Hardy. We know their type in the ring anyway—the men who come in with a ladder and a bucket of water, and spill the one while climbing the other, like the Original Humsti-Bumsti. But they are more than this and they are this as well not only because they spill water actually, but because spilling or dropping and smashing or failing in some feat is what they are for, and in failing and smashing, they show what a feat it is that never quite comes off. You see just why it is that they will never succeed. You see why it is that Laurel's plans will always go just a hair's breadth wrong and why Hardy will never succeed in being quite what he sets out to be. Left alone, Hardy would do it all right, but left alone he would never think of doing it in that way which Laurel suggests and which he thinks is all right. He is suspicious, but too lazy to have to think of some alternative himself. If he had to go up a ladder with a bucket of water, he would tie the bucket to a string and pull it up when he reached the top and lower it the other side—he might do that, rather than carry it up with him. It is only Laurel who suggests putting the ladder flat; on the surface an excellent idea. Steps are things you go up, and if the steps are flat you can't have to go up them, and the problem is solved. But Laurel forgets that the steps

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are there all the same; he can't see that, and so he goes tripping along, bucket in hand, and trips in earnest over each rung and somehow brings not only water and air into it, but earth as well. Yet Laurel would get on all right by himself, for he wouldn't have to apply his ideas to Hardy's world. He is hampered all along, just as Hardy is hampered by having someone who won't go at things in a rational manner. Hardy would have just gone on to the next house after being turned away from one where he had tried to sell a Christmas-tree. But Laurel says, no, the next street. Much safer. And so it would be—but the first house in the next street is the same as the last in the last street, as it was a corner-house. And only Laurel wouldn't have thought of that. Louis Chavance in *Du Cinema* for February, called their films "une folie de destruction", and they symbolise a principle of destruction. But that does not go all the way. It is true that their films always end in destruction, whether Hardy spouts water from a fountain or Laurel tears a grand piano to bits, but sometimes it is more than a house or a car being destroyed. Sometimes it is a night's rest, or some recently acquired pretence, and it is always more than just a thing destroyed. There is an idea as well. An idea going a little too far or a little astray. Doing more than it should, wandering out of the province of that one idea. Going too far, logic carried to extremes . . . the basis of nearly every form of comedy. When there is one idea and no other, damage results. There is Laurel and Hardy. There also is Lear. I mean, one excellent quality carried too far, to the exclusion of others; cancelling those others. Farce or tragedy results. If the tragedy is performed on the English

stage, farce results as well. But there you have Laurel and Hardy, and the idea is Laurel's, the cause for the idea, Hardy. It is a marriage of extreme inconvenience. Each by himself would be all right, small but successful. Scorning smallness, they combine, and the dovetail fits for all except one tail, which is left projecting, catching all the brickbats going, while down below there is the space it leaves, empty and wind-beleagured, shaking the building of what Laurel and Hardy hoped to do together. And Hardy is worried, and only Laurel thinks it can be put right by bringing the loose dovetail down to the empty one, leaving the others as they are, in the wrong order. And the house falls down or the ceiling collapses and the pipe bursts. And Laurel is perplexed and only Hardy knows what to do, which is rave.

Hardy is fat and Whitemanesque. A concave smile of helplessness. Pig eyes. The blustering that conceals vacuity. Laurel's fate is to pierce the vacuity and bring down the blustering on himself. He is thin, passive, put-upon, a yes-man.

When Hardy has a cold, it is Laurel who gets up to prepare a mustard bath, which he does so badly that Hardy wishes he had done it himself. When Laurel wants to go to sleep, it is Hardy who pours a jug of water in his bed. And it is Laurel who gives away the tricks when Hardy is conjuror. He doesn't mean to, but even this is not done in the Chaplin "through-no-fault-of-my own" neurosis. Laurel is just proud of Hardy, of being with him, and wants to show you how wonderful the tricks are. Hardy does them so well, you might not guess it. Not being as good as the great Hardy, Laurel bungles them . . . but you must see that

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that only proves that Hardy is even cleverer. You do see. But Hardy doesn't. And Laurel, unfortunately, is Hardy's partner. So in the next film he tries to think of even brighter ideas.

There are plenty of their films to be seen, *Two Tars*, *Night Owls*, *Big Business*, *Wrong Again*, *They Fall Boom*, their act in *The Hollywood Revue*. They have been going for two years. As they are to be had in sound or silent, almost any house should show them. *Big Business* was on at the Empire, London, with *Hallelujah*, and another before Garbo's *The Kiss*. *They Fall Boom* is a perfect example of circus-construction on the screen. Begins with a sneeze. Circus-parade across the screen. Side-turn, the falling out of bed. The cold gets worse, they fall out of bed more often. More noise. The bed deflates and is refilled from the gas bracket. A picture falls down, a blind flies up. The bed rises and rises. Laurel puts the picture up, the nail pierces a water-pipe. The landlord arrives. Hardy's cold gets worse. The bed hits the ceiling, explodes and falls down. The screen fills and fills, you see, and the falling room falls on the police the landlord has got in.

3

Here is where they are circus. The destruction. They are the bungled turns on the floor, the ring, which intensify the thrill, the feat, of the turns in the air and on horseback. They are the men who, in not being able to climb a ladder make you appreciate the more the acrobats, male and female, who can only begin to swing from their teeth or hang by

one toe when they have climbed three ladders into the roof, each bigger than the little one these men can not climb in the safety of ten-foot drop in the ring. They are the reflection, being destruction and unsuccess, of the feats that go on in this cylinder, and half of Laurel and Hardy's cylinder circus-construction is what they do and the rest what they suggest.

It can be suggested that they are psychologically valuable, that Hardy represents effete capitalism (he is bloated enough to please Pudovkin), bullying kept-under initiative (and Laurel is worn and thin enough to delight Pudovkin. Laurel is always honest. Pudovkin doubtless sees him a worker). It can be traced that their films are perfectly designed in terms of the elements . . . follow the trend and use of water in one film of theirs, and buy a black hat on the strength of your discovery. But all that is really true is that their films are good pieces of work, and very funny, and in a fresh and startling way. In fact, they should be seen and left as they are, doing their own little thing because it occurs to them to do it. That in doing it, they produce cinema-circus, is something only their audiences need bother about, and so beside the point.

ROBERT HERRING.

IN THE OLD DAYS

(PART TWO).

Millie and I, dismayed and spiritually crushed, debated the advisability of showing up again at Inceville after the pathetic *débaclé* of our first efforts. "I do not think it is safe," I insisted.

Millie looked miserable. "The thought terrifies me," she admitted. "but it seems ridiculous to let the result of a stupid practical joke ruin two great careers."

I peered at her. She was SERIOUS. To Millie, this movie venture was no mere lark to add variety to life. Temperament was awakened and ambition claimed her.

We returned to Inceville the following morning, swallowing nervously as we trod the familiar path toward our dressing-shack. Out of the tail of our eye we noted the approaching figure of Westy. Meekly we bade him good-morning.

Our greeting went unnoticed and we were obliged to listen to what, in his estimation, we were—and why and how. My indignation rose and I cleared my throat ominously. Millie pinched my arm and began a pleading explanation as to the

source of our mistaken technique. I stared at her in amazement. Could this be the proud Millie speaking in this conciliatory and anxious manner after having been thus coarsely addressed?

Yes, it was. Only then did I realize the extent of her ambition. This demonstration of its proportions deserved recognition. I bit my tongue severely and achieved silence.

Westy was really rather nice. He called us two little fools, advised us to listen to him in future, patted us on the shoulder and left it at that.

Rather silently we adorned our faces for further school-girlish scenes. Robert McKim appeared radiant in the doorway. "I work to-day!" he announced triumphantly, and passed on to spread the glad tidings.

Millie and I, it appeared, together with certain of our classmates, were scheduled for a skidding scene.

Even in those days the office of a "location" man existed in nebulous form, but he seldom located in advance. Hence we all set merrily out in a large car in quest of a propitious place to stage the skid. If the angels were looking down out of the sky to watch us, our progress must have appeared to them rather as an ant's progress appears to us, a series of erratic and apparently pointless zigzags which eventually carried us all the way to Hollywood. At intervals the driver was bade to halt while the location man gravely examined cross-roads where a hydrant was available and made mental calculations with narrowed eyelids. It was all very solemn and impressive. At least, to Millie and the others it was. I fear my nature was not very serious in those days and any exhibition of seriousness around me tended to bring on a state

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of almost maudlin frivolity. I must have seemed very silly, but the condition was beyond my control. I remember that the antics of the location man seemed to me delightfully absurd and the important gravity of my fellow school-girls kept me in a state of constant tittering. Millie's periodic glances of disgust only made matters worse.

Arrived at last on the far side of Hollywood—I think it was Vermont Blvd., the location man at last gave evidence of satisfaction. He nodded a great deal and said, "Humph, humph," many times.

It remained now only to get permission to use the hydrant to flood the road. With several pauses for inquiry we finally achieved the nearest fire station. Permission, it seemed, was not theirs to grant. We proceeded to the Board of Trade. They were not certain whether it lay within their power to give consent to the flooding, but rather thought not. Discussion pro and con was lengthy. Our car was an open one and the top was down. The sun was hot and our make-up was beginning to slip badly. We had with us, of course, the wherewithal to renew it but the melting process made the skin itch and caused facial contortions. These, taking place on the grim faces of my classmates reduced me to near hysteria.

The next objective was the Hollywood police station. The police sergeant scratched his head and looked doubtful. It was against the law to play unnecessarily with a fire hydrant. The location man explained the deep and serious purpose that underlay his request. The sergeant scratched his head some more. By the time he finally decided that it

would be necessary for us to drive on into Los Angeles to Police Headquarters I doubt if there was a hair on his head that had been overlooked.

Hunger had now overtaken us. We stopped under a tree and opened our luncheon parcels. To-day, no one would take any notice of such a common sight. But on this occasion, sixteen years ago, we collected a crowd in no time. Some of the girls, with an elaborate show of indifference, nibbled at their sandwiches with so exaggerated an elegance and such super-crooked little fingers that I now had a genuine hysterical breakdown. Millie, ashamed of me, bit savagely into hers and scolded me with her mouth full.

We continued the journey into Los Angeles. The location man disappeared into the police station and nearly two hours passed before he emerged, permit in hand and registering black rage. It was, of course, now too late to take the skidding scene and he raved about the wasted day, the inefficiency of fire stations, Board of Trades and Police Headquarters. He did not include location men in his diatribe.

My merry mood had by now worn off, and I was as solemn as anyone during the return journey.

The first sight of note that met our gaze on the Inceville lot was Bob McKim with a bandage tied rakishly round his head.

"What are you supposed to be?" Millie inquired innocently.

He gave her a look in which was no vestige of his morning effulgence. "I have been!" he announced gloomily. "I was cast in a Western bar room fight. I wish to God I knew what guy it was that broke a beer bottle on my skull."

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The following day the skidding scene was brought to a successful close by noon and we were deposited at the studio with an idle afternoon before us as the set of our ballroom scene was not finished. The director of the Western picture in which Bob had been wounded called for volunteers among the boarding school Misses to go up to the hills on location for a scene in his film. It was a sweltering day and volunteers were few in spite of the additional two dollars pay involved. Millie and I remained stolidly squatting on the one step of our shack listening in idle fascination to the conversation going on in the room adjoining. We had never before heard grammar treated with such masterly indifference as was bestowed upon it by certain of the extras here at Inceville, and listening was sheer delight.

“ Well, he ain’t better do it, that’s all ! ” This fiercely from a pretty little blonde called Bunny.

“ Gawd, what’s gonna stop a gink like he is ? ” questioned Bunny’s pal, Lena.

“ Well, *I’m* gonna stop him, lookit ! ” returned the brave Bunny.

At this point the cavalcade into the hills wound up the dusty road past our quarters. Four depressed-looking oxen came first, drawing old-world ox carts made of gleaming new timber. Behind them trailed several warm and moist male extras, Charlie Ray among them. Behind these an old horse plodded, attached to an ancient “ buggy ” whose wheels described alarming semi-ellipses in the air as they rolled. Both this vehicle and the ox carts were replete with the female extras.

We heard a heart-rending wail from the cabin adjoining as Bunny's touselled head appeared in the doorway, " Gawd, if I'da knowed I coulda rode, I woulda goed! "

Sheer and unconscious poetry, this!

Later in the day Westy came to me with a suggestion that I arrange my hair in a more suitable and fluffy manner for a school-girl. I listened coldly. For several weeks I had taken great pains with what is normally erratic hair in an effort to make it rise high and lie flat to my skull in the prevailing style. It seemed to me preposterous that I should be requested to undo the work of many weeks for the sake of a mere film in which I was so unimportant a factor. I realized that the slicked effect added years to my appearance, and that is what I wanted. And so, I listened coldly. I listened coldly also to Millie's exhortations later. She spoke reverently of the Demands on the Film Artist. And, as usual, this reverential attitude acted contrarily on me. I remembered that my mother possessed several little bunches of dark brown curls which had adorned her head at some period or other and which were now shut up in a box with other cast-off relics. The next morning I appeared ready for work on the ballroom set with a clump of these pinned behind each ear and a third blossoming unconvincingly out of a psyche behind.

Westy was very busy over Bessie and Lou at first and did not notice my trimmings until he was ready for rehearsal. He let out a terrible yell through the megaphone, although he was only a few yards away from me. " You yellow-

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head!" he screamed, "What's the big idea of the dark brown curls? The camera's not *blind*, if you are!"

"Well," I began virtuously, "you said—"

"I never said anything of the sort," he interrupted unfairly, "And if I said what I'm thinking now, it'd clear the set! I admit you *do* look less like a skinned rabbit but tone 'em down a bit with some powder!"

I removed them and obediently dipped them into somebody's can of powder while the rehearsal was held up. Millie walked away from me and stood in the distance, pretending not to know me.

"Now," yelled Westy, "get over there at the back, beside that girl in pink!"

"That girl in pink" was Alice Terry. She grinned at me in a friendly and sympathetic manner. During the several rehearsals we were pushed more and more into the background until when the actual shooting took place we were convinced that we were not in the picture at all. "Now, when Lou pretends he actually has met Bessie, look dismayed!" bellowed Westy.

Alice and I, crowded against the wall, exchanged quizzical glances "Blah, blah, blah!" said I, making a wry face. "Blah, BLAH!" returned Alice, kindly consenting to play with me. What did it matter? We were quite out of the picture!

But alas! At the showing of this scene not only were we in the picture, but for some odd reason appeared to be in a peculiarly isolated position of great prominence. This was Alice's first offence so she was merely spoken to severely.

I was bawled out. To-day I should have been turned out. To-day a scene with two such blights in it would be re-taken. But both this and the scene wherein Millie and I had made such spectacles of ourselves were allowed to pass. But I was eventually the cause of one re-take before the picture was finished and I had left the lot never to return, unwept and unmourned.

In those days each actor was supposed to keep account of what costume he had worn in what scene. The assistant director would announce that costumes worn in such and such a scene were to be donned for such and such a day. To be brief, although there were many dissenting voices, I obstinately, and in good faith, really, put on a darkish dress for a certain scene when it should have been a lightish dress. The result, as run off in the projection room, was a spectacle of me in the corridor of the school building attired in snowy white and opening the door of Bessie's room. Then—presto change—in Bessie's room in a dress that registered quite black.

I pass over the painful scene that followed. The chief thing that strikes me now as I look back over my brief career in the movies is how tolerant the industry was then compared to its cold and efficient attitude of to-day.

When Millie and I went in search of our pay at the end of the boarding-school picture, I recall clearly the face of Mr. Allen.

Millie said breathlessly, "Could I—that is to say, would you be able to—I mean, I'd like to stay on if you could use me in other pictures."

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Mr. Allen did not reply at once, but looked searchingly and anxiously at me.

"No," I said reassuringly, "I don't want to act any more. But I would love to drop in on you once in awhile just to see how you're getting on."

Mr. Allen's face relaxed and beamed. He held out his hand and wrung mine painfully. "Sure," he said, "Sure! Any time! Make us a *visit* any time you like!"

He mopped his brow and sighed heavily. Then he turned cordially to Millie. "Why, sure," he said. "We could use you in other pictures. Sure!"

CHARLOTTE ARTHUR.

THE ART-DIRECTOR AND THE COMPOSITION OF THE FILM SCENARIO

It is my personal belief that the day of creative set designing for the cinema has almost entirely passed. Not because of the lack of creative architects, (Germany would see to that), but because of the inevitable progress of the cinema itself as a method of expression.

The era of the creative studio structure may be said to have been at its zenith during the best period of the German

Art Film, from the eventful years of 1920 to 1925, when the cinema was still closely allied to the theatre and its painted decoration. We know that at that time the decorative setting was the binding element of completeness to the thematic narrative. The Germans were (as Mr. Potamkin so admirably pointed out in the November 1929 *Close Up*) essentially film craftsmen rather than film creators, and it was only to be expected that the painted scenery usually connected with the theatre should have played a large part in their film development. By their essential mysticism and fantasy, the German themes at that period demanded the decorative setting. We can refer to the key-films of the time, viz.: Wiene's *Caligari*; Kobe's *Torgus*; Lang's *Siegfried*; the same director's *Destiny*; Berger's *Cinderella*; Robison's *Warning Shadows* and Leni's *Waxworks*. These were all pictures in which the decorative environment was the binding element of the realisation, against which the thematic narrative moved with a slow, psychological deliberation. These films ended in themselves. They were supreme instances of the painter's cinema. The names that mattered were Walther Röhrig, Robert Herlth, Walther Reimann, Rudolph Bamberger, Andrei Andreiev, Erich Kettlehut, Otto Hunte, Paul Leni, Alfred Jünge, Albin Grau, and later Neppach and Werndorff.

Since that date, the film has progressed to find its true realisation in an environment of reality. Through the work of the neo-realists and naturalists, Pabst, the Soviet left-wing directors, the stumbling methods of Dziga-Vertov, the open-airness of Epstein, Flaherty, etc., there has been

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achieved the true cinema. No longer is it possible to feel that we would like to take down each image from the screen in front of us, and, having *passee-partout*-ed it, hang it on our wall as we would do a painting. This was so damning in Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*. Instead, we have learnt that each visual image is but a fragmentary contribution to the whole composition of the film vibration. It is the film in its entirety that we frame and hang in our minds, where it is linked by a universal idea with other films, to become emotions remembered in tranquillity.

There is no place for the painter in the film studio. He is accustomed to think in broad terms of pigment and sentimental decoration (vide: *The Little Match Girl*, *Le Voyage Imaginaire*, etc.) a habit of mind which is useless in the detailed building of a film. We know that a filmic mind is essentially one that thinks in terms of building; I am inclined to call it arithmetical architecture. We know that Eisenstein has admirably compared the construction of a film to playing with a child's box of bricks. We have only to contrast the synthetic methods of Pudovkin with the Chauve-Souris decorative direction of the late Paul Leni, in order to realise the value of constructivism.

The art-director has developed from a decorator into a technician, whose sole work entails a strictly organised structure of settings at the will of the director. The setting, instead of being the binding environment dictated by the creative imagination of the art-director, (such as it is in the ballet or the expressionist theatre) has become a part in the whole concatenation of events, alongside the technical

accomplishment of the camera and the three stages of the organisation of the film material. It follows, conclusively, that art-direction must take its place in the construction of the scenario-manuscript, as an integral part of the pre-conception of the film in literary terms before its realisation on the studio floor, on exterior, or in the cutting room.

* * *

The process of scenario organisation, which is the first act of montage in the construction of a film, is familiar to all *cinéastes*. It is divided into three sections: one, the selection of the theme, environment and rough action of the characters; two, the treatment in narrative form of the theme, indicating its future visual and aural possibilities; and three, the assembling of the detailed shooting manuscript, which we may call the scenario-plan. This latter consists, as far as is possible, of a complete literary expression of the film as it will appear when realised, and is divided and subdivided into sequences, scenes and shots with the inclusive sound images. Further, we know that the manuscript is welded into a plastic whole by the constructive editing of shots into scenes, scenes into sequences, sequences into the film composition as a vibrating whole; a living, pulsating, throbbing thing. We understand the manuscript to be built out of a thousand or more separate shots that are dependent one on another for their effect. It is by means of this composition of shots which is eventually achieved by editing (the final act of montage) that the film is caused to vibrate, thus giving rise to emotional reaction.

We are aware, of course, that a scenarist selects his shots

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from an unlimited number available to him, and it assumed, for the purposes of argument, that there is no angle or position from which an object, a person or a scene cannot be photographed, both terminals of the shot, (the object and the camera), being either static or in motion. It is the obligation of the scenarist to select from the shots in his imagination those which are the most vividly dramatic, in order that they may bring out the full significance of the mood of the scene as required by the thematic narrative. These selected shots he describes in his manuscript by words, for want of better means; although obviously the words are of little interest as compared to the visual images, as well as the sound images, that they represent. The procedure of the shooting-plan is the preliminary representation on paper of the eventual visual images on the screen and sound images on the film strip or on disc, as the case may be. In the hands of the scenarist the camera and the microphone dig down deeply into the inner reality of everyday life, bringing the consciousness of inanimate things to the spectator. The whole aim of the film lies in the representation of unnoticed things and motives of the living and the unliving, presenting them filmically for the pleasure or boredom of the spectator, according to his or her receptive intelligence.

* * *

I consider that the incorporation of draughtsmanship is of the greatest importance for the clarity and perfection of representing visual images in the shooting-manuscript. I believe that not only should the scenario be written but should also be drawn.

In the first place, purely architectural diagrams of the layout of sets, mobility of the camera, (travelling shots, panning shots, etc.) should be included, in order that a clear visualisation of the action of the characters in relation to the movement of the camera may be possible from the script. Added to this, the shooting angles and set-ups of the camera are to be indicated, as dictated by the imagination of the scenarist, based of course on his filmic knowledge and floor experience as well as his creative faculties. Secondly, it is possible to emphasise the literary description of the selected visual images by means of drawings, which will be clues, as it were, to the actual shots on the floor or on location. Here, obviously a difficulty arises. The literary descriptions in the scenario are usually concerned with movement of acting material, which it is difficult if not impossible to convey by means of a drawing, the nature of which is static. For this reason, therefore, I suggest that the drawings should be in the nature of footnotes, clues to the actual realisation, whilst the necessary movement can be fully indicated by diagrammatic plans.

The scenarist, as we know, visualises the complete film in his imagination before it ever enters the studio to be fixed on strips of celluloid. It is only logical that there are many aspects of the visual images that he cannot incorporate in his manuscript in word form. It is, then, at this failure of the literary medium that the scenarist should turn to draughtsmanship for a clear expression of his filmic ideas. In other words, the director should be able to work from drawings as well as from text in the realisation of the scenario.

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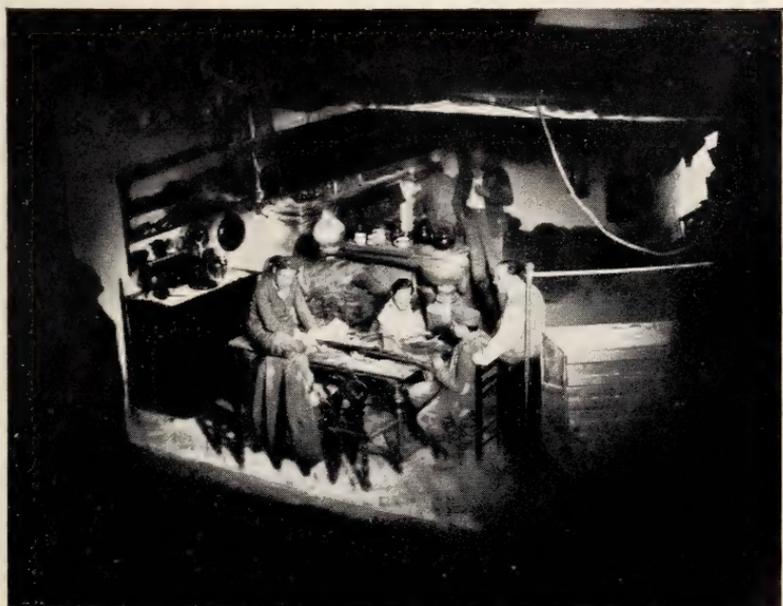
It will at once be remarked that this method indicates that the scenarist should possess another qualification other than the many already necessary to him. To recapitulate briefly : we know that in order for the completed film composition to be a unity, the entire filmic representation of the theme, and beyond it the narrative, is pre-conceived in the scenarist's mind and set down in the manuscript ; we know, also, that this preliminary expression of the concept contains the style, that is the method of realisation, which the director will adopt during the taking of the material and during the eventual assembling of the film strips bearing that material photographed upon them ; and, moreover, we know that the scenarist thinks and works in terms of externally expressive visual images and emphatic sound, both of which he must be able to control as does a writer his words. He must be continually aware that each sentence he includes in his manuscript will eventually assume plastic form on the screen in co-ordination with sound images in the synchronised score. It is obvious that he must have a specific knowledge of the filmic methods of expression. Every property of pictorial composition, of symbolism and suggestion, of contrast and similarity in the association of ideas and shapes, of the drama of camera angle, of the rhythm achieved by editing and cutting, of the technical accomplishment of camera-work, trick devices and studio architecture, shall be his mind, to be employed in order to express the dramatic content with the greatest possible emotional effect. The work of the scenarist is, therefore, a highly skilled and a highly accomplished task.

It is for the essential reason of simplifying the task of the scenarist that I suggest that draughtsmanship should be included in the scenario. It need not necessarily be the work of the scenarist himself. I put forward the argument that three or four persons should have the organisation of the shooting-plan in their control. The scenarist, the director, the art-director and the cameraman. Their work would proceed as follows: The selection of the theme by the scenarist or director and its treatment in narrative form. Then, the preparation of the shooting-script during which the art-director shall contribute diagrams and plans, with his especial knowledge of sets and their construction for emphasis of content by distortion and illusion. On these the cameraman shall suggest the movements and set-ups of his instrument, in accordance with the lay-out of the sets. Meanwhile, the art-director shall, in conjunction with the director and the scenarist, scatter the text (which is being composed) with small drawings of individual shots, showing proposed schemes of lighting, arrangement and contrast of masses, etc. In this way there will result the nearest absolute approach to a complete film pre-conceived and set down on paper. The film manuscript will thus be the collective work of the four most prominent film technicians. Both pictorially and textually, *the scenario will indicate the exact course of events* in the studio, on exterior and in the cutting room.

Thus the textual description will still remain the prominent feature of the scenario, while the draughtsmanship will be an added expression of the written visual images. The one will naturally explain the other. With the aid of plans, diagrams, lay-outs and descriptive text, I believe that the



Pabst directing *Westfront 1918*, tone-film of the War, at a private view of whose "rushes" a worker in the local cinema fainted.





From the Joe May production of the Ufaton film, *Der Unsterbliche Lump*, directed by G. Ucicky. A photograph by Carl Hoffmann.



Vanda Vangen in *La Fin du Monde* directed by Abel Gance.



Two photographs of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy in *Big Business*, a Hal-Roach-Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture. See article, *Cinema Circus* by Robert Herring, elsewhere in this issue.





Two photographs from the new film directed by Rene Clair, *Sous Les Toits de Paris*, with Albert Préjean, Pola Illery and Gaston Modot, fo: Films Sonores Tobis.





Albert Préjean and Pola Illery in *Sous les Toits de Paris*. Below another photograph from the same film.





The Snapdragon shuts its mouth tightly against rain. From the popular *Secrets of Nature* series of British Instructional Pictures.



Alexander Room, the director of *Bed and Sofa*, at work on a sound film in the Leningrad studio.



From the ethnographical film, *By the Caspian Sea*, directed by Magman and K. Korina, for Sovkino.





From *The Sleeping Beauty*, directed by J. and S. Vassilifsky, the scenario of which was written by G. Alexandroff, the well-known assistant and co-director of Eisenstein.



Another photograph from *On the Caspian Sea*.

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composers of the film manuscript will be able to select more easily the best possible shots for the representation of the scenes which will express the dramatic content of the theme. There is, however, one danger to be avoided in this proposed scenario draughtsmanship. That is the tendency it will carry with it to regard each visual image as a thing by itself. That is, of course, in direct opposition to the welding together of the manuscript as a whole. I need hardly say that it is fatal to think of a scene in terms of isolated shots. Rather, we must always visualise in a series of shots, with their eventual plastic screen realisation (as well as the symphony of sound images) uppermost in the mind. We must continually be conscious of the varying relations of the visual image lengths, for it is their rhythmic tension which ensures the increasing interest of the audience. The drawings in the manuscript must be clues to the progress of the film itself; a graphic commentary to the unfolding continuity of visual images. Although the drawings themselves are static, even as the words of the descriptive text, they are to be regarded as but the suggestion of their future filmic realisation.

PAUL ROTH.

NOTE: It is to be realised, of course, that the above suggestions apply to the general production of commercial studio-made films, and would be antagonistic to the naturalistic methods of purists who aim at employing only real material. It is a plea for the closer co-operation between the scenario and art departments in producing concerns; in particular in England, where such a co-operation might bind together the loose methods of working that at present exist.

(Mr. Roth's book *The Film till Now* will be published shortly. It is a theoretical treatise on the cinema as well as a comprehensive survey of all output from every film producing country up to date.—Ed.)

EVERYWHERE THE SAME

BERLIN, Mid-March.

A wood-cutter, this poor wood-cutter has lost his wife, and with great difficulty cares for the child that has been left without her mother. One day, the baron, to whom the forests belong, and whose little daughter has recently died, passes on a walk. He would bring up the child in richness he says, and gets it. The lonely father spends the years drinking and mourning. Until the baron inspects the forests again, accompanied by a mirthfully, sweet flapper. Yes, it is she, but nothing is betrayed, while she just thinks the old wood-cutter agreeably funny. Immediately she asks Papa baron to take him back to the city, which also happens. While she grows up there, refinedly, the heart of the old man cheers up such times as he is allowed to play ball with her. Once they leave for a health-resort, where she stumbles backwards into the lap of an exceedingly good-looking young man—that might happen and lead to acquaintance. But after they have returned to town, another girl happens to quarrel with the good-looking young man, throwing about all the paper in his room, letters flying down from the window, just as the former wood-cutter is passing. Who

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perceives (how terrible!) that all the three letters which have come down through the window have been written by strange ladies and that, consequently, the good-looking youngster is not worthy to possess his daughter. Whereupon he is rather embarrassed. The young, the good-looking, anticipating however, rings up his fiancée, and tells her that the old man has not behaved properly. Now she no more allows the old man to finish talking and he tries to get his warning to her by means of intrigues. She is not present when he takes leave of her room, as is the proper way of doing. There he just finds a post-card on the carpet, that she has gone with the good-looking man to the health-resort. In haste, the old man hurries after. He arrives just when the good-looking man is going to seduce her definitely, trying to persuade her not to take the last train. The wood-cutter interferes morally, the consequence of which is a boxing scene. In the end they both fall headlong, for it had all taken place on a very steep rock. The youngster totally dies, while the old man conveys the letters for evidence, is brought to the hospital where doctors in white coats fuss around, and the baron's family in black clothes awaits the death—which also arrives.

* * *

Perhaps you can guess what the name of the wood-cutter might be—Vladimir? Hjalmar? Pietro? Tom? André? Or Willem? No. It is Yakichi. The little girl: Yoko. The baron: Homma. The good-looking man: Tetsuo.

The real names of the actors of the chief parts are: Yakichi Iwata and Kinnyo Tanaka. Their director is

Tsunejiro Sasaki. For it is the question of a film. A Japanese film. Producers: The Shochiku Kinema Co., Ltd., Tokio.

* * *

If castles that are built in the air crash, the dust whirled up is subtler and more pervasive than is the case with solid buildings. The Japanese film, which we liked to imagine, caused a more grievous disappointment than others.

The wearier one becomes with what is near, the more hopeful are the dreams of what is distant. Japan—that means for most of the people who have not been there—something different, beyond, pastel-like. Like its letters: which cannot be interpreted, decorated, but not scrolled. Like its paintings: like a plain, without shadows, motley, but not coloured. Its photographs, too, are like that: remote and remoting, perspectivised and spaceless, quite light and without light, veiled and unveiling, unveiling the design of the things. That, something similar, analogous, would be brought by the film, the Japanese film, one was ready to believe.

Nothing of the kind. It brings grey, flat, primitive pictures. These Japanese stills lack everything, that Japanese pictures (paintings and photographs) always lack. But otherwise it was a positive lack, now it is a negative one. Then they lack what they used to have. But they have got everything which ought to be missing. All the conventions of our film: our episodes, our features, our gestures, our Kintopp.*

* Berlin Kino-slang.

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Personal vice seems most disgusting if it is discovered in a strange person. As if someone looked into a distorting looking-glass, that suddenly reveals increased grimaces that were not at all striking. Like man frightened by an uncanny movement in the monkey's cage: goodness! That is me, myself!

* * *

We do not want to care for the old Yakichi, who is not a bad actor and who does not need to shuffle along a long corridor in the manner of the "last man".

Also the beautiful Tetsuo need not disturb us excessively, though he emphasizes sallies by a sudden shriek of arm-movements, produces smiling-monologues after lucky intrigues, and lights the Shang-pipe spicily.

But that Yoko-girl! The actress of this Yoko and the type, could have escaped from a catechism of international film-production. Just a chance that she is called Yoko. Mary or Dolores might fit her just as well. She has got her lips painted in the shape of a heart, plucked eye-brows, clattering eye-lashes, though self-willed eyes, yet a doll's face. She likes to look into the picture slantingly and smiles chaffingly; instead of walking she hops incessantly and very quickly. She distorts her limbs, and thinks that this is temper in Japanese. When she has to be sad she turns away and shrugs her shoulders, when in fury, she tears paper in many wee bits, stamping her foot, she shows joy by pulling up her mouth in haste. She sneers. I say: she sneers. On command. Attention! How is Yoko glad?

* * *

It is troublesome. It is a shame for them and must also

make us ashamed. How these Japanese actors put on a mimic art that was cut out for others and then standardized. Into which we are forced and which does not suit them. But always standing out a bit round the collar, as accidental suits, which they wear with so much zeal, stand off their hangers.

One sees, how each of them wears this suit, literally, and how the suits hang from each of them. How each of them has a strange feeling in the suit and how he hides behind it. Disguised, disguised, too, by the mimic art. He does not live it. He just got it and now puts it on. He performs it; not a figure who expresses something, but an expression, sticking to the figure. He does not feel, he merely shows feelings.

Whether such a thing is derived from the mystic past of the pantomime?

It does not look like that. It does not look like style. Not limiting, but limited. Like a faint run against limits, which are.

Between Asia and Europe. Between Europe and America. These Asiatics always want to appear European. Just as with us: where one would like to look American. Is glad about corresponding progress. Supposed progress. Then some American maliciously peers at this dramatic art, and the way we bind our ties or have a pseudo-New-York-lady stretch her hand. Oh, if someone looks on carefully! In unobserved moments these Japanese nearly look Japanese.

* * *

In unobserved moments.

When a frank smile solves the face.

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Boozy types swinging rhythm over the table in the public-house.

Bodies bending to and fro in the chorus-dance of the wood-cutters.

Sadistic stick whistling over hands clenching to the rocky edge.

When one perceives strangely shaped canoes, or a tree, the name of which one does not remember.

When the camera moves further and higher, until the frame of the picture finally embraces landscape. Japanese landscape. Japan.

(One does not believe Japan to be the many different kimonos of Yoko. At the most the fashion-houses of Tokio. Where film-actresses get per cents).

* * *

Per cents, profit, business, industry, export. . . . If one thinks of that one begins to understand and nods sadly. One arrives at the words ware, seller, series, cliché.

Doubts emerge: how can it be possible that there is such a cliché? This same cliché. Must have the same reason. Same origin. The same spring. In the sentiment. In the man. Japanese, German, American men.

The same inclination. Well. Yes. For dreaming away, sleeping away. Palliating. Disguising. Toward hypocrisy. In all the men who are aware of the purpose, lazy cowards, damned.

Are you also like that in Japan? Also like that? You, too?

Another disappointment. But what does that matter——.

A. KRASZNA-KRAUSZ.

IT STILL RESTS WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Here is the end, for the time being, at all events, of the sad story of how I, as secretary of an amateur film society in a Midland industrial town, tried to arrange a Sunday evening performance of an "unusual" film.

I concluded my article in last month's *Close Up* with the statement that, after trying for four months to arrange the show and circumvent the blind pigheadedness of the local authorities, "who had no wish to set a precedent with Sunday shows", the Chief Constable informed me that no special permission was needed if the performance was to be private, and that it was up to us to arrange matters with the manager of the cinema whose hall we proposed hiring.

Ah, I thought, thank goodness all my troubles are at an end. I at once communicated with the cinema manager and told him the good news. He was not nearly so enthusiastic as I thought he would be. Perhaps he thought it was too good to be true! He rather disappointed me by saying that he himself would have to communicate with the Chief Constable to see that everything was in order, but after what that august gentleman had told me I had no qualms. Foolish optimist!

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I heard nothing for two days. No news is good news, I told myself. Then the cinema manager rang me up. Now for it! Everything in the garden would be lovely. Not on your life. The Chief Constable, he said, would require a list of the names and addresses of members of the society, a copy of the rules and regulations and God knows what besides to ensure that the Great British Public was not admitted to such a performance on the Sabbath.

In fact, said the cinema manager, there was so much red tape about the whole business, that under the circumstances, the principal one being that the authorities looked askance at the proposal as a whole, he could not take the risk of doing anything that would endanger his licence and reluctantly he begged to be allowed to withdraw his offer of the cinema.

Well, I ask you! I told him in a few well-chosen words, though hardly of the type calculated to delight any operator who might have been listening in, exactly what I thought of the blank-blank-dash authorities and had to leave it at that. I could not force the poor chap to loan us his cinema and he had been put to enough trouble already.

There was one hope left—an appeal to the Chief Constable himself. I went to see him, told him frankly what I thought of the whole farcical business, not omitting the Watch Committee, and asked him whether it was any use carrying the matter further.

He was very nice about it, said he quite understood and all that sort of thing, but what could he do? He was in the hands of the Watch Committee and that was all there was to it. He advised the Society to purchase a projector for its own use and abandon the idea of hiring a cinema.

I do not think I shall tell the Society's treasurer of that proposal. I have no wish to see him fall dead at my feet from shock.

So, good-bye to all that.

And I hope the Watch Committee !*!*!*!*!*!

LESLIE B. DUCKWORTH.

TALK AND SPEECH

And now let's have done with movie stars and give the speaking screen a fair measure of chance!

Technicians have admirably done their part toward perfecting the phonofilm, and are still on the job with commendable industry. Mechanically the new creation has reached a stage of development capable of real usefulness. But artistically and expressively it is still in the Pleistocene age of cinema evolution.

The present lack of its talking marvel is speech. It is already more than loquacious enough, and is producing, besides, a prodigious amount of noise—much of it called music—but with here and there an occasional refreshing exception it is notably shy on civilized speech.

Hollywood is riding on the tailgate of its new vehicle. It has spent hundreds of millions in the building and equip-

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ping of it, but it has not yet learned to drive it. For all of its expensiveness and potential worthiness, it is being allowed to blunder along without guidance or an intelligent comprehension of either its requirements or capabilities.

The chief trouble, of course, is Hollywood's movie complex. It is still mentally functioning in its childhood realm of dumb action. It is not yet consciously aware that the vocal screen calls for vocal actors—actors who have a command of speech as distinguished from a mere ability to talk.

Ninety per cent. of the film stars (to shave the number to a charitable minimum) who have been lugged over from the silent to the audible screen are not includable in this now requisite class. And particularly is this true of the females. Movie queens were never designed either by nature or schooling to be other than scenic. They are undeniably pleasing to look at. As pictorial figures they deserve their popularity, and perhaps even their extravagant weekly pay-cheques. But as exemplars of the spoken drama they are as negligible as string-pulled marionettes.

The films have willy-nilly entered the realm of drama. Now that they have become articulate and insist upon exercising their newly acquired function, there is no escaping the responsibility thus assumed. Popular expectation and demand have already shut off any avenue of escape or whatever inclination there may be on the part of the producers to limit the talkies to mere sound movies.

Accordingly voice becomes a prime requisite in the present cinema departure. It is as essential now to the screen as it

always has been to the stage. Yet voice is definitely something that our Hollywood deities do not possess.

At the same time, however, we must not be too ready to charge this against them to their personal disparagement. The fault is no fault of theirs. They were not originally hired to speak in public. On the contrary, it was distinctly understood at the time that they were only to be seen and not heard. Education, culture, intellect, stagecraft did not enter into the specifications, in the absence of any need to be other than mutely ornamental. A generous endowment of "it" filled the bill. And this quality is more than often enhanced by silence. Imagination inspired by physical charms can be ineluctably relied upon to conjure a fitting witchery of voice, with a corresponding increase of appeal.

And it is here that the phonofilm is working havoc. It is proving a ruthless iconoclast, a destroyer of illusions, a wrecker of pedestals, a profaner of shrines at which we were wont to worship. Instead of the divine tones we had been hearing in our mind's ear, glorifying alluring mobile lips, come emotionally shocking squeaks and stridences; flat, vulgar, unschooled voices, the voices of saucy shop-girls and earth-born dairymaids.

Of course, Hollywood is going to wake up. It is too canny to remain asleep. Its devotion to the star system, based upon mere picture personality, is bound to give place to a practical realization of the true office and requirements of the audible film. Beauty of face and shapeliness of legs will no longer chiefly serve as criteria of screen fitness. Five-thousand-dollar-a-week salaries will not continue to be

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lavished on decked and painted dolls with mechanical voices.

The demand for cultured speech will be heeded with characteristic commercial astuteness by our Hollywood overlords. Already they are giving approval to the plans of their intelligent underlings to subsidize if not actually finance schools of vocal training for the benefit of their players. They have not hesitated, on the mechanical side, to engage the services of scientific specialists equipped with immeasurably more knowledge and education than their own; and once the need for genuine dramatic talent is borne in upon them, they will no less hesitate to engage it.

But they will have to hurry. The novelty of sound which has thus so far beguiled if not hypnotized the crowd is destined shortly to be exhausted. Rudimentary movie standards applied to the evolved cinema drama will soon cease to be tolerated. And in that imminent future an exacting and discriminating public will turn thumbs down on mere talk and insist upon speech. It will demand actors, not mere fashion plates or Apollonian poseurs. It will insist that the monotonies involved in the exploiting of inflated egos with diminutive abilities be replaced by productions worthy of its time and money—productions in which men and women of appropriate talents and versatility, and gifted with a sense of artistic propriety, will truly act and speak and forget for the time being their individual personalities.

CLIFFORD HOWARD.

BOOK REVIEW

"The first book on how to write for the talking pictures." (*The Art of Sound Pictures*, by Walter B. Pitkin and William M. Marston. Published by D. Appleton and Company. 10s. 6d.).

O.K. chief.

Not the last word, the authors agree, but the latest on the one medium which would have fascinated Leonardo da Vinci (the authors agree) were he alive to-day; a medium combining, as it does, engineering expertness with aesthetic effects of colour and music. Penning an introduction Jesse L. Lasky adds, "I, for one, am very glad that talking pictures happened."

The authors begin by telling their pupils *what the public wants*. They point out that magazine story writers at least know that they will reach a public that can read; while the American film reaches very young children, "slightly educated adults", and immigrants who can't a bit. Words beyond the comprehension of a child of ten are dangerous in the talkie script.

Frank, suggestive pictures embarrass the boys. (N.B. View of the authors). Look at the unprecedented success of "that sad, tear-drawing thing of Al Jolson, *The Singing Fool*,

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which is about as sexy as the *Encyclopædia Britannica*." (Both, if you understand us). The public can't get together on sex; before a mixed audience it isn't nice. (See Page 23). A magnificent mediocrity of films is explained as a necessity born of their popularity.

However, pupils of the Pitkin and Marston School are warned in time about the censor. There are twenty-nine pages of charts showing recent decisions of local authorities.

The censors of Ohio would allow "scenes of child indicating, by title or action, that it needs to go to the bathroom", on the other hand, the authorities at Va. (these uncopyable abbreviations) will not stand for such lewdness. In fact Va. will have no nonsense; no "wet mattresses", "kicking on posterior", "nose thumbing", "scenes of baby's toilet chair", or "scene showing label on bottle such as *Castor Oil*, if not accompanied by vulgar title".

After *The Queen's Necklace* has been condemned in London papers, which print stills of the banned scenes on the back page, it is nice to know that Pa. is equally right minded, insisting on all "scenes showing branding iron in fire, if application of it is not shown" being deleted. HORROR is expressed in a special note. Pa., also, won't permit "scenes of persons wearing masks, if this is not done for purpose of robbery" or "scenes showing persons disguising the features in any other manner, or with mud". Pa. is not so abstemious about "scenes showing placing of the death cap", or about titles referring to lynching.

Kan. has no objection to a portrayal of theft if it is carried out in an unbusiness-like way. No state will pass a scene in which licence plate numbers are disguised; but machine

guns in action can be screened in New York if they are operated by officials of the law. Ya. won't let *fool* get by, yet sanctions *broad, tart* and *trollop*. Alas, in all states, except New York, a roulette wheel may be shown in action *if the scene is not distinct*, the story advanced, and justice prevails in the end. (So much could have been forgiven if that wheel had been banned).

Nudity and exposure are treated at length. It appears that :—

- (1). All states forbid the showing of a person in the nude, even if done in long shot so that the body *is not vulgarly exposed*.
- (2). All states forbid the exposure of sexual organs.
- (3). Portraits of nude women may be shown in all states except New York and Pennsylvania. In New York, such scenes can be included in an educational picture only. In Pennsylvania, the showing of the scene depends on the action.
- (4). All states except Pennsylvania permit the showing of nude statues. In Pennsylvania, the showing depends on the action.
- (5). All states except New York and Pennsylvania permit titles regarding nudity, e.g., "She's nude." "Don't come in—I am undressed," etc. In New York, these titles depend on the action and the story. In Pennsylvania, the first title may be used but not the second.
- (6). All states except New York and Pennsylvania permit

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the showing of persons in baths, in a long shot. New York permits the showing of only head, neck and arms. Pennsylvania insists on a cut, if possible.

“Twin beds, with one bed mussed, indicating that only one has been occupied” are frowned on in Ohio. “Husband and wife in bed together, if actions not suggestive” give qualms to Md.; and in that state one is spared “scene showing facial expression of man, indicating he contemplates seduction, if actual seduction is not shown”. “Man approaching woman on street, trying to *make* her, if they are not shown going away together” offends New York’s morality. “Fade-out of man and woman in intimate position, if there is later scene showing her with a baby, indicating they were intimate, if no titles are used” is a situation which finds few supporters. And New York will not tolerate “kissing on the neck when excessive or lustful”.

Having digested all this readers are helped to plan scenarios.

Intensity on moments is rightly held superior to velocity of events. Dual speech, which was invented by Eugene O’Neil in *Strange Interlude*, is put forward as a future development. The authors, indeed, are perspicacious about language which they define as vocal behaviour. Students are cautioned not to overlook breathing, ejaculations, self-expressive utterance, and elemental noises. Scenarists are given the tip to talk dialogue, not to write it; to use a dictaphone, adopting different voices to keep the parts separate. “However well trained your fingers may be, the odds are

a hundred to one, or more, that your tongue can make conversation better than your fingers."

Rhythm the authors hold in no great awe. "Whatever can be done about it will be done in the studio; and that will be very little." The scenarist is not to worry! Till the mechanized larynx comes to surpass the human one, till dialogue can move at one hundred to one hundred and forty words per minute, instead of seventy to ninety, the authors see no hope of aural rhythms informing visual rhythms.

A series of tests, by Dr. Marston and Olive B. Richard, is reported in the longest section of the book. It is intended to teach the budding talkie-dramatist whether the moo of a plaintive cow will make listeners giggle or mourn.

Reactions of subjects to screen episodes were tested by breathing, blood pressure, electrical changes and variations of grip. Greta Garbo and John Gilbert, in *The Flesh and the Devil*, were used to test the reactions of blondes and brunettes to the emotion of inducement. "Each tries," a caption declares under a kissing still of blonde Garbo and brunette Gilbert, "to induce the other in different parts of the film episodes used."

"Emotions have no existence or meaning apart from men and women who face situations and struggle in them. They are only a phase of personality, nothing more." . . . "And these emotions are intensified by the fact that people in the chairs cannot express their reactions by shouting, brandishing their fists, walking up and down, or any other vehement activity."

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Emotions are catalogued, roughly, into compliance, dominance, inducement, and submission. Physiological expressions ("Contraction of the blood vessels which supply the tonic muscles on the outside of the body. Sometimes flushing of the face, neck, chest, and even the abdomen,") are documented.

"A man lighting a cigar with a thousand dollar bill" is given as an example of dominance.

We hope that all who "quietly and with apparent carelessness drop an expensive dish on the floor in order to make a guest, who has just broken another valuable dish, feel comfortable" (example of submission) will never be rewarded by "general stabilizing and harmonizing of all the internal functions of the body, in such a way that the maximum alliance, or co-operation, between these different functions is attained."

Colour featured in further tests. It was established that men placed the nodal points in the following order of preference: blue, red, green, yellow. Women voted green, blue, red, yellow. Translating the colours back into emotional responses:—

<i>Men.</i>	<i>Women.</i>
1. Blue.....Dominance	Green.....Compliance
2. Red.....Compliance	Blue.....Inducement
3. Green.....Inducement	Red.....Dominance
4. Yellow.....Submission	Yellow.....Submission

"Enterprising authors may well consider colour possibilities in various parts of their stories, which might enhance the emotional effect supposed to prevail in this part of the plot, along the lines suggested. We cannot, of course,

guarantee that the average motion picture editor will make such colour-motion suggestions seriously at the present time."

Still, Messrs. Pitkin and Marston remark that soon business men and advertisers, in company with educators and legislators, will employ the film. (Sales talk on the wireless can be cut off; the spectator in the auditorium does not so thoughtlessly vacate his place). A knowledge of the psychology of colour is very important in filmic advertising. A. T. Poffenberger—they do try to get things right in U.S.A.—did a lot of thinking and calculated that yellow and orange are best for advertisements of building material, yellow and purple for perfume, yellow and green for summer camps, etcetera.

Colour processes are lucidly explained. It is impossible to do more than outline; the interested reader must invest in this absorbing volume. (Absorbing in spite of the Glynish pages on desire, satisfaction and possession).

The additive processes of colour photography depend on the fact that three colours of light appropriately combined on the motion picture screen are capable of producing all the natural colours. All the red, all the green, all the blue will give a complete record of natural colour. Three different pictures, made by passing coloured glass or gelatine between the lens of the camera and the sensitized film, were taken of the same object in rapid succession. Because the film had to be run three times as fast in the projector, the Kinema Colour, working in the persistence of colour vision, failed owing to pulsation. Flicker and *fringe* were two other

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failings. All the same this type of latent colour record was more commercial than film which is itself coloured.

The *Multiple Film Process* called for three pictures taken successively on three separate films. (Each film shot through a different colour filter). The same lens was used for the three films, prisms ensuring the same angle of vision. A slight shrinkage, or any other cause for lack of synchronization and the whole thing is blurred.

The *Multiple Image Process* splits up the single frame for the reception of three tiny images. For this system the spectrum is generally split into two; certain natural colours, therefore, cannot be reproduced. It is up to the art director to be ingenious.

Present processes, in use in Hollywood, are subtractive.

Technicolor needs a Technicolor camera. Prisms and filters are so arranged that successive frames of the same film carry latent red and green colour images of the same object. Two strips of positive film are used in printing: red colour values on one strip, green on a second. The positives are *mordanted*; that is, they are treated so that they have the property of absorbing certain dyes. Both sets or mordanted positive are transferred to the same side of a new film, the red positive having been dyed green and the green red. As paper takes print, so the gelatine, when pressed against the dyed film, takes the dye. There are many disadvantages (Read Pitkin and Marston) but the film can be shown on an ordinary projector.

Multicolor primaries are blue and orange-red. Any standard camera can be used for Multicolor if a special attachment and magazine are bought. "Two films are placed

emulsion to emulsion, so that light coming through the lens of the camera shines against the celluloid side of the front film. The front film is covered with an emulsion which records the blue and green end of the spectrum. In other words, a blue-green picture of the object in front of the camera lens is recorded on the front film. The emulsion on the front film is surface dyed red, which acts as a colour filter for the emulsion on the second film." A red-orange picture is recorded on the back film. Both films are printed on opposite sides of a double coated film. The pictures on one side of the film are turned orange-red and, on the other side, blue green. A special type of shellac protects the double coating from scratches, etcetera.

Sound technique chapters do not break much fresh ground. There is lots of theory—the less our senses receive, the more our personalities must contribute to the understanding of the object presented! Other text books have here proceeded.

The book ends with a glossary of such bewildering terms as *blope*, meaning to eliminate foreign sounds from a film. There is an Appendix of sets, available at the big studios, and a list of motion picture periodicals. The beginner is advised to adapt his settings and plots to the selling mode!

Here endeth the valuable survey of Pitkin and Marston. Students of the American mind will set it beyond price.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

CINÉ CLUB DE GENEVE

Ciné-Club de Genève présentait à ses membres, samedi 22 mars, trois films encore inconnus : *Cristallisation*, document scientifique, d'abord, puis aussi réservoir de visions originales fournies par les différents aspects de la solidification fantaisiste des minéraux. Tous les systèmes cristallins, aux angles si particuliers : cubes, polyèdres, prismes où se joue, pour le divertissement du regard intrigué, une lumière sans cesse réfractée, dont les jets se croisent, s'enchevêtrent au hasard des configurations. Un traité de cristallographie, sans doute, mais qui se laisse examiner avec le plus vif intérêt.

Epstein, défenseur du cinéma-essence, de la photographie suggestive, pouvait travailler à son aise le thème du visionnaire Edgar Poe, intitulé : *La Chute De La Maison Usher*. La " descente du Maelstrom " ne lui eût pas interdit non plus l'exercice d'une imagination en quête d'apparitions capricieuses et évocatrices. L'atmosphère, mais c'est l'arc-boutant de son système d'exposition . . et, par le détail, l'angle de vue, Epstein ponctue nerveusement ses descriptions. Son style est avant tout incisif et rapide. Le découpage assure une liaison des images tourmentée, qui sans cesse intervertit l'ordre de succession, introduit une

vision incidente, rappelle tel signe fugitif, insiste, sur l'auxiliaire, retourne au principal, et finalement aboutit à créer précisément cet état d'insécurité et ce sentiment de vie étrange et soumise au seul caprice cérébral, qui anime les oeuvres de Poe. Le cinéma se libère ici de toute entrave et, vagabondant de l'idée au geste, de l'irréel au réel, promettant, oubliant, il acquiert ce don d'être à la fois lui-même et le prétexte de compositions esthétiques. Cette liberté d'expression lui semble prêter une manière de personnalité, dont il faut pourtant bien rendre la paternité à l'auteur, mais le fait même de dissocier le principe et la cause, de saisir, sans lui obéir, la vie sensible à l'oeil et de jouer, pour ainsi dire, avec les qualités visuelles des objets, marque bien ce désir louable d'évasion qui peut seul mener l'expression cinégraphique au-delà du banal et des formes conventionnelles. Les essais d'Epstein, si confus et hésitants qu'ils puissent paraître, disons-même si peu récréatifs qu'ils soient, à la longue, méritent cependant une attention particulière.

Close Up a publié déjà quelques clichés de *Pluie*, qui donnent, sans qu'il soit besoin d'insister, le ton du film de Joris Ivans. Succession d'aspects, physionomie détaillée d'une cité ruisselante sous l'averse. Certaines personnes n'ont rien vu là d'extraordinaire . . . mais aussi est-ce toujours de l'extraordinaire qu'elles cherchent. L'art, ici, trouve son expression dans l'observation minutieuse, alerte toujours, spirituelle aussi par le choix des motifs.

La quatrième exhibition du Ciné-Club de Genève fut une mosaïque de films d'un métrage peu important. Et c'est fort bien ainsi, car, en un laps de temps relativement court, les spectateurs ont eu devant les yeux un certain nombre

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d'échantillons révélant chacun une manière de cinéma intellectuel appliqué à des sujets fort dissemblables. L'occasion était unique, donc, de comparer entre eux les quelques systèmes de prise de vues, d'établir ce qui, de l'un à l'autre, justifiait un certain avantage dans un sens ou dans l'autre. Félicitons donc les dirigeants du Ciné-Club genevois pour leur très intelligente sélection de programme.

En dehors de toute préoccupation artistique, un petit document biologique, signé par la société italienne " Luce ", présente quelques spécimens de *La Faune Sous-Marine*, représentée ici par des exemplaires réduits pouvant prendre place dans un aquarium. Avec une patience toute pédagogique, l'opérateur a enregistré les agitations diverses du homard, de la poulpe, des seiches, et de quelques autres habitants des eaux oscillant entre le règne animal et le règne végétal. Tel qu'il fut réalisé, ce film pourrait être fort utile à l'enseignement.

Germaine Dulac, elle, s'est plu à composer ses *Arabesques* mouvantes avec un matériel extrêmement divers, et réussit, ce faisant, à retenir agréablement l'attention sur une succession d'aspects généralement heureux : jet d'eau en éventail, saisi de face et de profil, branchages convergant vers un foyer lumineux, traînée de fumée s'étirant devant un écran de nuages, voile flottant au vent, coquille d'escargot, toile d'araignée, fleurs surgissant brusquement d'un terrain rocailleux, reflets lumineux parallèles s'incurvant sur un fond trouble. Avec *Disque 957*, la réussite nous paraît moindre. Germaine Dulac entendait recréer visuellement les motifs d'un prélude en si bémol de Chopin, inspiré, selon George Sand, par une grise journée de pluie passée à la Grande Chartreuse.

Le disque en mouvement apparaît partiellement, se dédouble . . . puis se fond en jets lumineux extrêmement précipités, pour enfin céder la place aux signes naturels dont l'émotion a tiré sa substance musicale : oscillation monotone des rouages d'une pendule, alternant avec certains détails de l'atmosphère extérieure : ruissellement de l'eau sur les vitres, chute régulière d'une goutte d'eau dans une flaque entourée de verdure, allées tristes et humides. Mais certainement *Pluie* de Joris Ivans, avec moins d'ambition, traduisait infiniment mieux l'état d'âme atmosphérique dont il est question, par ses subtiles notations.

La *Symphonie Diagonale* d'Eggeling est, par excellence, un exemple typique du cinéma géométrique, lequel peut plaire par l'imprévu des combinaisons linéaires, mais tout aussi bien rebuter en vertu de sa sécheresse. Apparition et disparition brusques de dessins pas toujours originaux, sur un fond invariable. Cela, c'est un peu, quoi qu'on en dise, d'une élémentaire éloquence et il faut reconnaître qu'il ne rentre dans cet ordre de compositions, qu'un art fort discutable, ou du moins inapte à éveiller de réelles sensations esthétiques, surtout si l'on considère que le mouvement ne contribue ici qu'à faire passer par à-coups, dans le champ visuel, un sujet après l'autre.

L'Anemic Cinéma de Duchamps est plus récréatif, sans doute, où par une rotation fixe analogue à celle des toupies, un ensemble de spirales se meut, donnant l'illusion, presque, de la perspective. Beaucoup moins esthétiques cependant sont les textes circulaires rédigés pour rappeler automatiquement certains sons identiques (choux-fleurs de serre, souffleur de chair ; esquimauxmaux exquis, etc.).

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Le film *Essai de Publicité*, de Hans Richter, est fait surtout de surimpressions dont certaines valent par un relief tout particulier, mais l'on a fait un tel abus de ce moyen de présentation qu'il semble bien ne plus exciter comme auparavant la curiosité. Infiniment supérieure, à notre avis, serait sa "synthèse-analyse" d'une manifestation hippique, qui, en un rythme approprié accumule les visions les plus suggestives qui sont autant d'indications concises apportant à l'ensemble, avec un désordre pourtant logique, les fragments dispersés d'une aigüe contemplation.

Enfin, pour terminer, deux extraits d'*Arsenal*, de Dovjenko, et d'*Octobre*, d'Eisenstein, choisis tout exprès pour démontrer deux systèmes de montage. Dans le premier, l'association des images est ordonnée selon le mode le plus commun, qui exploite l'effet "claquant" d'une succession brusque de détails créant parfaitement le sensation propre à souligner l'événement lui-même. La violence du déraillement d'un train militaire est exprimée ici, à merveille, par la chute d'un accordéon, dont il semble que, par soubresauts, sort la vie. Dans le second film, la technique particulière de l'un des procédés de découpage d'Eisenstein apparaît d'une évidence fort compréhensible. Il s'agit ici de mettre en parallèle l'Eglise et l'Armée, et, nez à nez parfois, alternant rapidement les une aux autres, aussi, des figures symboliques frappantes, mais peut-être quelque peu naïves, extériorisent la pensée de l'auteur. Force, conviction, sont par là manifestées avec une remarquable adresse.

FREDDY CHEVALLEY.

COMMENT AND REVIEW

FINANCE.

Messrs. Gee and Co. have followed up *Exhibitors' Accounts* with *Renters' Accounts* (7s. 6d.). Both volumes have a general title, *Kinematograph Trade Accounts*. In his preface the author explains that when he commenced the work the present vertical combination of sections of the trade was not so common.

The aim of the work is to help the film to take its place among the industries of national importance. The publishers point out, justly, that the Industry cannot benefit by the Quota Bill unless waste is eliminated and the heads of companies are able to put their finger on the leakage.

Charles H. Travis has done the job. He suggests eleven different statistical books, ranging from Poster Stock Book to Traveller's Commission Book, and sixteen different account books. He knows the trade inside and outside, foreseeing such items as "the hire of tricycles in the despatch department". He is tactful about keeping the bank balance from the staff. He is helpful about the Cinematograph Film Act. He knows how to institute counter-checks, and how to make

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books a strong moral force to keep departments up-to-date in their work.

The neat ruled pages, which serve as examples, make one almost long to become a renter. Certainly, it should make renters long to become efficient. After reading Mr. Travis' faultless manual there can no longer be any excuse for let-downs and contracts for barred films.

A touch of humour is given to the book by the author's choice of hypothetical film titles: *The Sorrow of Demeter*, *The Sleep of Endymion*, *The Vengeance of Apollo*, and *Niobe and Leto*.

O. B.

ACTING LIFE.

In a news reel I saw an unfortunate woman, sentenced to life imprisonment, and heard her deliver a sob story outside the court. I have seen close-ups of men condemned to the electric chair; photographs taken thirty minutes before the criminals were executed.

Many times I have had to watch top-hatted men reading speeches of spontaneous thanks; obliging noblemen presenting trophies to dare-devils of land, sea or sky, and declaring, by squinting at a typed sheet of paper, overwhelming, patriotic sentiments.

How disconcerted one triumphant hero was who discovered that his prepared opening words were the same as those of a rehearsed lord! . . . It is a great pleasure for me . . .

Glaring at the audience and defiantly carrying the farce to an end.

How fluttering some of the sternest statesmen who want to hog the lens and yet have to look at their speech between every fourth word!

It's all right, say you, as far as it goes.

Who, anyway, is referee?

News reels are of great value; for one thing they give us an interesting documentation of the way England photographs in winter. But exploitation of tragedies seem a trifle shaming.

Will the day come when we cannot thank a gallant rescuer without a prepared speech before the microphone belonging to the manager of the local cinema?

And television.

Vertoff's radio ear and kino eye.

Use the people.

Are all the people, in retaliation, to become actors?

Will our voices no longer betray emotion but good-recording qualities?

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

THE TRAIN OF DESTINY.

"Take," said H. D., "*Turksib.*"

It took us by storm.

"Take, now, *The Train of Destiny.*"

Directed by Genaro Righelli this picture shows that "un-

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remitting toil is the portion of the peasant prisoners during the building of the long track of the Siberian Railway."

The Military Governor arrested Gregorow because he suspected him of being red. Gregorow is tactless and calls the Military Governor a tyrant and a libertine. Fritz Kortner, the Governor, has a son who falls in love with Gregorow's daughter, Renée Heribel. Poppa, also, thinks she is attractive.

To show his sympathy with the oppressed the son visits the local meeting of *the party*. They are all very hearty; like Shakespeare's "What ho" bits. They are arrested, and Poppa decides to take the girl away on the train. But, being Russia, the bridge is left half finished. However, Gregorow uncouples the engine and wins forgiveness.

Our old friend, Alma Taylor, turns up in a tiny part, looking more charming and gracious than we ever remember seeing her in the past. Theodor Loos, from *Metropolis*, plays the red.

These last silent films are so nice, there is a charmingly family air. We clap to make everyone happy—operators included.

O. B.

"PHOTOGRAPHY."

"The lens is an instrument like the crayon or brush, the photograph is a process like design or engraving; for what makes the artist is the sentiment not the instrument."

The 16th Number of *Arts and Metiers Graphiques* (Paris) is a very special number dedicated to photography. It is spirally bound in card covers, which is to say that the pictures are bound on to a spiral of wire, which enables them to open out flat as in a portfolio. A practical novelty for a periodical with advertisements.

Mr. Waldemar George's preface contains the usual history from Daguerre, a long appreciation of the late Parisian pioneer, Adget, and enthusiasm over modern photographic tendencies shown by his eulogistic descriptions of Photogramms and Negative-prints, those delightful white and black effects obtained from subjects such as liners at sea.

Altogether, 130 photographs, some reminiscent of, others identical to, those seen at the Stuttgart Exhibition and in Jan Tschold's recent book *Photo-Eye*.

Microphotos, radiographs, Adget's photos of old Paris, showing the significance of Adget as a pioneer of the actuality photograph, of which there are a large number in this book, though a surprising lack of good examples of photo-montage.

The Germans are heavy, but show some remarkable Heads by Max Burchartz (Essen), and an enormous, but beautifully detailed Close-up by Lucia Moholy (Berlin).

The Parisians show pieces of things, the importance of which tendency as an art-form is being considerably discussed in France itself. Amongst the Parisian photographs are (the titles are my own) *Wheels of a Locomotive*, by René Zuber; *Telegraph Posts at an Angle*, by Roger Parry; *Legs*, by Maurice Tabard, who has also designed one of the excellent photographic advertisements at the end of the book; *Part of a Fork*, by A. Kertesz—these and others form examples of the

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Parisian tendency. One or two photos, however, appeared hardly *à la mode*, such as, perhaps, the *Hands on Piano*, by Laure Albin-Guillot.

Man Ray shows a charming Spiral, also a mysteriously beautiful portrait of a girl, which has an almost photogrammic touch.

CHARLES E. STENHOUSE.

THE WORLD ON FILM.

Dr. Edgar Beyfuss, whose film *Die Wunder des Films*, criticized in *Close Up*, May 1929, has been having a continuous success in Germany, is now putting the finishing touches to a new montage-film entitled, *Die Wunder der Welt*, a rhapsody in word and picture dedicated to the daring explorers, who with their cameras have captured the beauty of the world for us on countless expeditions.

Commencing with scenes depicting the Creation, the film shows the beauties of Nature, the jewels beneath the sea and beneath the earth.

In part two, the most celebrated explorers guide us on our travels throughout the World—with Arthur Heye into East African territory, with Schomburg through Africa's jungles, with Dungern and Gontard on a giraffe hunt in Pori, Colin Ross guides us to the South towards Cape Town, with Sven Hedin in the Gobi desert and Lola Kreutzberg at Bali. At Japan the "Resolute" is met, and having passed from Argentine through Mexico, one reaches U.S.A., the land of

mighty dimensions and the Statue of Liberty, the symbol of modern times.

Part three is a very varied cross-section. Everyone loves his country (typical pictures) and attempts to defend it with weapons. Soldiers marching, over the Rhine, the Thames, the Seine. Tanks, cannons, fleets, WAR. But each man seeks his God. Religions: Brahamans, Buddhists, Greek temples, Gothic domes. God lives over everything, especially over work. Rhythm of work. Machines, machines, machines. Man, worn-out, recuperates by means of SPORT. Man becomes master of the earth, but Nature does not permit herself to be mocked at, and retaliates with Storms, Earthquakes, Volcanic Eruptions, and Fires. Increased facilities for travel tend to make the world smaller, and thus we see pedestrians, motors, boats, steamers, ocean-liners and bridges ever increasing in size, rocket-cars, aeroplanes, Zeppelins. The Zeppelin over Berlin, Paris and New York leads to the final part of this amazing film, a concluding symphony of film-photomontage.

CHARLES E. STENHOUSE.

A CONTEMPORARY.

A new contemporary, the *Sozialistische Film-Kritik*, the official organ of the Hamburg branch of the Volksfilmverband, though showing a marked "tendenz" in style, joins most enthusiastically in the battle against kitsch and against the present censorial conditions.

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Some truths concerning the German censors are published. In Berlin, the film *Revolte im Erziehungshaus* remains banned. The play of the same name has been performed with the greatest success at nearly all of Germany's more important theatres.

The German Universal-Film-Verleih has produced a film called *Ludwig II, König von Bayern*, the title rôle being played by Wilhelm Dieterle. The Munich police have banned this film in Bavaria. It is possible that the loyal Republicans in Munich feared that the film might destroy the prevalent monarchist legends, or possibly they even feared that Ludwig II would be represented too faithfully. One point is, however, definite. Not one single member of the Munich police board has seen the film, and not one can correctly explain why the film has actually been banned.

In the *General Line* a cat, which crosses in front of a wedding-procession, had to be removed; the Catholic church having taken objection. The *Sozialistische Film-Kritik* states: "Nearly every Soviet film is pruned by the scissors of the republican-catholic censors. But not only the staunch, social films of present-day Russia, but also every progressive film production in Germany falls beneath the censor's sheers."

The paper's enthusiasm about good films counteracts its somewhat strong social views, and the film-lover will find little with which he is not in complete agreement.

A simplified analysis of Eisenstein's visual overtone theories has appeared, and a new film made by Pudovkin in Berlin, called, *Die Ehe der Maria Lavallo*, has been announced; and one of the very numerous sarcastic paragraphs

states that John Barrymore has ignored the advice to make his next film together with his wife, Dolores Costello, because he considers that once two people are married, the public no longer believes that they are in love with each other.

C. E. STENHOUSE.

ENTERPRISING AMATEURS.

The Newport Film Society seem, indeed, an enthusiastic group of amateurs. They have made a sound move by publishing on their attractive membership cards a list of twelve special programmes to provide entertainment for their members until June 30th, of this year.

Too many amateur Societies fail to provide adequate projection evenings, and consequently many weeks are wasted on unfruitful discussion, which unfortunately too often ends in personal conflicts. The *nfs* have, however, looked far ahead and have arranged some excellent programmes of amateur films, amongst which are:—

Mar. 24th. SEWELL AND AHERN NIGHT, upon which occasion their prize-winning film, *The Gaiety of Nations*, will be shown.

Apr. 28th. AMERICAN AMATEUR NIGHT. A contrast of styles will be provided by *Fly Low Jack*, and the Watson-Webber *The Fall of the House of Usher*.

May 26th. 9.5 NIGHT. Experiments on 9.5 film will include *The Man Who Came*, by C. E. Stenhouse, three Studies by R. A. Fairthorne, and *Waitress*, by Orlton West.

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Lectures and film-tests will also be included in the programmes.

“Newport Film Society exist to make and show good films and to encourage the appreciation of good films.” Praise is due to the way they intend to carry out this policy.

C. E. S.

THE SECRET OF THE EGG-SHELL.

(A UFA DOCUMENTARY TALKIE).

“The next one, plea-se,” and the candidate, a young boy, shivering with fear, enters the examination-room. In front of him two professors, a jovial and a gaunt one, a long table, a skeleton, preparation, books. “Now . . . what can you tell us about the development of the animal in the egg?” the jovial one asks the student, whose face cheers up, for that is just the chapter he had repeated yesterday. And he starts: “The best way of watching the early development is to observe the eggs of Echinoidea, for they are highly transparent. We can see, how the one cell is furrowed in the middle, and” The picture of the examination-room fades into the observation-field of a microscope, and we can see the transparent eggs, how the one cell is furrowed in the middle, and how two cells become four, and how four become eight, and on and on, until the cell has developed to the animal as we know it. (We remember having seen similar shots in *Nature and Love*). During all the time we

hear the student's explaining voice. And he tells us of the development of fishes, we see the artificial fecundation of their eggs, how the embryo grows, moves, watch his heart beating. "And what do you know about the development of higher animals?" the gaunt man asks, while the kind professor is obviously enchanted. The eggs of serpents appear on the screen, young snakes slipping out in the sunshine. Another question: "What do you know about birds?" The student takes a fowl's egg, carefully bores a hole in the shell, then covers it with a glass plate, wraps it up warmly, and through this plate we can watch within a few minutes through the eye of the camera, all that takes place during three weeks, till the little chicken breaks the shell of the egg with great trouble. Whereupon the professors are satisfied and make an end of the examination and the film.

It is only a one-reel film, and as the problem it deals with, the problem of development, is perhaps, one of the most involved that there are, we understand that it must limit itself to a few extracts from what a strict scientific film of this kind ought to show. It is fascinating, however, to watch the well done shots, and we must say, that this experiment of documentary talkies is a success. The sound-reproduction is very good, and we understand nearly every word. The frame-story is very amusing, it is a clever idea to interrupt the scientific shots by funny episodes of the examination, which makes it possible to show the film to a larger audience. The film is shown in Vienna at present as a one-reeler before a big talkie.

TRUDE WEISS.

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FOR ADOLESCENTS ONLY.

A brilliant idea—*Pandora's Box* with the lid off! Yes, in England. You would have thought the censor would have kept the lid firmly on Pandora's box. But he went one better. He took the lid off, let everything out and then showed us the film to let us see there was nothing in it. Result, everyone thinks it a duller film than the scenario made it and the trade papers were unable to recommend it. The English subtitle announces that "Lulu's response to 'primitive instincts' gave her 'a peculiar fascination for men.'" But in the film as made, because made in the round, it was seen that she had a peculiar fascination for women, too—or at least for one woman. So in the English version the Lesbian part, so marvellously played by Alice Roberts, is cut out. We musn't know about them. As Edgar Wallace observes, the public that goes to cinemas is not on the same level as those that go to plays, and so they have to be treated differently. The Lesbian goes. This piece of cutting was very ingenious, because she keeps on occurring and is rather important. Her absence in the English version ruined the scenes on the ship where Lulu hid, robbing them of at least half their completeness, power and poignancy. The wedding scene suffered in the same way. It was also not made clear in the English, what the two men were doing in Lulu's bedroom; the simple sub-title, "Let's strew roses on the bridal bed" was just omitted, although the scene was there. So no one know why it was there. The remark Lulu makes in her hysterics in the theatre, "Smoking not permitted," was changed for no reason at all into the cheaply

pointless "Don't burn your fingers." Various other bits were cut—some scenes of the fiancée, and some of Siegfried Arno's attempts to stage-manage; all this in the usual *anglais* attempt to "speed up" a foreign film. All rhythm, of course, vanished. But the worst cut was the excision of Alice Roberts—not because she was Lesbian and all that, but simply because she was important, she fitted, she was part of it. They were going to synchronise this film, in order to get away with it. If they would leave men's work (yes, MEN'S) alone, there would be no need to worry. *Pandora's Box*, as it will be seen in England gives no idea of the film it was when Pabst finished it. Pabst's gift is the gift of wholeness, completeness, actual and psychological. Alter it, upset one vibration, you have ruined a piece of fine work.

R. H.

FILMING THE "GIANT."

(CONVERSATION WITH THE PRODUCER L. STEPANOV).

The organisation of the tremendous Soviet Grain Farm (sovhos) "Giant" is the first experiment in the world in such organisation.

Before the very eyes of the filming group, on the endless steppes of Salsk, machines made their first appearance. 850 tractors awakened the steppe turning up the virgin ground. An area of 180,000 hectares came to life daily. The eternal feathery grass disappeared.

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The steppe met people very severely. There was snow and frost and the unwadable spring mud. There was no housing for either the people or machinery. They settled in huts, in booths and sheds. But everyone, from manager to hired-hand knew: there is a fighting command from the Government, there is a general policy of the party which must be carried out.

And these hard days gave birth to heroes. People who voluntarily gave 16 hours a day to work, who ploughed, sowed and gathered a harvest of 50,850 tons of grain. On the steppes, where for thousands of years feather grass had waved, a great new factory arose—a grain factory—"Giant."

It is this heroic work that the filming group wanted to picture on the screen.

There are 13 brigades in the Soviet Farm. In the heat of harvesting, from 600 to 700 people work in these brigade groups. They have an original life—from earliest spring to late autumn they spend all their time on the steppes. Work, rest, dinner and even slumber—all under the open skies. Among the tractor workers there are 12 per cent. women—chiefly Komsomols. And among them are former members of Budenny's famous army division. On these fields, they chased the enemy on horseback, and to-day they are conquering these fields by steel horses.

The whole picture was filmed in the sovkos "Giant" at Novorossisk, and the group worked five months. The conditions under which they worked were extraordinarily difficult. But the warm participation of the brigades, their tremendous help encouraged them and made them with even greater firmness work to attain their aim. P. A.

PARNASSE, ESSAI DE EUGEN DESLAW.

Le nouveau programme du Studio 28 est intéressant à divers points de vues ; en dehors du film principal *Alibi* qui est sans aucun doute un excellent film poilicier, il comprend aussi *Parnasse* de Eugen Deslaw et *Le Ballet Mécanique*, de Fernand Léger.

Ce dernier film, vieux de plus de six ans je crois, n'a pas reçu un accueil des plus favorables ; son argument, sans doute, demeure très discutable ; Eisenstein qui a vu le film au Congrès des Indépendants déclaraient récemment à un de nos confrères parisiens : " Léger, dont le métier est la peinture, a néanmoins compris ce qu'il y avait d'essentiel dans le cinéma, le point de vue formel."

Parnasse a été accueilli avec beaucoup de sympathie ; on connaît la valeur de Deslaw, à qui nous sommes redevables déjà de *La Marche des Machines* et de *Nuits Electriques*, qui constituent de précieux efforts pour le cinéma spécialisé. Son nouveau film, primitivement intitulé *Quatre Cafés*, *Quatre Crèmes*, est présenté actuellement sous le titre, évidemment ingénieux : *Un Documentaire*.

Deslaw a voulu indiquer ainsi la différence de conception de ce film avec celle de ses autres essais. Et en effet, *Parnasse*, qui est appelé à recevoir à l'étranger un accueil enthousiaste est avant tout un documentaire, audacieux sans doute, réalisé suivant une conception très personnelle, du fameux quartier de Montparnasse, rendez-vous parisien de la bohème de l'univers ; un documentaire, et aussi parfois, une ironique satire !

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Par ses plans surprenants, ses angles étudiés, ses recherches techniques, Deslaw nous révèle un Montparnasse que ses habitants eux mêmes ne connaissent que très imparfaitement, mais que sa camera a saisi avec une précision amusante.

En somme une belle réussite de Eugen Deslaw, un jeune qu'il nous tarde de voir s'attaquer à une oeuvre d'importance, qui a déjà largement fait connaître ses qualités, ses possibilités, un jeune qui fait honneur au "cinéma spécialisé" et qui est appelé à être un très grand réalisateur.

MAURICE M. BESSY.

BOOK REVIEWS.

NIE WIEDER KRIEG. NO MORE WAR. PLUS JAMAIS DE GUERRE. NUNCA JAMAS GUERRA. NOOIT MEER OORLOG. ALDRIG MERE KRIG.

What will the new War films tell us? Meanwhile we can buy for one shilling this collection of some 50 war photographs taken from Ernst Friedrich's book, *War Against War*. They are not artistic, my dear, but they do present war in a light which renders further enquiry and discussion superfluous. And there are people who still talk about the armies of the Lord God.

The book should be left about, casually, in military clubs and South coast hotels.

Morally, the photographs prove nothing. But as a psychological shock they are excellent and necessary.

H. A. M.

A number of *Das Neue Frankfurt* has reached us, which should be of interest to many English readers, although it is not concerned particularly with cinematography. It is an illustrated magazine devoted to the problems of modern architecture, with particular regard for the person of moderate means, or for communal buildings. The number before us is the first of two double numbers and is printed in German, English and French. It may be obtained from *Das Neue Frankfurt*, Frankfurt am Main-Süd 10, at three marks per single copy, five marks for double numbers, and twelve marks for a year's subscription.

One of the most depressing sights in England is the rows of small houses constantly being built to an antiquated pattern. As a matter of fact, it costs less or the same amount, to build in the new manner. And no one who has lived in a modern house, designed to admit light and air, and to eliminate all unnecessary housework, would ever willingly live again in the usual English villa. But very few people in England seem to know or care anything about modern architectural development. So hundreds more houses with the wrong kind of window, badly designed kitchens and uninteresting exteriors, continue to be sprinkled across the landscape.

Those who are interested in architecture will find the plans of the new communal buildings, and of the work being done in Frankfurt, extremely interesting. Schools, flats for one or two people, and other designs are illustrated and described, together with an article on future plans. It may easily be obtained by sending a money order for three marks to the address given above.

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There is a spring-tide of film critic novelists.

After giving us Mr. Robert Herring's delightful *Adam and Evelyn at Kew*, Messrs. Elkin Mathews & Marrot have published Miss Iris Barry's *Here is Thy Victory*.

Everyone will remember; Miss Barry and *The Daily Mail*, Miss Barry and *Let's Go to the Pictures*, Miss Barry and the Film Society.

The novel has a Fritz Lang idea; the death of Death. People cannot die, which worries them a lot. Tuberculosis or cancer patients drink lysol. Young men murder old mothers to get their inheritance. The churches are packed out because life without death, people cry, would be too boring. However there is not much indication that life with death was too exciting.

Everyone will want to read Miss Barry's able book.

O. B.

An interesting article has appeared in *The Journal for Adult Education*, April (Sidgwick & Jackson, 2s. 6d.) which should be read and kept by those who are interested in the educational aspects of cinematography. It is called *The Educational Influence of the Cinema*, and is the report of an experiment conducted in October, 1929, by a special committee of the British Institute of Adult Education into the educational influence of commercially shown films.

Reports were received from 48 observers, distributed over 27 centres of England and Scotland. Each observer was asked to attend a performance or performances at the local

cinema, if possible during the week October 14-19th, and otherwise at the earliest convenient date. Every type of cinema was covered by these visits, and all types of film, both talkie and silent. In all, ninety films were mentioned, exclusive of shorts and news-reels.

Observers were asked to note whether the programme contained material of direct or indirect educational value, or any items of deleterious character. The list of seven films mentioned as having definitely educational value was headed by *Finis Terræ*, by Jean Epstein. The other six were, *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *The Patriot*, *With Cobham Round Africa*, *The Trail of '98*, *Drifting Through Gascony* and *The Great Arctic Seal Hunt*.

Twenty-four centres reported that the news reels had value, and four noticed that the most educational item on the programme was an advertisement film showing scenes in factories where corsets were being manufactured. (We had thought, however, that health consideration should have discounted such a film).

There was general agreement as to the paucity of direct educational or artistic value.

While it is true that most *Close Up* readers would agree with much of the above record, we wonder how far the observers were aware of the excellent educational films available abroad. And how far they would be willing to work in an attempt to alter the existing conditions of costs and censorship. The greatest educational film that has been made to date is *The General Line*. But would educational authorities co-operate in showing that film to schools? Probably not, because it was made in Russia. For the same reason such

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geographical and cultural films as *Pamir*, *Men of the Forest*, and *Turksib* probably would also be forbidden or discouraged. *Cosmos*, made for children, was banned at first in England, and then shown in an altered version. There is no mention of the English series, *Secrets of Nature*, in the report.

But the great difficulty of educational cinematographic development is that there is at present no organisation of the many groups at work. Thought tends to move along rigidly conventional lines: an educational film must be first of all "safe." And, therefore, in keeping many rules, it becomes dull; it has no link with the spirit of the age. Yet what children want is *Turksib*, rather than *The Trail of '98*; only when quite school-deadened do they demand melodrama in place of facts.

It is a pity that a series of performances could not be organised in London, particularly for those interested in education. Each country might furnish a programme in turn together with a list of available films, and addresses of where these were to be procured with the renting price. In this way we should at least be aware of what has been accomplished in other countries. In the meantime, the detailed report of the investigation of last October is extremely valuable, and we advise those of our readers who are interested, to study it carefully.

BRYHER.

HOLLYWOOD NOTES.

With characteristic optimism, M-G-M are contemplating doing over *Ben Hur* as a phonofilm. Despite the enormous cost of the silent version (some four million dollars), the picture has more than paid for itself by this time. Its gross receipts are reported to be close to ten millions, with returns still coming in from it. However, in the making of the audible version the producers will not repeat the exegregious blunder of sending their players and equipment abroad. They have learned by this time that the story is not laid in Rome, as they originally believed, and they have discovered, too, that backgrounds of Antioch and Palestine can be faithfully reproduced in and about Hollywood, as evidenced by *The King of Kings*.

* * *

Directors with a flair for the unusual, who have exhausted the possibilities of new and unique camera angles, are turning now to experimenting with microphone angles. An exemplification of this is to be found in Norma Talmadge's first talking picture, *New York Nights*, wherein director Milestone moved the microphone about while the camera remained stationary in a long-shot scene of a ballroom set. The result is a series of vari-ranged "sound shots"—the picking up and amplifying of individual voices amid the crowd of dancers, without at the same time bringing the individuals themselves into correspondingly closer pictorial range.

* * *

Pathé studios have inaugurated a new production technique.

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This is the "dress-rehearsal film." It had its initial try-out with Gloria Swanson's forthcoming picture, *What a Widow*. The entire picture was filmed in rehearsal, and within a space of only three days. The actors were in costume and many of the sets were already prepared for the actual production. The cost of the experiment was about ten thousand dollars, which the producers feel was fully warranted by the resulting benefits and advantages. The rehearsal film, portraying in action every scene of the story, provides a working model for the ultimate production. In other words, it serves to supplement the scenario—to illustrate it, as it were—and thus afford both director and actors a more vivid, practical and time-saving guide than is possible under the present established system.

* * *

Revues, in spite of their inanities and monotonies, evidently continue high in public favour! At any rate, the studios keep grinding them out. Paramount-Lasky are putting the finishing touches to *Paramount on Parade*; the Fox Company are following up their current *Happy Days* with *Fox Movietone Follies of 1930*, and M-G-M (creators of *Hollywood Revue*) are ready to release *The March of Time*. Incidentally, each of them is proclaimed as epoch-making and as eclipsing anything that has gone before.

* * *

The making of pictures for the Spanish market is becoming an increasingly important feature of Hollywood activities. Hollywood-Spanish Pictures, Inc., headed by Rudolfo Montes, is the latest independent company to enter this

specialized field, while all of the established companies are likewise turning their serious attention to it. Paramount-Lasky are now at work on a Spanish version of *The Benson Murder Case* under the technical direction of A. W. Pezet and with a cast including Maria Alba, Andreas de Segurola, Barry Norton, and other native Spaniards and South Americans.

To prove that he is not merely talking when he declares that he will never abandon silent films, Charlie Chaplin is preparing to form a ten-million-dollar company to be devoted exclusively to this now pre-historic form of cinema art. Lon Chaney, the screen's outstanding impersonator of human monstrosities, who has been Chaplin's lone fellow-champion of old-style movies has now deserted the flat-footed comedian and become a zealous convert to the new order. Striking while the iron was hot, M-G-M secured his signature to a five-year contract for talking pictures. As evidence of his complete and enthusiastic conversion, he is devoting himself to a mastery of French, German and Spanish, in order that he may appear in person in the foreign-tongued versions of his phonofilms.

* * *

Preparatory to introducing *Grandeur* film in all of the larger cities throughout the country, the Fox studio recently completed a census of American cinemas. According to the figures obtained, there are 22,624 theatres in the United States devoted to the showing of motion pictures. This represents approximately one cinema to every fifty-five hundred of the population, including infants. The Fox Company estimate that out of this number, and including about a thousand

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sound-equipped cinemas abroad, there are some five thousand that will want to instal Grandeur equipment as quickly as machines and film can be supplied. At present the only two cities in the world in which this 70 mm. talking film is being shown are New York and Los Angeles.

* * *

“ Fewer and better pictures ” is Hollywood’s new slogan. The talking picture is responsible for it. The old-type, so-called “ program picture ” is passing out—the hurriedly made movie designed for the smaller theatres, where it is shown but one, two or three days and then replaced by another for a like brief run. More and more these smaller cinemas are following the example of their big brothers, in running a picture for a week or more at a time. But patronage under this schedule can only be assured by the consistent showing of interesting and worthwhile films. So far the mere novelty of sound, wherever introduced, has sufficed to draw the crowds for a sustained run; but this cannot continue indefinitely, and the producers realize that if this newly established precedent of longer showings is to be maintained they must devote themselves to turning out intrinsically better pictures than those that have heretofore satisfied the smaller communities.

* * *

It is not beyond the possibilities that Hollywood, in its determination to maintain supremacy in the film world, may establish branch studios in various foreign countries as a means of more effectively reproducing its pictures in the respective languages of those countries. The present method

of importing actors from abroad, in addition to having its own players learn other languages besides English, is so far largely experimental. If in the end it should not prove wholly satisfactory, it is quite likely that the leading producers will follow the pioneer example of the Tiffany-Stahl Company, who are already arranging for re-making their pictures in France, Germany and Spain, in order to be assured of realistic atmosphere, as well as appropriate characterization and truly representative speech.

* * *

Animated cartoons are now to have colour as well as sound and voice. This latest development constitutes a unique feature of Universal's recently completed Paul Whiteman revue, *King of Jazz*. The picture opens with a talking cartoon sequence (*A Fable in Jazz*) done in complete Technicolor.

Incidentally, it may be remarked that the animated cartoon offers a field for genuine artistic development. The grotesqueries and infantile comedy at present associated with it have obscured its latent possibilities. Tony Sarg, a good many years ago, with his cinema marionettes offered a hint of the opportunity awaiting some alert genius to expand this medium of expression into something distinctively original and worthwhile.

C. H.

MOTHER IN LONDON.

Now that *Mother* has been shown publicly in West Ham without disturbance or even extravagant enthusiasm on the part of the audience, although the length of the queues and an hour-and-a-half's wait testified somewhat painfully to the interest which the exhibition of the picture aroused, it may be taken that the L.C.C. having been proved incontestably wrong will continue to make fools of themselves by maintaining their ban. It's so meaningless, and one wants to be sick.

West Ham is a poor district.

Mother is probably more likely to cause excitement than the other better known films of the Russian revolution.

And yet.

It should be added that all the scenes which are supposed to be too much for our Censors' stomachs were shown.

Let us hope that the West Ham Town Council and other local bodies will follow the precedent.

Mr. Joris Ivens has continued his lectures in Russia with much success. After speaking in Moscow and Leningrad he travelled south to Kiev, Baku and Tiflis. On the way he received an invitation to make a film of a giant building in course of construction, connected with the central Electric power station, but prior engagements in Holland prevented him from accepting the offer.

CLOSE UP

A copy of the London edition of *Kinema Key* has reached us. It contains a list of cinemas within a radius of twenty miles of Piccadilly together with the names of the films showing at each. It can be obtained from any newsagent, price one penny, weekly. The offices are at 166, Fleet Street, London. While it can hardly be compared with the French publications of the same nature, which are, of course, more expensive, there is no doubt that those in search of revivals of unusual films will find it extremely valuable, for an alphabetical list is given of the pictures showing between given dates in all parts of London.

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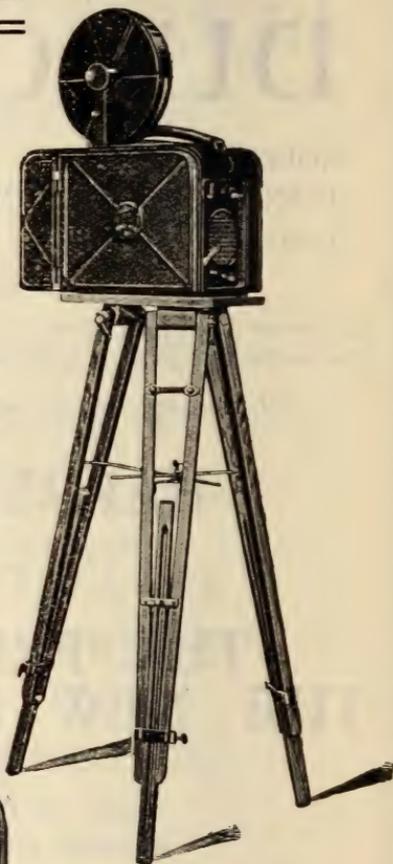
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AS IS

BY THE EDITOR.

Only the irresponsible really commit crime. The criminal of standing throughout all ages and in all lands, is inevitably a perfectly decent, conscientious scientist. In fact, it is the amateur of crime who has given crime its bad name; without him we would have had to find something more worthy of abhorrence. Crime, as you know, is nothing—doesn't exist. My crime is surely somebody else's virtue, and remember, it is only the criminals who are ultimately canonised. Saints and murderers have this in common—both merit death for their pains, so that it is as anti-social to be saved as lost, especially since the line between salvation and destruction is so fine that they are often not mistaken for but *are* one and the same thing.

With or without a little talk you can soon convert anything into crime. And look at what we have made into virtues! The very fact that peace conferences and disarmament conferences can go on—and on and on and on (to choose a vicious virtue or a virtuous vice, at random) without one

single resolution toward peace, and a good many toward war—proves the corruption of political bootleggerly that exists all over the world. And it's wonderful, really, how they have made a virtue out of their Judas kiss of scrapping obsolete warships, when for all purposes of the war they anticipate, warships of every kind will be obsolete. And they know it, and you take your choice as to whether they are humanitarian or thugs. I say bootleggerly, because war is not unlike prohibition—both are a pride in slavery; white, yellow, red and black—and black and blue—lauded by fools with hallelujahs and kept going to the “smashing home of big grosses” by all the bootleggers—careful, pedantic-minded men with supreme contempt for law and order.*

Almost any example of what is known as a public-spirited man will show you, under conditions favourable for examination, a mind bent on gaining the world and losing his soul. Is that criminal? It is clever. He contrives his scheme of replenishment and gluttony under the shielding cloak of LORE and ORDER (in Caps.)—his accessory before and after the facts, a copious covering that protects him and catches the unwary, innocent insects, to the irreparable wreckage of their harmless enough and not so very long lives.

Yes, clever. And you see, it *does* depend entirely on a point of view, this mystery of crime. You're wondering what it may have to do, all this, with Kino-art.

* * *

* I use law and order without Caps. to indicate abstract justice (also without Caps.)—some kind of decency and toleration found sometimes among the most high. Law and Order is another matter.

CLOSE UP

It has this to do with kino-art. By tracing another analogy, kino and crime have this in common: nobody knows what constitutes either. That is one reason why everybody is so certain about both. Most talking films are a crime, certainly,—yes, certainly, and their makers the kind of amateurs who give crime its bad name. Undoubtedly the process is analogous. More and more lucidly do they sing, talk and dance. More and more firmly is the world of men and women (*soi-disant*) becoming impressed by the fate that is being thrust upon it. These people have accepted talking films sunnyside-up and tail-over-tip—*accepted* them. Soon they will make a virtue of them. And any attempt to violate said virtue with vision will be a kind of criminal offence under the something or other act for the Protection of Hearth and Home and Love in the Cottage. Another chance is being lost. Indeed, the world is a kind of psalm of lost chances. People and things have each in their time their chance to be great, and sooner or later miss it. Not wholly, maybe, not permanently, perhaps, but is there anybody who can pretend that mediocrity is not the ideal of Man—his Golden (as he significantly qualifies it) Mean? There exists no man, so fine, so lofty and magnanimous but has not hidden up his sleeve some harmful, bigoted repudiation.

Machine Age would be more worthy of worship if machines brought strength to man rather than to his enterprises. The abstraction of machines is thrilling—where would the cinema fans be without them?—but their use is not very often thrilling or ennobling. Industrialization—that does not mean going from weakness to strength, alas, but

maintaining an organized weakness. Ideals alone will make machines beautiful.

The sheer technical achievement of light made into people that talk and move is a marvellous thing. Too marvellous to be lost and debased. Our weapons of war have been marvellous—those beautiful, obsolete ships, those sleek, long guns—like telescopes with wonderful promise of wider horizons—our airplanes with a kind of godhead. . . . Let us discover our enemies.

The talking film may transcend itself and one day match artistically its impeccable and classic achievement in sheer science, then no force will have greater power. But the bootlegger mind must go first. That is the enemy of the Machine Age man. That only.

KENNETH MACPHERSON.

STEREOPTIMISM

Continued.

Perhaps you have decided by now how you are going to categorise the stereoscopic spectacle—near image or near actuality. Myself I would call it at the best only an illusion, with all the limitations of illusion. At least, they are limitations from the stereoscopist's, the materialist's, point of view. To

CLOSE UP

me they are opportunities. They put stereoscopy not short of natural vision, but one better than natural vision — that is, nearer image. With reservations I would call it nearer image than the ordinary photograph is. Either way the lens acts as a sort of digestive tablet for the feeding mind.

Like ordinary photography, stereophotography may bring all objects within the field of vision to one focal plane. Likewise the angle of vision may be varied at will. You see already we are forsaking the realistic vision, and not with reluctance. There are other possibilities of departure from the norm of natural vision, and it was with the welfare of these in mind that I trespassed on technical fields. The division of stereoscopy into different principles, into classes of the true and the false, into variations of ways and means, suggests a corresponding division of effects. Even systems based on the same principle, resembling each other in the process, may have some difference in detail affecting the result.

Remembering the novelties in still-stereoscopy one anticipates the deliberate falsifying of results. Aptness and discrimination in the taking of a subject, it was proved, could alone bring about a superiority over the product taken by a man skilled enough in photography but ignorant of the stereoscopic resources. Further than that, effects can be added (in binocular systems) by a reactive illumination or colouring in one of the duplex pictures. Of course, in practice only a limited number of distinctions can be perceptible to the human eye, but there should be nuances among them that the artist could select expressively.

Next there is the extreme exaggeration or distortion of

effects. It is possible, for instance, to space the photographic eyes as far apart as we choose, increasing the impression of depth in the subject to an extraordinary degree and making roundness in distant objects that would in nature appear with only slight relief. Conversely the subject can be made to appear abnormally flat. There is the old trick of the pseudoscope also, reversing positions so that each eye sees from the other's point of view, producing an appearance of hollowness in what should be rotund, distance in what should be nearness, an effect that might be utilised for stressing weirdness in a spectacle. Not to be halfhearted about it, imagine the possibility of a binocular compass of vision up and down, accentuating the impression of vertical depth. The application of the Camera Angle in addition to all this promises more effects, although these will be distinctive effects, allowing us recourse when necessary to those angulations depending on a reduction to plane.

Now if there are all these possible gradations and phenomena of depth-impression, instead of one absolute standard to be called stereoscopy, the multiformity can be turned to advantage. To drama's advantage; although I dare say that every idea will have to serve its apprenticeship in comedy first. The distinctions, we are supposing, can come about first in the photography of pictures, next in the printing of pictures, then in the projection of pictures, and beyond that, possibly, in the mode of viewing the pictures. Also, many of the scenes can be composed accommodatingly to the stereoscopic design. But for convenience presume every phase of depth-relief as being virtually at the command of our camera's

CLOSE UP

eye, ready for even a visible alteration during the progress of a scene. You see we have the choice of worlds. Only by being critical shall we be able to make the most of them.

Begin simply with the purely scenic values. Does a semblance of solidity impair the expressiveness of pictorial composition? Do artists of the legitimate canvas prefer the so-called limitations of their present medium, or do they, as is commonly supposed, seek wistfully for a means of rendering the subject in solid-looking vision? Apart from the consideration of payment, I haven't the least idea myself whether an artist would prefer to paint his patron's portrait by the cubic inch instead of the square inch. If there are any authorities to quote, somebody else must quote them. For I am not a worshipper of Art, but a worshipper of all that is artless. What is more artless, what sounds more artless, than the truth?

In order to give the subject a greater box-office appeal, put it in this light. Would our pictures be less pretty if they viewed in actual form? Reflect what beautiful pictures are created on the stage when the scene is illuminated behind a curtain of gauze, dampening down the third dimension. Again, we often find ourselves admiring in a photograph a pretty view that is, as we learn on referring to the name, simply a view of a local street or park we had hitherto thought commonplace. The perspective-plane reproduction has made order out of the muddle of mixed objects. Hold back your head and squint your eyes until the landscape or street in prospect remains distinct but not detailed. Solidity almost disappears, and the trees, fields and houses fall into an unexpected pictorial pattern. Then distance, as we all know, makes scenery more enchanting. The obscuring haze is not the only influence;

distance allows our eye to bring objects more in conformation with a single-plane concept, so that the relation of each other becomes orderly and distinguished. Incidentally these tests illustrate a useful distinction between perspective-impression and space-impression in a vision.

I hope I have made it clear that I am considering only those values peculiar to pictorial composition. Granted there can be "composition" with solid materials, as in, say, an actual room. Yet even this knowledge serves to warn us that many of our film scenes, such as exteriors, must include a certain amount of accidental material; and in such circumstances the effect of modification to plane, which I have indicated, does help to harmonise.

Naturally tastes will differ. Some people may prefer that "cardboard cut-out" appearance, as differing from spatial roundness in a stereoscopic picture (a tendency of the colour-analysed stereograph, I believe), although to many of us it seems ugly. The factor of physical strain may also enter. It is arguable that there may be a cause of eye-fatigue both in the three-dimensional form of spectacle and in the two-dimensional representation of spectacle; and between may lie a source of restfulness and harmony. Often I have amused myself by looking at the movies with one eye closed (instead of two!), and although the strict stereoscopist would snort at the results I should think well before sacrificing them in favour of the results of a full-blown binocular system.

Call them all, therefore, "styles." The designer will select according to the compositional requirements of the subject, and according to his own characteristic technique. He may

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choose to take one scene as flat as a Japanese print. Then have *basso-relievo*; let us have *mezzo-relievo*; let us have *alto-relievo*; let us have everything.

Localise the relief-effects, and we are well on the way to a new order of focus. Perhaps a distinction of depth to make a fancy border round a picture. Or a detail might be marked through a particularisation in its flatness or solidness. (Here there should be more chance of representing a natural focus on detail than in those fuzzy effects of concentrative focusing we resort to at present.) And doubtless the director who introduces a *flat out* instead of a fade out will be appointed a genius forthwith. Certain effects of camera locomotion, too, should gain by a stereoscopic survey.

The tendency of substantial form to expose a pretence of size—a fault, this, for many cinematic purposes—can be turned to good account when we wish to stress a design of size-inferred-by-scale, a motif now difficult to induce.*

Apart from pictorial appositeness, the circumstance of the incident or the sensibility of the narrator may influence the condition of depth. Sensational spectacles may rightly be physical, hence substantial in appearance. Solidity could

* Only literary critics take the size of a screen scene literally. To normal persons a large scene, such as a close-up, is merely an adjustment in the field of consciousness. One is surprised at times, while watching a photoplay, to observe how the heads of incoming patrons near the foot of the screen contrast ludicrously in size with the figures on the screen. Not until then are the film characters exposed as gigantic impostors; indeed for a moment even then it is the intruding, real-life figures who seem in the mind to be false, because of their apparent littleness.

come forward for the physical experiences, to retire sympathetically when turns are taken by the mind's eye alone.†

From this the extension of a motif, the recurring inference of depth—it might be a flatness, it might be a massiveness—colouring the dramatic interpretation.

Now recall to mind the restfulness of relief we have just supposed as lying between the two extremes of flatness and bodiliness. Such modulations, controlled throughout a sequence, by mounting or by perceptible readjustment, could help towards making a spatial harmony in the ensemble. The design could be dramatic, or purely aesthetic. A new order of motion; a gamut in the third dimension.

Finally, admitting the depth-degree of a scene as a value or capacity in the technique, the whole photoplay scheme is

† Returning to box-office problems, how should the stars be represented? Wouldn't Diana Lentino be even more alluring if stereoscopically seen? I'll say she would! It just shows you how sensual a woman's beauty is. Didn't I admit (see above) that "*solidity could come forward for the physical experiences . . .*"? But, please, I'm not taking any Puritan or Freudian stand. I say simply that human beauty is a substantial, physical thing, however chastely enjoyed. The moral of it doesn't matter a hang to me. But I am going to allow for spiritual degrees: some stars may have an ethereal form of loveliness, and the visionary appearance should not be seen in three dimensions. So I foresee special studio departments in Hollywood solemnly trying to determine the *stereoscopic content*, in other words, the *IT capacity*, of each star before the film is taken.

Incidentally—as if the cameraman had not enough idiosyncrasies of beauty to worry about—they may discover that there are stereoscopic devices for reducing the unfortunate bulkiness of an otherwise valuable star. This is progress.

Of course, there is no need to add that the frailest of heroines are subject to the moment of strong passion, and such a moment will be inferred by a sudden development in the third dimension.

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elaborated by yet another combination. Since all capacities of the screenplay—*colour, size, motion, duration*, and so on—should be wholly in sympathy with one another (accentuating, harmonising or contrasting), as well as singularly apt, the quality of depth in the subject could respond sympathetically to a design of colour in the subject, or *vice versa*; the design of motion could impose a limitation on the design of depth, or *vice versa*; and accordingly with all other capacities in the photoplay including sound, if you wish), to an extent far beyond the possibility of tabulation here.

ERIC ELLIOTT.

ALL-TALKING, ALL-SINGING, ALL-NOTHING

I suppose it would not be denied that one of the essential gifts of the daily paper film critic of popular standing is to be able to write voluminously about nothing. However asinine the subject-matter, there is always plenty to be said about it. And we know in any case that the best journalists are very often those who can give an air of importance to things which really do not matter at all. I have done it myself. I have interviewed film stars and "executive heads" (it might just as well be their feet) as if the whole world depended upon it.

Magnification, the virtue of the screen, is also its vice. It glorifies the trivial, trumpets the inane.

And therefore, after nearly two years of talkie experiment, in which astounding advances have been made in technique, we are confronted with an intellectual progress whose summit of achievement is the production of *The King of Jazz*, conducted by Paul Whiteman—something meaningless but verbally provocative. I have no doubt it will be entertaining. I have enjoyed many such films. I have read columns of learned discourse on the adroitness of directors in producing a sort of nourishing wine beneath the froth of movement to which they had committed themselves. Consider the dynamic rhythm of a hundred legs, the gathering-up of girls into significant form. It is stupendous! Never mind what the film is about. It is about a Yank who was always doing "small time," until he met his cutie, who knew that he was cut out for Broadway, and then he did Big Time. Over here he would have just done time, and that would have ended it.

In short, the all-talking, all-singing era, so far as the realm of ideas is concerned, has given us absolutely nothing. It is almost painful to see the good technique thrown away on stagey rubbish whose centre whirls round and round in spurious spirals until it becomes a circumference, an outline of nothing. When is the cinema of ideas going to penetrate this country? Every month one sees stills and articles in *Close Up* that hint of the profound intellectual disturbance that is agitating the Continent, the passionate desire to prove and establish the cinema as a cultural force. But over here can you point to one film, talking or silent, which really



Gustav Diessl in *Westfront 1918*, a Nero film directed by G. W. Pabst.



Two further photographs from *Westfront 1918*, recently shown to enthusiastic audiences in Berlin. This is a talkie and is reported to contain interesting experiments in the use of sound. When shall we see it in London?





From *Westfront 1918*. Those who remember how truthfully the post-war life of Vienna was shown in *Joyless Street*, will find promise in these photographs that this film will deal as unrelentingly with the war.





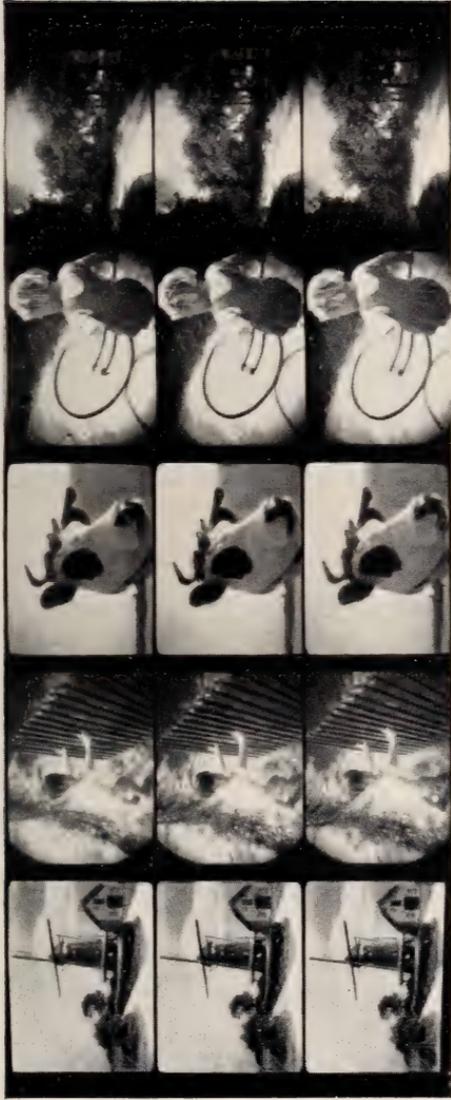
Westfront 1918.





From *Quand les épis se courbent*. See Article by Jean Dreville elsewhere in this issue.





Two more Studies from *Quand les épis se courbent*. The film was photographed in Holland.



Garbo's first entrance in *Anna Christie*.
(By courtesy of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer).



Garbo in O'Neill's *Anna Christie*, her first Talkie.
(By courtesy of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer).

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represents a point of view, an aim, an experience, genuinely reflecting the religion or paganism of the time?

It is impossible. *Blackmail* is a good story, but it tells us nothing, except that if pretty girls will get involved with artists in Chelsea they may get seduced. But this is exactly the type of film of which I complain. What was the great focal point of all the critics over this particular film? It was admiration and analysis of its technique. Good heavens, to think of the stuff I have written, or attempted to write, about Hitchcock's technique! I look at the stuff and I say: "This is awful! What on earth are you talking about? Where did you get hold of it all?" And at once I am reminded of the dreary university lectures I used to attend on the textual sublimities of Chaucer, the alliterative fancies of Piers Ploughman, and so on. But the vital spark of Chaucer and Langland I never got. And nobody reads either of them now except as an academic exercise. For the truth is, these studies were concerned with the *makings* of literature, not with the thing made, which you can hold up to the light and judge as a living texture. It is as if you bought a clock for the works instead of the time.

Now let us take *Journey's End*. To begin with we had to borrow it from the stage. It was not an original piece of work. It is not really a piece of film-craft at all, and everyone knows it. But it conveys an idea which occasionally touches sublimity, the quite simple idea, so hard to convey, that war is futile. And by implication it conveys the idea that those who served during the war lived a life that is richer, more wonderful, more terrible, and indeed, more real than it is now. During a war you notice the hollyhocks if you see them. They

have the scent of an experience. After the war you see them but don't notice them. You can see them all your life, so why bother?

Now I say that this particular idea, quite accidental to the main theme, is of tremendous significance to our age, whose ideas are chaotic, mean, spiritless and depressing. It embodies the thought expressed by Walter de la Mare in the line: "Look your last on all things lovely," a sense of the precious and the fugitive which can make a cup of tea a communion and a field of grass a philosophy. But if you look through the schedule of films for the year, silent or talking, you will be lucky to find one subject in a hundred which will waken you to a sense of what is going on in the world. The world is living and loving precisely as it did before the war, except that it wears less and drinks more and is more gorgeously arrayed in the stuffs of self-deceit than of olden time. A very pleasant world of types, of marionettes who sin punctually to time, who thieve, make good, hate each other, embrace each other, forgive and curse each other without one glance at the real springs of existence.

All this I despise and reject, and so does nearly every other critic in his spare time. And why? Not for the dubious pleasures of intolerance, but simply because, until we do, we shall never get a cinema which is a compelling force, which is a real influence upon the time, a consolation in the mad world in which we find ourselves. And many are looking for this.

I doubt whether one of the problems confronting the post-war generation have been seriously tackled by British film directors. The astonishing upheavals of sex which Mr. Miles

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Malleson had the courage to face in "The Fanatics," the passing of the balance of power in the family from the parents to the children, the profound dislocations caused by the surplus of women, the economic wounds of unemployment, the changed philosophy of the woman in business, all these have left the intelligence of Elstree and Shepherd's Bush blandly contemplating the merits of star value and sex appeal. It is a very different thing abroad. *Une Femme Qui Tombe*, Ozep's stimulating but not brilliant picture which I saw in Paris a little while ago, *Bed and Sofa*, the earlier films of Pabst (for I think *Pandora's Box* shows a decline) not to mention the tremendous themes of the Russians, definitely confront the social order (or disorder) and align it with current intellectual ideas. Or better still, they bring imagination to a plain statement of fact, and leave us to our thoughts.

This is the job of the cinéastes as it is for the workers in other art forms. Have we not all talked, sung, and danced enough? Is it not the most glaring of facts that our technique is far ahead of our ideas and only waiting to be charged with thought to re-emerge a hundred-fold more powerfully? We have yet to find an Ibsen, a Brieux, even a Brighouse or a Somerset Maugham, of the screen. They are waiting for the screen to attain intellectual self-respect. The film world in which we live seethes with the brains of clever men and women who hover on the borders of the screen without ever casting their shadow upon it. Of course, they are too brisk, serious, cultivated. They desire speech. It would never do to open the door to them and risk a positive renaissance of film drama. And so that is where we are—stranded in endless spools of third-rate, spineless, uninspired, rootless, brainless

celluloid which can only "get over" by intensive boosting and a violent stressing of the wrong valves. We have been at it for over thirty years—a mere moment in the life of an art form, but not so trifling in one which moves fifty times as fast as any other. And I suppose the real fact of the matter is that nobody cares about anything enough to introduce it into the cinema as a sort of mission, as something desperately important which must be prosecuted and advanced and proclaimed with eloquence. It is this frightful, sagging habit of indifference, of death at the centre of things, of utter sophistication and pose. It is the disintegrating softness and niceness of the Englishman that D. H. Lawrence has written about. We are prouder of the cinema for what it can do than for what it does, because we don't particularly want it to do anything. And that, in my belief, is the fatal error. All talking, all singing, all dancing. Yes. *Et praeterea nihil*. Let films describe a devitalised existence in terms sufficiently *avant garde* and we are satisfied. Well, that is the death of the cinema, when all it can indulge in is a criticism of itself rather than its subject. It has been talking incessantly all this time, but who will give it speech? And with speech the passion of conviction? It is this we are waiting for and must have, and until we get it we shall be endlessly discussing a technique which means nothing, lacking the living substance within, a mass of terms to describe a corpse. Criticism at present is compelled to write as if every film were made in the British Museum.

ERNEST BETTS.

LONDON LOOKE BACKE

“ To looke backe at Ills, begets a Thankfulnesse, to have escaped them. . . . To Looke Backe, at our sinnes, begets a Repentance. . . . So that if wee looke not Backe, ther's no going forward in that journey to Jerusalem.” And whether that city is only a place of mike and money or really the promised land of cinema fulfilment, well, whose fault is it, ours or the cinema's?

Here they are, all the time looking forward, looking back only to justify their ill-advised excursions into the future. Producers. “ In the old days, when the cinema was looked down on . . . ” they say, and instance the greater appeal, the many millions whom one opus reaches, the thick and padded seats that are yours for two hours and three and six, the washed air, the heated air, the cooled air. The hot air that they talk! What has it to do with cinema, what has the cinema done to justify, not itself, but us? It justifies itself all right, because it began with nickleodeons and has progressed to gilded Capitols; it began as Hagar and is hailed as Helen. But where are we, where do we stand, how much that we see in cinema is still the other side of cinema; how much are we honestly given, directly and not by suggestion; how inside are we, and how outside? It was John that cried in

the wilderness. It was Christ that went to confute the doctors and elders at their own game. Quote Dekker again, writing in 1630, and say instead of "feaver," films :

Our Doctors gave that young Sicknesse then (as they doe this, now Reigning) a fine gentleman like name, the spotted feaver, as if it had beene Ermynd, the spotted fever, as if it had beene a Beautifull faire skind Sicknesse, and those Spotes, the freckels in the face of it. But how many did this spotted Leopard set upon and teare in pieces.

Don't our doctors now so kindly call the silent film, spotted with dialogue the "new entertainment," as if it were Ermynd, and the spots, the many many many spots of foolishness which mark the whole use of it, as if they were only a few freckels on its really pure visage? We can't see the face of cinema any more, not because the silent film is "dead," but because the talking one has refused to learn to live. I really do think a year and a half is time enough for almost anything to happen, even for people to learn their job, and we have had talkies that time, in England alone. And I like talkies. I want them to be something. To arrive at something. God knows where they are arriving now, just going on being a mixture of stage and film. Talkies can't be film as we used to know it. They have got to be something in which what happened to action, in the matter of timing and choosing and heightening—formalizing, if you like—is done with the dialogue; after which it must be realised that talkies are both dialogue and action. So formalized action and stylized dialogue must be shifted up, combined, and formalized anew. And it doesn't happen. It doesn't happen. No one does anything about it. It was pleasant at first when the real screen

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stars who spoke, talked really casually, naturally. It was a relief from stage stuff. But when it came to a movie like *Halfway to Heaven*, you found that the dialogue and the speaking was so casual that it might have been something else just as well; other words, other lines, could equally well have been spoken; the ones we heard were "not inevitable." And there was the strange thing of the images being heightened and vital, and the noises made by those images being just everyday. So look back, London, and see just what has been worth having in the last month or two. *Turksib*. Yes, and *The General Line*. Both already known and analysed. Eisenstein's film was shown at the Film Society, after having been privately shown at the Soviet Embassy. These private shows of Russian films in Grosvenor Square are interesting; it is a good use of extra-territorial rights, it is a good thing to find an embassy doing. The London Workers' Film Society have an enormous success with their Russian films. This new society, with cheap fees, has done more than any other body or person to let good stuff be shown in London. They put on *Turksib* with Laurel and Hardy, they run their own news gazette. They get the Russian pictures we have in vain expected the Film Society to get. True, the Film Society have done better by us this last season, but we have *Potemkin* in 1929, when the Workers' give us *Turksib* itself a few months later. No one can afford to neglect this new body, and no one, fortunately, need say they cannot afford it. Then, in a lull, we have two German films, *Land Ohne Frauen*, and *Pandora's Box*; the latter ruinously cut, the former ridiculous, I feel, whether cut or not. Four hundred and thirteen women

shipped to Australia as wives . . . and Veidt being unlucky . . . and the wives crooning on the studio-ship which rolled perilously without upsetting their balance . . . and Veidt going mad through lack of a wife. Really, really! Let's be our age. Then a film called *The Battle of Paris* directed by Robert Florey. Look backe, London, and remember that Florey was once an advanced director. This is his film. A street singer picked up by an artist who forgets her during the war till she appears in a tiara at a café and sings *Tipperary*, and gets seized by apaches, from whom she is rescued by the artist as the armistice is signed. Don't say I didn't warn you. This is Mr. Florey. The point about looking back is that it helps to show which is NOT the path to Jerusalem, but if we once looked, in any position whatever, at M. Florey, who can guarantee us against future slips? Nevertheless, there was one interesting point in *The Battle of Paris*, put in for comic relief, but actually deadly serious. A negro soldier in a café in Paris, sees some other negroes. Goes up to them. Hullo, brother. They answer in French. The American negro shrugs his shoulders and goes off. No nearer anything, why do they talk a different language when they are black. Isn't it enough to be black without finding some of you putting up other barriers. . . So funny, finding this in such tripe.

Then a French talkie, *The Queen's Necklace*, in French with explanations. Douglas Fairbanks suggests a libretto, as in operas; this has not occurred to anybody. There is then an actress with possibility in Monay Goya, who was in *The Flame of Love*. No good when she speaks or "acts," but marvellous moving, and that could be made her acting.

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Then, the big screen. At the Regal, at the Alhambra, at the Stoll, where it expands and is altogether more satisfactory. Though I was severely shaken by Mr. Elliot's article, I stand for the big screen. It is only another way of bringing you into the picture, as the Russians do from behind the screen by their cutting. Eisenstein advanced as a reason why the front rows get so excited at movies the fact that the screen fills all their vision.

The big screen at Stoll's I saw used on *Dangerous Curves*. I went to this because I had a theory, watching *Halfway to Heaven* at the Plaza, that the trapeze shots would be much more effective done on (not a big but) an expanding screen. This they use at the Stoll. I found also that *Dangerous Curves* is such a good picture. Circus-muck again, but treated in the take-it-or-leave-it manner. What you took was unusually subtle psychology; what you had if you left that, was, the circus bunk beautifully photographed, Paramount lighting, marvellous sound recording, Richard Arlen and Clara Bow and the charm of the American language. I went on to *Dark Red Roses* after this, to see Lopokova dance, and I found I was listening to a foreign language. Fresh from "bums" and "guys" and "that's O.K. with me" and "it suits me," I found all this stage English very unusual. They called each other "chaps" and said "it isn't done" and they said "Splendid" and "Goo' naight," and each time you had to sit up, catch the word, translate it and say to yourself, "oh, yes, that means so and so, and should be said like this." Lopokova danced. The camera took it. I can't think why a dance wasn't made out of it. Panning in order to

follow isn't putting dance on the screen. How many times must I say you have to dissect everything before you can build it up? Camera should get a foot, an arm, head, the neck from the back, two feet, twirl of the body, leg, arm . . . you know, it should build up. Look at the book *Film Photos Wie Noch Nie*, page 133. There, in that arrangement of stills, is something much nearer dance than any film. I can't understand why Lopokova didn't insist on something being done to ensure her dance being given a screen equivalent, instead of a photographic reproduction. She is surely big enough. It needs an entirely new kind of choreography. Why didn't she seize the chance?

Many stars make their first talkies. Gish, Keaton; a sad, sad affair *Free and Easy*. It began so delightfully, and became so dreadful. Why must Keaton be made to show he can do what everyone else does, when he can really do what none of them can ever hope to? Perhaps, having proved he can sing and dance and weep like everyone, they will let him do a Keaton talkie in his next talkie. Then we shall see something. One night I went down the Thames on a police boat on which the B.B.C. were rehearsing a broadcast of *The Pool of London by Night*. I sat on the roof of the cabin in which were engineers and a bullion of wireless apparatus, while, in the bows, J. C. Squire and a sergeant of the river police confided to the microphone what was passing. A police patrol went with us, occasionally hailing ships. It was extremely Keaton. I saw Buster ringing eight bells on the roof of the cabin, and forgetting to count one, and counting the seventh twice over. I saw him

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blowing his nose on a blue-peter, and occasionally blowing a siren to persuade himself he was not alone on the river, answering it again with an " Ahoy " or " Ahem " . . . why does no one film the Thames from Tower Bridge to Limehouse? The sound part of the trip was very interesting. I listened in the next night. Sound cannot help but be interesting. Buy the Columbia album of stage effects, price two pounds ten. It has all kinds of noises for projection; an orchestra striking up, followed by applause; crowds in all kinds of tempers, bells, sirens and tug-noises. A disc of a fair-ground is not good; far better effect is got by playing a Zonophone barrel-organ record on one machine with an Odéon of the Fratellini clowns on the other. And " clashing swords, with crowd murmurs " is not so good; it is rather like the bar noises in *Anna Christie*. The others are excellent and worth study. So is the opening sequence of *Dangerous Curves* and a lot of *Anna Christie*. The sound in slow motion of a polar bear roaring in *Bathtime at the Zoo* had points. This is one of *The Secrets of Nature* which are at last recognised now they have sound.

Garbo herself in *Anna Christie* shows what sound means when a woman knows what talking means. I have never heard anyone come into a film and just let her voice go on as Garbo does, letting it take inflection from her mind, letting it light her face, letting it all mean something. She has a fine, husky, unforced, vibrant voice. But even that is not so exciting as the fact that talking makes her face more expressive than before. And you know that that is what we usually lose; they talk, and their faces are masks. Garbo's eyes in her first

scene in *Anna Christie* are extraordinary. One can't say anything about them; they are quite beyond *me*. One can only say "Garbo's eyes" and hope that that crypticness will send people to see them. Are they looking right through, are they determined not to look at anything? Are they weighing things up, are they through with weighing things up. Go and see Garbo's eyes in her first talkie. *Anna Christie* of course is boring. It is major minor-drama. It is dated and doesn't get right down to it, and we have seen it all before and we want something new. And then Garbo walks on and gives it to us. She walks on in the part of *Anna Christie*, who is dull and old, and gives us something new. Claustrophobia. Refusal to be bound down. Something Cerebral and fine, which there is no need to talk about; one just goes to see it, slinks in and keeps it to one's self. But I will say that to me this talking Garbo wipes out all that wardrobe-mistresses romp with lace and orchids of the Gilbert films in one bored flick of a wrist. It develops right back from *Joyless Street*. A plain intent, burning Garbo. A creative force, not a personality. It looks back, in order to go forward to Jerusalem. When you see this, such a vibrant voice-form of thought, you think what is waiting for anyone who can use sound in a new, real way. You think, here is something to go on with, and then, looking back, you wonder if anyone will. Eisenstein is going to Hollywood. Douglas Fairbanks comes to London. I find him thinking sound over and refusing to do another film until he thinks he knows enough to make a film that is a new kind of film, a talking film. I find Cochran burlesquing talkies as only it occurs to Cochran to do, but it is such a shoddy, poor revue, why bring that up? I don't know what

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else I find, looking back. Maybe *The King of Jazz* will show me! Colour, wide-screen, stereoscopy, television . . . they are all there in the future. We ought to be looking at them. Radio, drama and painting all hanging up like vultures above us. They'll all come in. But into what? That depends so much on what we have right now, what we don't have, the new entertainment, the talkies no one knows how to make into a new entertainment, as the old people made the flickers into films. The use we make of colour, stereoscopy, television depends on the use we have made of talkies. Is that very dull and pompous? Dekker again. "Looke not through perspective-glasses, to make objects afarre off, appeare as if they were neere you, but looke with full eyes at those presentations which are directly now before you." And make something of them if you can. Dekker, 1630.

ROBERT HERRING, 1930.

PHASES OF CINEMA UNITY II

The entire matter of the Compound Cinema belongs to the concern of Cinema Unity. Unity differentiates between a hybrid and a compound. Chaplin, for instance, finds speech—and I add "all synchronized sound"—alien to his unity. His is the simple medium resisting compounding. In barest terminology, his medium is clowning, which refuses

speech. To join speech to his form would create a hybrid. But Carl Dreyer sees speech as essential to his method.* In short, it is not a matter of liking or disliking the talking film that will determine its survival. It is a matter of finding artists who will achieve their full expression through it. What is inevitable is—intrinsically and ultimately—good. What is the intrinsic talkie? By utilising it we will attain to the ultimate talkie. The aesthetic jargon of the last ten years of cinema limits nothing but itself. Mr. Betts calls the talkie not a film, but a “speech plus film.” All right, it is a speech plus film. That is nothing more than saying the silent film is one kind of cinema (let us call it “film”) and the talking film another kind (call it, if you will, “speech plus film.”) If Mr. Betts intends to imply by that that speech is supplementary, I can only say he is thinking of the ideal silent film troubled by an intrusion. He cannot vision a compound unit of visual and spoken utterance.

For the entire key is “utterance.” I am extending my heresy and at the same time contradicting Mr. Kiesler who

* Leon Poirier has called, in *Photo-Ciné*, the sonorous film a bluff. He finds sound sufficing for the informative documents, for “a spectacle not meant to move” the audience. He finds it, however, practically impossible for the expression of “the multiple and delicate nuances of the sentiments, the emotions, the impressions The amelioration of the quality of sound will not change the situation. It is the conception itself of the sonorous films that must be modified.” As to the talking film, well, has the colored photo dethroned painting? Movement is the principal essential of the cinema. The sonorous film will enrich the music, its veritable progress will be the improvement of the film’s musical atmosphere. Poirier is talking here only of the simple film, “the film’s musical atmosphere” indicates his attitude there is certainly a more serious error in this conception than in the sonorous film conceived as a unit. That is the sole justifiable con-

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said that speech cannot be stylized. I oppose also the Russian directors who accept the sonorous film but not the film of speech. Speech can be stylized, harmonized and unified into an entity with the visual image—and if it can, that settles the question. Personal preference is only personal preference, and to speak like a Frenchman that the cinema's aim is to "reveal the world of things" or that "the film is the art of the dream" is to speak only of the film that reveals the world of things or the film whose art is the dream. Everything in life belongs to the cinema, if the cinema can convert it into a functioning unity. To think otherwise is to restrict the cinema to a few simple forms and to confine it against its will. But the will of the cinema is stronger than the will of the opponents to the compound forms, as it is stronger than the will of the commercialists who would for ever banish the simple forms.

Utterance. Stylization. Speech in the cinema differs from speech in the theatre. The initial fact that we are dealing with indirect presentation rather than direct determines

ception of the sonorous film. I can but say to Poirier that if to him the sound-film is "a bluff," it means simply that he has not the mind for it, and let him staunchly stand by the silent film. That poor neglected will need its friends, and I am one of them and shall salute any director courageous enough not to be lured or browbeaten away from it. There are altogether too many directors tampering with sound who have no sense of it. But there are as many tampering with sight who have no sense of it. Yes, movement is the prime essential of the cinema, but it is not all of it. And, moreover, just what is movement? What will M. Poirier say to the thought expressed in a letter to me by Francis Bruguiere of a form of visual-oral cinema where the visual images *accompany the sound*? The music editor of the *London Times* has expressed a similar thought, although he has naively compared this accompaniment to the printed program notes.

the difference. The film is a medium of projected images. It remains that even in the talking picture. We meet the image in closer intimacy than we do the image on the stage. It is, moreover, more concentrated, more condensed, always starker—if its nature is respected. The speaking film enhances this condensation and this intimacy. For the bolder, the more concentrated the image, the more exact is the synchronisation. That is one reason why Dreyer's method is ideal for the talking film.

If one has closely watched the lip-movements in *Jeanne d'Arc*, one will have observed that they are emphatic through concentration. It is not only a condensation of time—which is also one difference between theatre and cinema (yet not an absolute difference)—it is a concentration of movements. That is, the lips seem to hold an utterance longer than usual, because into that utterance is concentrated more than the word seemingly uttered. This concentration coincides with the total visual intensity, and relates to the time-intervals between the images and the duration of each image. It is a part of the rhythmic-unit and the time-unit. The captions in *Joan* (I speak now of the integral version originally Dreyer's) are never longer than the duration of an image. Timed to the total time-unit and intervalled to accord with the rhythmic-unit, they are justified. Here is another clue to the speaking film. I have spoken previously of the time-interval which affords counterpoint. The time-interval affords also harmony in that it permits of repetition of visual image timed to verbal image (speech or caption) and verbal image timed to visual image. Dreyer does this. He gives the visual image, succeeded by a caption carrying only a

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part of the words spoken, followed by a visual image, succeeded by the remainder of the words spoken. This very simple device contains everything the cinema pretends to offer, drama, suspense, visual emphasis, rhythm.

I have spoken in the previous paragraph only of the words not uttered simultaneously with the visual projection. The talking film is also one of simultaneous speech-and-sight. In fact, it is chiefly that. Non-simultaneous compounding refers more to those instances where sound does not issue from the visual image upon the screen. For, it must be remembered, it is not only the utterance of the visual image that will enter into the compound, but the off-screen utterance too. These off-screen utterances will be parts of the subject-matter and hence parts of the structure. They must not be *effects*. Effects contradict unity. The expedient sonorous film and film of sound-accentuations are counter-unit conceptions. The same objection applies to them as to the uses of the "close-up." Compare here Dreyer's "gros plan" with the Griffith close-up in *One Mysterious Night* or in the Gance film, *The Wheel*. These are effect concentrations, whereas Dreyer thinks the entire film as a gros plan unit, and no gros plan is inserted for its own pictorial quality or dramatic effect. Dreyer has made a principle of the gros plan.

Speech as utterance is stylized speech. Its basis lies in a variety of sources: explosive speech, uniform pitch, monotone, etc. Radio and phonographic articulation offer instructive analogies. In the *Nouvelle Revue Francais* of March 28, Paul Deharme has outlined a "proposition for a radiophonic art," the study of which will prove valuable

to all practitioners of the speech-sound-sight film. Principles which can be utilized with profit in the cinema include : vocal masks (conventionalized voices); repetition of certain portions of phrases to reinforce the image and, I add, for rhythm; the noises of the action will not possess the character of reality; chronometry of the representation. . . . These will not apply to all kinds of the compound visual-oral film, for the character of Deharme's stipulations is dependent on the acceptance of the unreal as the intrinsic radio-form. But the conception of the conventionalized voice can afford, in its conversion into the integer of the particular film, the principle for a cinematic oration. The troughs and crests of an inflected phrase will be re-rendered by a mean concentrating the pitches to an *approximated* monotone, or reduction in the number of diverse tones.

Nothing is more important in the oral film than silence. The pause becomes valuable as accumulation of the oral image, as accentuation of the visual image. I dare to say that silence will find its completest power in the non-silent film. Again not the extraneous pause but the pause in the total pattern is the determinant of the uses of silence in the non-silent film. I have anticipated this declaration in an article written at the time of the latest advent of the sonorous film, but only just published in *The Musical Quarterly* for April, wherein I treat of the phenomenon of silence in the musical accompaniment. In the few instances where the pause has been allowed in the musical accompaniment, it has been for the purpose, not of a rhythmic construction, but of a momentary dramatic effect. Here in the non-unified accompaniment the effect is permissible to allow the visual

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image fullest physical transmission. But in the integrated compound-film, the moment counts only as the portion of an inclusive entity.

I must insert one exception here, and that is the film of broad comedy. The effect becomes rhetoric in a comic film, and rhetoric is the very nature of cinema comedy. The devices or effects in Clair's *Two Timid Souls* are justified by the nature of the film, and therefore satisfy its unity. That is why I prefer that film to *The Italian Straw Hat* in which effects or rhetoric is not employed. Facile fluidity is not a virtue in a farce-comedy, however virtuous it is in a film like *Vanina*.

Hardly had I suggested the possibility of Shakespeare in the compound cinema, when announcement was made of the Fairbanks-Pickford plan to film *The Taming of the Shrew*. Within the same period Glassgold quoted Griffith on the dialogue as hope of the movie. Euripides in the talkie, said Griffith, enthralled. And Glassgold scoffed. Dialogue indeed! His words of sarcasm are summed up in these words I quote from an article of mine: "Attach a phonograph to Mona Lisa?" I, however, was referring to the cinema's first form of non-oral images. The compound cinema is not phonograph to a flat film, it is a unity of independent structure. I do not know the nature of the Fairbanks-Pickford tentative, nor Griffith's conception. I suspect an error in the latter because of the use of the word "dialogue." Not a dialogue-film but a blank verse, recitative film, in which the verbal essence is extracted and refined to meet with the image projected. Only a great poet can re-render in the cinema the great poets of the drama. But may we not hope?

Blank verse evolved a Shakespeare although it was born with a *Gorboduc*. Did Petrarch create the sonnet or did the sonnet create Petrarch? Later I hope to indicate (perhaps feebly) how a great poet may re-render a great poetic drama—or at least indicate a method. Again, it is a matter of the conversion of distinct, but related, unities. Yes, related, for the cinema is not so remote from the theatre as dogmatists insist. The cinema has a source in the theatre, the theatre has a source in the cinema. No category is isolated.

Where does compounding cease? Where a unity is not creatable of the diversities. The "smellie," for instance. I have only frivolously referred to it before. Shortly after my reference to it, a writer in a French journal treated "the olfactory cinema" facetiously. But be assured, it will not end with offhand references. The "olfactory theatre" has at least once been attempted. In the Theatre d'Art in the Rimbaud-Mallarmé epoch, a production was mounted of J. Napoleon Roinard's "The Song of Songs" with an accompaniment of music and perfumes. This was the outgrowth of Rimbaud's sonnet of the vowels, of René Ghil's theory of instrumentation and of Chardin Hardancourt's "Book of the Orchestration of Perfumes." It was an attempt to establish "a concordance between the tone of the music, the poem, and the decor, and the quality of the perfumes."† I shall here but touch upon the physical difficulty in controlling the volume and diffusion and duration of the odors, and just hint at the physical discomfort of the audience, enveloped in fragrance. I accept the opportunity of commenting

† Leon Moussinac: "La Décoration Théâtrale."

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upon the question "where does compounding cease?" and its answer, "where unity is not creatable of the diversities." Stylization is possible only with defined and circumscribed forms. What cannot be stylized has no form. Odors are diffusive, not contained within limited areas. They cannot be set in counterpoint to the experiences of the sense of sight, as can be the experiences of the sense of sound. From past experience we are assured that odors will be seized upon to intensify visual sensations in the cinema, but this is again an enterprise of extraneous effects. The problem is: can odors enter the structural unit of the film? They cannot. Sounds can. In the terms of the task, it is the problem of "montage," as expressed by the Russian directors. Odors cannot be mounted because they cannot be kept within an area coinciding with the image upon the screen.

I leap at once to a phase of cinema unity which determines the entire philosophic nature of art as experience. I have stressed it in the *May Close Up*, 1929, in my words upon *The Crowd*. It is the matter of the theme, the subject-theme, in its relation to the treatment. The full theme may be expressed in various ways. It may be borne by the verbal legends, the sub-titles. There is the instance of Martin Berger's film, *Rasputin*. It is a grand, strong, voluptuous work. But its entity is disturbed by one thing. The visual film stresses the sensual conduct, the love-life of Rasputin. The verbal legends refer constantly to the spiritual debauchery of Russia by Rasputin. The level of the theme borne by these legends is other than the level of the experience

borne by the visual progression. There is a space between these two that is not bridged, and one is disappointed by a film that would otherwise be, in its own category and on its own level, a masterpiece. The theme may be borne by the nature of the personal relationships. There is the instance of Pudovkin's *Storm over Asia*. The personal relationships are indicative of a larger social relationship. The construction of the film, masterful as it is, is upon a level lower than the level of the experience which this social relationship, the ultimate theme, demands. Therefore the masterful construction, the construction in reality of the American physical film, does not satisfy the unity of the film, viewed from the principle vantage-point of theme, and the critical participating spectator feels himself cheated. I shall not here dwell upon the extremely low levels of social irony to which this same film often falls, although this indicates the same disregard for the theme as does the construction. We may contrast to this film Eisenstein's *Potemkin*. It is true that Eisenstein made no attempt to relate this episode to the entire revolutionary period of 1905. But that was his right, even though it probably kept his film from being more than a powerful film of surface-masses.‡ The film stays within the boundaries of the theme, and for once one experiences the pleasure of a decisive unity. Upon a higher level of experience (because of the wider refer-

‡ If I may seem presumptuous in my allowing *Potemkin* only the quality of surface masses, I may say that I expressed the same judgment in 1927 in the National Board of Review Magazine. Shortly after, Eisenstein said in *The Nation* (New York) that his film was a poster-film. This is exactly a synonym for my phrase, a synonym even less descriptive.

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ence of the theme), Dreyer achieved such a decisive unity in *Joan*.§

The consideration of unity necessitates at least a glance at the phenomenon of dissociation. Dissociation, as evinced today, received its first statement of creed with Remy de Gourmont. He was the prophet of dissociation. Its contemporary expression is mostly French in inspiration: dadaism and surrealism. I say this even though the propagandist of dadaism was not a Frenchman, Tristan Tzara. The cinema experienced the first deliberately dissociative film in Clair's *Entr'acte*, whose scenario was the work of Picabia, a dadaist. There have been many dissociative films since, mostly French and mostly the work of young men who have not taken the time to think through their intentions. For even a dissociative film must have an intention, if it is only to convey automatic ideas. *Entr'acte* has been called satire; that was its intention. But the nature of satire is entirely that of precise reference. And if anything demands a unit-direction it is satire. Dissociated images do not converge towards one reference. The implication in the characterization of *Entr'acte* as satire is: images are in themselves satirical. This is questionable. Precise reference implies a relationship which at once declares

§ The documentary film—*The Black Journey, The Trail of '98*—offers a brief opportunity to say something about levels of experience. It will be seen that that documentary most often succeeds where no narrative is attempted, for the narrative generally falls below the level of the experience of the document. Therefore, Poirier's *Black Journey* is a film of integrity, as is also the second part of his *Exotic Loves*; the first part of the latter fails in integrity because its narrative is of the level of simplism rather than simplicity. *The Trail of '98* is a very bad film entirely because of the intrusion of the narrative, which is of the level of the worst melodrama, whereas the document itself is man.

no image absolute and hence not in itself satirical. It is the reference that creates finally the satire.

But I oppose the entire principle of dissociation. One may even accept the theory of a multiverse, a cosmic pluralism, and oppose aesthetic dissociation. Remy de Gourmont scorned the endeavours of men to relate the separate categories, as he saw them, but each of his essays was a unity. The task of the artist is to establish, or attempt to establish, the relationship between the dissociations. Baudelaire constantly transferred the categories and achieved a synthesis. He re-associated the dissociations.

One may forgive dissociation in the elder arts. Time may itself produce reduction, which is mistaken for purity, and disintegration. But if the dissociationists are faithful to their creed, they will admit that the cinema has its own character and upon it should not be imposed *all* the experience of aged arts. Isolations that do not re-establish their relationships thwart the cinema, which has been hindered entirely too long by accidents and non-accords. The cinema must go through a long experience of unity.

H. A. POTAMKIN.

HOW I TURNED *QUAND LES EPIS SE COURBENT*

Monsieur Jean Dreuille has made *Autour de L'Argent*, a documentary film some of our readers may have seen, and has just finished *Quand les Epis se Courbent* (When the ears of corn bend over) which will shortly be presented in Paris.

Among the numerous difficulties to beset a film director with each of his new films, must be placed the request of a fellow worker who asks you for a few lines to explain how and why you made your work. I suppose readers far prefer to know by what magic Joan Crawford achieved her seductive smile or what is the mineral water that Anita Page prefers. And so one pulls one's self together, appears delighted, thanks the editor effusively and takes a sheet of blank paper in one hand, an elegant style in the other and courage with both. The usual way to begin is with some banal cinematographic remarks in which one tries to prove that the costume film is dead, that the star counts for nothing in the success of a film whereas the director is everything, until the snobs shall have decided to the contrary. Therefore it has been decreed that the invented documentaire is the order of the day.

So having warned the reader that there will be no question of Anita or of Joan, I will approach my subject.

A Dutchman in Paris, M. Van Canstein, who had already ordered several French films, resolved to make a very simple scenario of a kind little exploited to date, if possible idyllic, and began a film "in praise of the country."

For the photography he decided, and you will know soon whether he was right or wrong, to ask my help. Alas, we had hardly begun when the film nearly got no further, for the car in which we were seated maliciously upset itself at the Dutch frontier, and we were thus deprived of our chief tool for the work. In spite of this adventure, the camera which had been rescued unhurt, leaving us the bruises, soon got to work on the Dutch countryside. As for the peasants, whose principal quality was to ignore completely all movies, they were charming, obliging, and gave us admirable interpreters for the picture.

Quand les Epis se Courbent was turned in Holland but it might have been made equally well in England, in Normandy or in La Beauce. It was not our plan to illustrate a legendary country and few windmills, *coiffes* or *sabots* will be found in the pictures. How it will disappoint lovers of the obviously picturesque!

But particularly there is no cosmopolitan star engaged with a flourish of trumpets: only a farmer, a farmer's wife, children that play, hay that is cut, hens that peck and the bells that ring the angelus over infinite vast plains.

We may add too, that in order to film the cutting of the hay for example, on the banks of the Zuyder Zee, we had to travel in a jolting cart for six long hours, to get to the scene

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of operations, and it took as long to return, all in order to turn a few metres of film. And there was the memorable morning, when I had to lie flat on the ground from dawn till dusk, with my hand at the camera and my eye at the viewfinder to follow untiringly the fantastic evolutions of a farmyard cock, that after all I spoiled.

And by way of epilogue, there is the tale of how the blades of bending grain should have "spoken" as well, but the stirring of the dawn and the murmuring of the evening about to die, awoke no enthusiasm in the masters of the talking film who asked, yes, asked Van Canstein and myself if, in the middle of all this beauty, it would not be possible to interpolate a theme song!

Before such comprehension of the new method of expression, we were silent, we shut ourselves in, and because it is "so American" we wrote in English the words, *The End*.

JEAN DREVILLE.

(A series of postcards made from the above film may be obtained on application to the London Office of *Close Up* at a price of seven and sixpence for the packet of fifteen. As regards the numerous applications for photographs which we receive from our readers, we are at present conducting an investigation into the matter of the possible sale of photographs to cinematographers and can make no definite statement of our policy in this matter until the investigation is concluded.)

FILM CRITICISM

Alexandre Arnoux once wrote in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* à propos the Corinne Griffith film *Three Hours* : " Un Lupu Pick, un Murnau, un Feyder même, (celui de *Thérèse Raquin*) aurait poussé à fond l'horrible, le livide, le révoltant du sujet. . . L'Américain n'a pas osé aller jusqu'au bout." Aller au bout. Of how many films can it be truly said, as *Close Up* said of *Two Days*, that everything goes to its limit?

Indeed, how many will confess that to apply this dictum to a film is to render it the highest praise? We say sometimes that a film is stark or uncompromising, and then qualify it in the next sentence by adding that if certain matters were differently and better arranged, things would not be thus, which qualification is irrelevant to criticism of the film as such, and often appears to have been inserted rather for the purpose of covering our shame at having praised that which some mistaken scruple informs us should not have been praised, since it horrified us, terrified us, than from any confusion of thought.

Take the best film criticism in English. (There is not much of it.) There is a certain unanimity in the attitude with which the writers approach their main problems. Considerations roughly are: aesthetic merit, sincerity, psychological depth, freshness of thought, sociological value, including under the first head questions of composition,

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rhythm, light and shade, inter-relation of scenes and so on.

Then turn for a moment to French criticism, and breathe deeply. Is it a difference in mentality or merely in language, or are these inextricably intertwined? Take, for example, the review *Du Cinéma*, which contains, I suppose, the best French film criticism. (The November 1929 number, by the way, had the scenario of *Chien Andalou*, which, it is safe to prophesy, never, never will be seen in England, while *Britannia Rules The Waves*, that is, though it is to many the outstanding film of this, and, for that matter, all previous years). To dub a film "sauvage," "âpre," "féroce," is to approve; to discover in it "la folie," "le cruauté," "le désespoir," is to praise; and a film had better be "monstrueux" than lovely.

It may seem childish to pick out some half-dozen words in this way, but the whole tone of so many "appreciations" is in this vein. Of course, there is no suggestion that the considerations above mentioned are disregarded, that would be impossible, but this state of mind is sufficiently in the foreground to be worth while noting, particularly as it goes to the whole attitude of the critic to the object of his criticism.

Thus no English critic has, I think, written as Monsieur Jean Perros wrote recently in *Variétés* in the opening sentence of an article entitled *A bas le pittoresque*: "Les doigts de brûlure, les yeux d'angoisse, la bouche de terreur, les gestes de cruauté froide dans le silence, et aussi cette lumière inhumaine comme le jour de l'Enfer, viande brûlée jusqu'à l'os, peau ridée sur elle-même, enfin l'identité de l'amour et de la mort et le rire déchirant qui nous prend devant eux, mesure de tout, voilà le point où le cinéma, sous ses aspects les plus

dérisoires, comme les plus directement bouleversants, commence à nous toucher." The gentleman (or ladies) who babble in the social columns about "exquisite patterns" should repeat it to themselves, often. On the basis of the Coué system.

The rest of the article is equally admirable; explosive, shattering, true and relevant. It is extreme, and therefore characteristic of the tendency referred to. The point to be observed is that "L'horrible, le livide, le révoltant du sujet" is postulated as a desirable end.

Following exposition with tentative explanation, there can be no question of a Monte-Cristoic steeling of the nerves of the soul, and one may as thoroughly discount any hope of finding the why and the wherefore in innate sadistic impulses. Nor, as a rule, is there merely admiration for realism effectively done. That is an elementary consideration which may mean something when the subject is British films. It is true that "l'horrible et le livide" in a film by Pick or Feyder brings about the illusion of realism in the cinema.

But the films the most widely separated under the customary classifications find a common denominator in Monsieur Perros' point of contact. May it not be that French criticism has responded more sympathetically to the peculiar climate of the territories discovered? Can it be acknowledged as the product of minds which will adventure into the most arid of deserts, of those possessed by "cette force vive qui entraîne les hommes véritables vers les problèmes les plus angoissants"? (See *Cahiers d'Art* à propos *Chien Andalou*).

And whether it is that the environment of English film critics in particular is hostile to the development of a similar

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attitude, or whatever may be the reason, the fact remains the most marvellous description of a cinema-world beyond the everyday world is to be found in a work by an author and literary critic on the subject of Dostoevsky's world. In view of the insistence in that work on spiritual adventure, this is perhaps not so surprising, though the adventure may lead to very different deductions. In the introduction to his study on the great Russian, Mr. Middleton Murray writes: (Yes, more quotation!): "We can do no more than to watch the swift unrolling of the incessant vision and we are fascinated by the mere succession of phantasmagoria. The men and women that we know are inextricably mingled with men and women that we know not, and the known takes from its contact with the unknown a touch of grotesqueness which is bewildering until in a kind of divine despair, we ask ourselves where can this Bohemia be in which the reality partakes so much of the stuff of dreams. The proportion of life, the sweet reasonableness of things human has been dissolved away. Outward acts seem to have been wrenched from their own sequence, and to make mock of their familiar logic. Causes are monstrously inadequate to their effects, and the smallest actions of everyday take on the character of portents." And I think the reference to "the sweet reasonableness of things human" connects the passage up through "l'identité de l'amour et de la mort" with the other.

Dostoevsky world, cinema world, other world, which, too preoccupied with this one we have not yet fully apprehended. We should be more féroce, investigate the atroce, we need not fear to be précocé—there's no danger of that.

H. A. M.

THIS YEAR'S SOWING

“Independents” (more soothing, I trust, than “amateurs”) find themselves saying, at this time of the year, “A poor piece, me thought.” In reference, of course, to their friends’ films of last summer.

Having maintained an attitude the “Independents” have to consider the about-to-bes. Things have changed since last venture. New problems have not replaced old but been added to them. Therefore I questioned Basil Emmott, the first professional to use inkies in England. For the sake of the “I’s” I began:

“Readers want definite answers to indefinite questions. They can’t bear to meet the truth that lighting should alter for each face. So much money has been allotted, and the minimum number of lights for close up and long shot has to be determined.”

“Two,” he flashed back, “thousand watt lamps, an inky spot of five kilowatts, and a tiny carbon spotlight; that for the close ups. Half a dozen thousand watt lamps and one seventy amp. spot; that for shots of full length figures. Mechanised: mount the lamps on banks. Thus, for long shots, a bank of four can be placed on the right of the camera, a bank of two on the left, and the seventy amp. spot shot down from the top of the flat.”

“Using,” Mr. Emmott finished defiantly, “panchromatic stock and working at f2.5.”



From *Histoire de Détective*, a film by the Belgian regisseur Charles De-keuleleire, whose films *Combat de Boxe* and *Impatience* are known to the avant-garde. See *An English Eye on Paris* in this issue.



From *The Earth*, Dovjenko's new Wufku film, which is said to surpass his very finely sensitive *chef d'oeuvre*, *Arsenal*. The theme is—live rightly and you need not dread death.

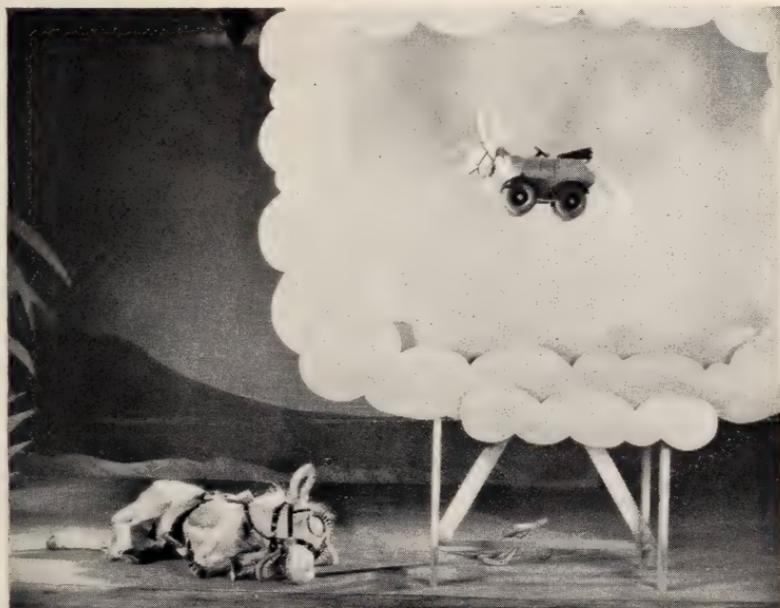


From *The General Line (Old and New)*, Eisenstein's masterpiece which has been passed by the Censor for exhibition in England, and banned in France.



Photo: Ufa

From the *Immortal Vagabond*, the Ufatone Super, Joe May Production, remarkable chiefly for the wonderful camera-work of Carl Hoffman. . . . The village mayor (Dr. Manning) makes a speech.



Scene from *Tom Mix*, one of a series of Marionette films made by John Grierson. See *Mickey's Rival*, in this issue. This still is from a horse's dream, after love at first sight for a Ford.



Photo: Ufa

Wolfram Junghaus' polar dog, Wolfi, with one of his friends—a six-year-old crocodile, Hector. Dr. Junghaus is a member of the Culture-film department of Ufa.



Photo: Ufa

From *The Immortal Vagabond*, the Joe May Ufatone Super, photographed by Carl Hoffman. The Mayor (Dr. Manning), makes another speech.



Photo: Ufa

Rosa Valetti in the Jannings Ufatone film, Erich Pommer Productions, *The Blue Angel*, directed by Joseph von Sternberg.



Albert Préjean in *Bluff*, a Georges Lacombe talkie. Lacombe's film *The Zone* is now well known. A Film Sonore Tobis.



Two characteristic studies of Paul Robeson, famous negro singer and actor, in *Borderline*, a Pool Film, directed by Kenneth Macpherson.





From *Borderline*.





From *Borderline*, Kenneth Macpherson's film, on which he is still working.



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“Don’t imagine,” I remarked indulgently, “that because this is simple I despise it; I know one cannot repeat this sort of thing often enough. But let us contemplate the case of the more advanced.”

“Close ups; to get any god-damned effect that has some vitality you must shoot through the cracks of two niggers.* This ensures the lens being in shadow and allows you to turn lamps where you will. “You can place a thirty-five spotlight on the floor to light up the hair rim, and train a five kilowatt inky spot onto a cheekbone.) Secondly, you must light the background—say with a fifteen thousand watt lamp on the left and a five kilowatt inky spot on the right to add a pleasant streak of luminousness—so that the background will come up quickly in the developer and the face remain soft.”

“Long shots,” he galloped on, “mean intelligent application of the same principles.”

“Ah, intelligence,” I muttered.

“Do you know,” he went off at an individual tangent, “the way American studios test out a cameraman? They tell him to take a shot cutting on the knees. Without a window or an inanimate object it’s hell. Well, remember mid-shots in most British films. You’ve seen actors standing in god-damned rows? It’s the tyranny of matching up in drawing room dramas. People can lean about in decorative positions in prison scenes.”

“We must not,” I hinted firmly, “forget our non-pro-

* A “nigger” is a black screen, used to shield the camera from rays of light.

professionals for all the lure of prison scenes. Discuss exteriors."

"I'd rather not, there is so little that belongs to this year. Think-of-the-amount-of-light-in-front-of-the-lens does not belong. This year has, however, brought more general use of filters for correction. Do you want a human note? For here is a table which I drew up myself and tested out on *Drifters*. The filters are only for use on long shots; the effect, in close up, is far too hard."

	K ₁	K ₂	K ₃	G	A
2.5	2				
2.8	2.5				
3.5	2.8	2			
4	3.5	2.5	2		
5	4	2.8	2.5	2	
5.6	5	3.5	2.8	2.5	
7	5.6	4	3.5	2.8	2
8	7	5	4	3.5	2.5
10	8	5.6	5	4	2.8
11	10	7	5.6	5	3.5
16	14	10	8	7	4

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“ The first column stands for the normal exposure, which can be judged with some modern exposure meter, and the other columns give the change of aperture when different filters are employed. Empty spaces show that, in the circumstances, the filter cannot be used. G and A are special; turning blue skies dark and producing heavy contrasts by rendering white clouds very white.”

“ And remember,” he finally warned, “ to impress the “ Independents ” that no tips are the least bit of good if the the cranking is not carried out at the correct rate.”

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

PROLETARIANS OF THE FILM

Berlin, middle of May.

It was one of those spring evenings which lie like a weight on Berlin-Friedrichstadt. The air smells dirty, fusty, used-up and visably oppressive between the lines of house-fronts, tediously prolonged, florid and hollow-eyed, like bedizened corpses. The shops and offices have closed, and all the life has hurriedly taken flight. In the daytime one has such crowds to contend with here that in the evening it seems as though one were left desolate. I note carefully how the street-

lamps and the illuminated signs make patches of colour amid the greyness. I hope that I can include this observation in my report. I must be off the film labour exchange.

This seems important. Then I recall vividly what and how Egon Erwin Kisch wrote about the Hollywood Labour Exchange. Complicated by one of those reporter's stunts which can infuse colour and excitement into even the greyest material. It is the good God in his own high person whom Kisch brings down to visit the "Central Casting Corporation," in order that he may there review the riches of his ancient creation. With amazement and self-complacence the good God surveys the variegated human market of the film capital and is hardly able to count the nations, species, types and oddities. With amazement and scepticism God hesitates before an employee of the C.C.C., who reels off to him the salaries of the stars and the supers. In amazement and desperation he takes to his heels when all the telephones begin to ring, and 13,000 registered workers ask for a job and 750 are satisfied.

Berlin is not Hollywood, I reflect. I turn through a gate, cross a courtyard and mount the stairs. This house was once full of splendour; in it were "the halls of cupid," and from the gallery of this one a famous dancer once leapt naked onto the polished floor. . . . Now it looks like a cheap Café—a little disorganized, unadorned, large and full. Three hundred, four hundred, perhaps five hundred people are staring towards the door. Over here. Towards me. At me. A thousand glances fused into one. A sheaf of rays. But a dark, faint, gloomy sheaf, heavy and oppressive. Who could advance beneath such a gaze—neither flattering nor

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interested, neither threatening nor hostile? But sinister and paralyzing. With a sense of horror I feel that these three hundred, four hundred, perhaps five hundred people all want something, from me, and, filled with embarrassment, I squeeze my way through their ranks, whence float up scraps of French which only add to the confusion.

Finally, afterwards, outside, I learnt that they were awaiting a French regisseur—work. I was ashamed, because I had been mistaken for some one else. I was ashamed of my paltry pursuit of journalistic tit-bits and sensationalism. On behalf of all who had ever made sketches, anecdotes and headlines out of this "material." Almost even on behalf of Egon Erwin Kisch, who, behind the registry offices and telephone calls of Hollywood had also failed to discern with sufficient clearness the multitude of those who were sitting and waiting.

The social problem personified was seated here. The proletariat of an industry.

But not in their full strength. Actors of distinction, composers, architects, photographers, regisseurs, authors, who had for months been vainly hunting for work, might be added to their number. But at any rate they are individual lives, with individual personalities and names. They may have their subjective hopes, ways, by-ways and expedients. But sitting here is something impersonal—the crowd, a number. One cannot conceive any special possibilities in their case.

It has happened so.

In the war and post-war time German film production grew like a weed, high and thick. The ground was laden

with material, the public hungrily expectant, the competition on the other side of the frontiers. The crisis had come! All around riches, ambitions, livelihoods collapsed. People without a home or a calling were seeking for employment and food. The film was just what they wanted. There was a frantic opening of agencies and employment bureaus, which registered every one, on the strength of a bare statement, a few words, a glance. At that time they liked to deal in multitudes, and multitudes were dealt in.

Soon, however, competition stormed the import barriers. The material of centuries was shaped and twisted *viribus unitis*. The public yawned. Whereupon the sound film entered the field. The chances and potentialities of the industry diminished daily. Finally the professional employment agencies were abolished by law. At the present day the "Central Berlin Labour Office Register of Posts for Film-Actors" is a government institution.

The work is supervised by a committee of experts, in which associations of employers and employees are represented. An actor and an actress are entrusted with the administration. They also decide—in the first instance—regarding admission to the register. It is not easy to get a new card, with name and photograph, address and description, branch of work and special remarks, added to the Register. One has to furnish proofs that one has been working for a considerable time as actor or artist, chorus-singer or dancer. Contracts and certificates from organizations must be produced. The exceptions are rare. Students who have completed their training at a dramatic school are only enrolled after tests and by way of a trial. Often a particularly pretty girl. And then

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only after it has been made very clear to her and her family how bad the prospects are of earning a living, how narrow the scope, how uncertain the chances of success, how dangerous the atmosphere. Yet very few submit to a curt refusal. The most unsuitable are the most persistent. Those whose heads have been turned by plausible advertisements, pamphlets or articles. They write letters which do no credit to their elementary school.

The card index contains the names of 2,500 people—1,300 men and 1,200 women. Social celebrities, young and old. Special types and types from the common people, including peasants; types from thieves' dens. Fair and dark. Sportsmen and sportswomen. Exotics. The abnormal and the decrepit. Fat and thin. Knowledge of music. Knowledge of foreign languages. Women with long hair. Children of from 4 to 14 years of age, for children's parts. Then come "professional people who are entered in the sections of the Labour Office for scientific, social and artistic professions and in the special section for artists, but also in the special section for film-actors"; young sound-film actors and actresses, elderly and old sound-film actors and actresses. First and second tenors, baritones, and first and second basses, classified under soloists and chorus-singers. Male choruses, wind choruses, children's choruses, sopranos, mezzo-sopranos and altos—for solo and chorus. Youthful lovers and sweethearts, youthful character actors and actresses. Boys. Male and female artists. Trainers. Solo dancers, girl dancers, chorus dancers and special dance numbers.

2,500. 500 come almost every day. From 6 to 8 the hall

is packed. For 10 pfennigs one can get a cup of milk, tea, coffee, cocoa or meat-broth. For 15—real coffee with cream or bread and butter. For 20—soups, for 25—sausage. Most of the tables are empty. It is cheaper to chew one's pipe. They play cards, crochet, knit, darn. They chatter and scold. To the left, the old gentleman; to the right, the old ladies. In the centre, the types. On a platform, the girls. In the gallery, the young men. At every sound their eyes are turned towards the door. Every strange face affects them like a summons from a regisseur. They set themselves to rights, draw themselves up, smile or affect an air of indifference. (The eyes are never indifferent.)

For days and weeks hardly anything has happened. Not indeed since the beginning of the year. Formerly it was better. The total number of engagements in round numbers (very much rounded) was 15,000. 15,000 divided by 2,500 makes 6. That would mean six days' work for each of the total number entered. For the whole year. The calculation is, to be sure, very rough. Many—the majority indeed—only figure in the lists. Others—no small number—are regarded as used-up material, a worn-out tool, a face to be passed over. They are no longer wanted, often they cannot, do not know how to keep up in the race; they are squeezed out, their energy sapped. Only a minority are fresh, more spirited, more efficient. With connections, friends, luck. One may ask these how far the calculation was correct. A girl says: "I am earning a hundred marks a month already." "In good seasons I earned nearly 200," says some one close by. One actor once told the head of the labour exchange that he had earned 450. One, once.

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How do these people live? In order to be eligible for the unemployment dole they must have worked at least 26 weeks in the past year. Which of them has worked 26 weeks? The granting of unemployment and social relief is subject to special conditions. The number of supers employed on the stage is constantly diminishing. The days of revues are over. Sketches have been driven off the market by the sound film. The touring companies stay in foreign countries. Even if there are opportunities, there is not always money.

What holds them then? Why do they sit here? What are they waiting for? What are they hoping for? Chance, luck, success? Supers become stars as rarely as tommies become field-marshalls. We hear, it is true, how Ossi Oswalda began. We know that Camilla Horn was once on the labour exchange. Not long ago Petta Frederik passed through this door. Three out of 2,500 multiplied by X (X stands for the number of years). "Pretty girls who can dance are soon cleared off even now" says the head of the women's department. Yes, but pretty girls are soon cleared off everywhere. The question is: whither, for what, how cheaply, for how long? This "success" too is not healthy, permanent or systematic. It would be systematic to get small parts. Solo parts. That does occur moreover now and then, in isolated cases. At very long intervals. Without mention of the name in the programme or film. Who discovers—and when—the little male or female soloist again, even if they have pleased for a moment? They must make the round of the agencies, be ceaselessly on the move, tireless and unabashed. So long as they can endure it, so long as

they are capable of it. Then they must resign themselves to rejoining the ranks of the supers.

Change their profession? The whole German economic world is overcrowded. Where are new recruits welcomed? Above all when they come from the theatrical profession? Regarded by the ordinary citizen as undisciplined, lacking in perseverance, capricious. In fact: accustomed to other work and ways of work, with remarkable sensibilities and remarkable insensibilities. Are they now to learn a different way? Through whom? Where? When? They have only learnt to wait. They go on waiting.

Many, perhaps, no longer notice how desperate their case is. At all events they do not want it to be noticed. Very few probably quite realise how insecure and untenable their position is. That the problem which their existenc presents to industry, economics, the public and the state can hardly be solved fully and radically. The magnitude which would be proportionate to their number and the duration of their unemployment will hardly be re-attained by this industry within the near future.

A. KRASZNA-KRAUSZ.

MICKEY'S RIVAL

Mickey Mouse is to have a rival. If you think that is improbable that's because you haven't seen John Grierson rolling on Wembley's studio floor amongst a lot of joyous, irresponsible Marionettes. I was not too enamoured of the marionette on the screen idea, myself. But a fixed notion must give way when there is good reason.

"You see," Grierson said, turning over on an elbow until he lay almost flat upon his back, "the backbone of the job with these little fellows, is rhythm."

I liked that word "job." It was workman-like and a refreshing change from the terrible jargon that is developing. "Ever since I was at the Welwyn Week End School, you know, the conviction has been soaking into me more and more, that even the Russians are not fully alive to the necessity of sustained rhythm.

"They build up terrific visual impacts and often achieve a rhythm then, but between these impacts long stretches sag rhythmless. That, I think, is because their attention is taken up with tempo.

"Tempo, it seems to me, does not matter so much as a basic rhythm sustained throughout the piece."*

* Permitting myself a personal observation at this point: I see no reason why Tempo and a Basic Rhythm, if properly considered, cannot co-exist in the same piece. There are copious musical examples to show that they, also, can be successfully blent.

“ Watch ! This will give you some idea of what I mean . . . “ Madam . . . if you will take this gallery, please . . . and you Monsieur, this one . . . then your figures can come up together and separate . . . SO !” he called up aloft to the Gornos. “ Now let’s go with the music. . . ”

Tap-a-tap-a-tap-tappy-tap-tap, and limp little rag figures suddenly became vital and buoyant Hula maidens shaking out their lava . . . lava with riotous rhythmic cavortings.

Then a tiny bowler-hatted figure in baggy trousers and flapping boots, strangely reminiscent of many pathetic moments on the screen, pattered in, became fascinated by the rhythm and in trying to pick it up, imposed a syncopated rhythm of his own endeavour, upon it.

“ Cut !”

The gramophone stopped and the figures hung limp once more. “ Oh, a question, Mr. Grierson. Do you intend to keep the dimensions of the puppet stage in the mind of the spectator, or will you break down these limitations with close-ups, rhythmic cutting and so on ?”

“ Well there enters a problem yet to be worked out. It is possible to succeed too well. In a previous Marionette film, a Wild West Rough Rider leapt over canyons and raced the prairie with such filmic perfection that the sense of marionette-show was lost. So the question now is : to be or not to be Marionettes ?

“ I think we shall prefer to keep a reminder in the film that it is a marionette performance that the audience is looking at. Doubtless we shall break up the *Visuals*, but in such a way that the cuts assist the grotesquerie and stress the

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rhythm. It will have to be worked out, because here again the question of the *orals* comes in.

“The sounds must complement the scenes, that is to say, grotesque sound-effects must match the grotesquerie of the figures and their situations. Each type of figure has its own rhythm-sound. Pomposity for a commissionaire, lissomeness for the Hula maids, industrious and insistent syncopation for mechanics at work. But these individual rhythms can be blended into a single major composition carrying a rhythmic principle throughout and merged with the visuals into a complete and effective whole.”

This is exactly what the creator of Mickey Mouse has been doing. And if Grierson brings it off, it will be another feather in both his and A.S.F.I.'s cap.

That's why I say that Mickey's going to have a rival.

HAY CHOWL.

SOUS LES TOITS DE PARIS

(Under Paris roofs.)

At last we have had the premiere of Rene Clair's film. I went to this premiere in trepidation, fearing that the "talkie" might have placed obstacles in the path of this director's intelligent work.

It is therefore with so much the more pleasure that I can write of my agreeable surprise.

Clair, who is one of the few French directors that deserve to be studied closely, has known how to adapt his genius to the talking film. Thus he has created a new style. He has dared to do things that are astonishing, and even shocking, to the public, but it is certain that *Sous Les Toits de Paris*, has made an enormous stride forward in the evolution of the talkie. Up till now, people have been content to add words, sounds and noises more or less intelligently to pictures. Sometimes this process has been successful, at others it has been a lamentable failure. (One good example is the following from the end of *Prix de Beauté*. Genina, the director, with an intelligent scenario, has given us one entirely new moment. The heroine of the film is sitting in the projection room where her first attempt at speaking is being run through. Her husband, jealous, arrives and shoots her. While she drops inertly in the chair, the picture on the screen continues talking, and those still in the room go on hearing the voice of the one who has just died). But against this example, how many inept moments have we not had to suffer?

Others have lazily found it to be sufficient to photograph more or less adroitly, plays or subjects borrowed from the theatre.

Clair, who is intelligent, perhaps too intelligent, has realised this danger. His love of the cinema has sharpened these apprehensions, and if his attempt has not completely succeeded, it is still true that he is the first in Europe to escape from a sterile formula.

Perhaps some examples will illustrate my meaning more clearly.

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We see people speak in this film without necessarily hearing them. And it is not through any desire of paradox that Rene Clair has employed this method, for all these non-audible though spoken moments are utterly comprehensible to the spectators, we understand perfectly the action by their playing.

Or for example: a girl, the friend of two comrades, goes to find one to warn him the other is in danger. We see her enter a café. We hear her call out the friend's name and the door shuts. All that she tells him afterwards is unheard, but it is not necessary. We understand it.

The chief weakness of the film is above all, its weak scenario. The characters are not strongly enough defined in a too conventional setting. Sometimes, the almost mathematical precision, the too visible mechanism, can be annoying. Against this, however, must be set the rich technical material, in which all the directors must dip, to render their films more intelligent in the future.

As I have said already, the formula is not yet fully established. Sometimes the process is so visible that it seems almost intentional. But this is nothing against the first attempt to give to the pictures the human significance they had lost in favour of careless words. Even if the public should not acclaim this film, I should still be certain that in another two or three years, we shall return to this example of rare intelligence, even if I do not greet its appearance with all the respect due.

There is one more astonishing thing to record.

Rene Clair's films always capture us by their wit, so much so, that we forget their lack of sensuality.

In *Sous les Toits de Paris* Rene Clair has succeeded, his innovations for the "talkie" apart, in creating passages of a moving and poetic beauty, such as we have seldom had the chance to see.

It seems that Clair is now entering into a phase of mature work that promises even more than did a youth full of unexpectedness and surprise.

JEAN LENAUER.

REVUE DU PREMIER SEMESTRE, 1930

LA MENACE PLANE SUR HOLLYWOOD.

Le film sonore a sauvé Hollywood ! Il était temps car, depuis quelques années, la lassitude du public américain devenait de plus en plus manifeste en dépit de toutes les recettes imaginées pour corser les menus cinématographiques. Les Chefs d'Hollywood étaient au bout de leur rouleau et commençaient à désespérer, franchement, de retenir à leur table la clientèle des salles obscures. Le sonore arriva à point nommé pour délivrer d'un affreux cauchemar les magnats du film. Dès lors le cinéma muet rétrograda dans le stock des antiquités et la demande s'en fit aussi rare que celle des bas de coton blanc.

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Profiter largement des années de vaches grasses, est une tendance opportuniste fort à la mode à Hollywood. Et certes, en ce moment, le fourrage ne manque pas, les possibilités sont illimitées. Paramount-Lasky, à elle seule, envisage la production, et la location aussi, naturellement, d'environ 200 films parlants et musicaux pour les douze mois à venir, sans compter 68 bandes d'importance : drames, opéras, revues, et 52 éditions de nouvelles illustrées et parlées. Fox projette la fabrication d'une cinquantaine de films, M. G. M. s'en tient à 40 environ, et toutes les autres firmes ont pour le moins autant de pain sur la planche.

Et cependant, malgré les perspectives actuelles qui légitimement, certes, un solide optimisme, Hollywood ne se sent pas très à l'aise car elle devine à l'horizon d'invisibles menaces. D'autres inventions ne vont-elles pas, dans un avenir prochain, culbuter les dispositions prises à l'égard du nouveau procédé, contrecarrer la mise au point définitive du sonore, mettre en péril, même, les coûteuses installations et par là compromettre les budgets. Les progrès de la technique cinégraphique inquiètent ceux-là même qui, peinant à s'y adapter, en récoltent pourtant les premiers bénéfiques. Voici déjà le film en couleurs naturelles : *On With the Show*, dont l'accueil auprès du public fut un succès comparable à celui qu'obtint en son temps le pionnier de la Vitaphone : *Le Chanteur de Jazz*. Encore un film ou deux de cette réussite et le public ne voudra plus entendre parler des bandes en noir et blanc, désormais déclassées.

La technique de la projection stéréoscopique fait, elle aussi, de rapides progrès, grâce à l'invention de Lorenzo de Riccio, des laboratoires Paramount, qui consiste à remplacer

par un écran de forme convexe la toile à surface plane utilisée jusqu'ici.

De la Radio Corporation, enfin, surgissent des possibilités plus intéressantes encore de projection naturelle susceptible de rendre, moyennant un vaste écran panoramique, les détails et la perspective des objets. L'effet obtenu serait tel qu'il permettrait de se dispenser dorénavant de toutes les savantes opérations de la camera : gros-plans, plans généraux, etc.

Si l'on ajoute à cela que le phénomène de la télévision est sur le point d'être réalisé pratiquement, permettant de son côté de faire projeter simultanément un film, par un studio central, sur des milliers d'écrans dispersés dans le pays, et enfin qu'une invention européenne paraît assurer le remplacement avantageux du film en celluloid par un film en papier susceptible de transmettre aussi bien l'image que le son, l'on ne sera plus étonné que l'inquiétude, malgré tout, rôde autour d'Hollywood. Les signes actuels de prospérité ne valent que pour un temps peut-être fort restreint, car le public, on ne l'ignore pas dans les directions, brûlera demain déjà ce qu'il adore aujourd'hui et le film sonore ne peut déjà plus passer pour une nouveauté !

CLIFFORD HOWARD.

LE CINEMA AU JAPON.

(d'après une étude de N. Kaufmann).

Le cinéma s'est rapidement développé à Tokio, notamment, où l'on comptait, avant le tremblement de terre, une

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centaine de salles de projection, alors qu'il y en a actuellement 200, dont une certaine proportion consiste en établissements selects, offrant au public, à un prix élevé, les films américains, tandis que d'autres ne sont que de modestes constructions de bois, permettant à quiconque, moyennant une finance d'entrée réduite, de voir les films indigènes. Les séances durent en moyenne de trois à quatre heures.

Eisenstein remarque à la fin du document de N. Kaufmann, que la technique cinématographique, au Japon, trouve d'abondantes illustrations dans l'alphabet, le dessin, la peinture et presque tous les domaines d'activité, hormis au cinéma. La raison en est attribuable au fait que le cinéma japonais n'a jamais su se libérer des traditions et de l'influence du théâtre national. Le cinéma fut longtemps considéré comme un sous-produit de l'art théâtral, tout juste appelé à fournir une distraction régulière aux éléments les moins fortunés et les plus incultes de la population. Les acteurs de cinéma étaient recrutés parmi les ratés de la scène. De même, le cinéma japonais s'inspirait uniquement des thèmes de théâtre, ce qui eût pour effet de faire apparaître une succession interminable de films historiques, ou "Jidai-Geki," adaptés d'oeuvres dramatiques puisées dans l'histoire féodale du pays et les légendes de Sumarai. La psychologie, le choix des sujets, la mise en scène et les méthodes d'expression des acteurs, dans les films précités, sont strictement formelles et traditionnelles, mais les mouvements exquisement rythmés, les parures et intérieurs artistiques, en rehaussent sensiblement l'intérêt. D'autres sujets conventionnels eux aussi, des films japonais, ont trait à l'amour de la famille, la fidélité conjugale, et au dévouement

du valet à son maître. Cependant, le public japonais, saturé d'exemples peu renouvelés, s'est lassé et il fallut s'orienter vers un genre nouveau pour combattre efficacement l'envahissement du film populaire américain. Quelques bandes comiques ont été tournées, où le ridicule s'attaque aux campagnards, aux fonctionnaires et officiels inférieurs. Enfin, à part certaines reconstitutions de la vie moderne japonaise, l'on tourna, " nipponisés " *La Dame aux Camélias* et *Dans les Profondeurs*, de Gorki.

Les deux entreprises de cinéma les plus importantes du Japon sont la Nikkatsu et la Soetsiku; la première dispose non seulement des meilleurs acteurs et metteurs en scène, mais encore des connaisseurs les plus éclairés sur les formules artistiques de l'antique Japon. La valeur esthétique de ses films est certainement considérable. La Soetsiku est, elle, organisée selon des méthodes plus modernes et montre nettement, dans le choix des scénarios et le traitement de l'action, une tendance marquée à l'adaptation au présent. A part une école de cinéma, Soetsiku a fondé trois établissements cinématographiques importants, dont le principal, situé à Kamata, est devenu en quelque sorte l'Hollywood japonais. Là où, il y a quelques années, s'étendaient les champs de riz, avec ici et là de rares maisons dispersées, l'on compte actuellement une population de 100,000 âmes.

La rapidité de la production, nécessité, il est vrai, par les conditions difficiles de l'industrie cinématographique japonaise, dépasse de beaucoup celle que l'on constate Outre-Atlantique. Tandis que la fabrication d'un film américain demande plusieurs mois de travail, celle d'une bande japon-

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aise est l'affaire, souvent, de quatre semaines, tout au plus, voire même de 7 à 15 jours !

Les acteurs japonais sont divisés en deux catégories bien tranchées : ceux qui se spécialisent dans les rôles historiques, et ceux qui interprètent des personnages contemporains ; ces derniers étant subdivisés encore en : sportsmen, comédiens ou amoureux. Cette classification ne s'applique pas aux actrices, qui sont choisies, non pas selon les exigences des rôles à fournir, mais surtout en vertu de leurs charmes personnels.

W. M. RAY.

LE CINEMA EN ARGENTINE.

Buenos-Ayres. 2 millions d'habitants—200 cinémas. Une consommation énorme de films étrangers, mais en revanche aucune activité cinématographique indigène dont il vaille la peine de parler.

Les films russes ont acquis une grande réputation en Argentine. *Potemkin* remporta un énorme succès, de même que *Dix Jours*. Des films russes et allemands, traitant des problèmes de culture sexuelle, sont projetés un peu partout et suivis avec intérêt.

Un Ciné-Club a été créé à Buenos-Ayres, qui organise conférences, assemblées contradictoires, séances de projection.

Le public argentine est impartial et possède un sens particulier de l'humour. Composé d'éléments fort dissemblables, il ne saurait être accusé de chauvinisme à l'égard de l'une ou de l'autre manière de production cinématographique.

Des programmes allemands, *Variétés* fut apprécié ; *Metro-*

polis eût une carrière modeste, et *Les Espions*, si l'on tient compte du succès remporté en Europe, demeura plutôt dans l'ombre.

On goûta fort *L'Argent* de l'Herbier, en raison probablement de l'identité du sujet avec les préoccupations des habitants. Mais la satire du film de Feyder : *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*, manqua totalement son effet.

Les films américains sont, naturellement, très nombreux, ici. *La Mélodie de Broadway* et *Le Masque de Fer* plurent tout spécialement, et l'on prit garde en outre aux *Damnés de L'Océan* de J. V. Sternberg, aux *Quatre Diables* de Murnau, ainsi qu' à *La Symphonie Nuptiale* de Stroheim.

H. P. TEW.

INTERVIEW WITH DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS

"How's your putting?" said Mr. Fairbanks, as I walked into his bedroom. And then introduced me to various members of the Walker Cup team who were around. I said I had also met Eisenstein several times; Mr. Fairbanks, who had just putted a ball under the bed, lent on his club and said "Have you seen *The General Line*? I haven't." I had, twice. I said I thought Eisenstein's use of film (no,

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not montage—I left that word to the penny dailies. High-brow? Of course! Hadn't I Mr. Fairbanks' permission to be? But wait for that) showed what he might do with sound, and certainly could do. Slash his sound images across each other, as he slashes a wheel across a face, feet across steps and a screaming woman. "Painting," I quoted Eisenstein, "is like the smash of a whip—only the smash is fixed." And so, if he used his sound images at all as he uses his sight images, all this about language difficulty, speech retarding action, lack of form and so on would not exist. "That," Mr. Fairbanks said, "is what I meant in there."

"In there" had been another interview, largely monopolized by an elderly film-reviewer who came in late and talked like a film star who has his line to strut. In between time Mr. Fairbanks had managed to get a word in. A word to the point. He is, it is impertinent to say, intelligent? He is worried and wondering, and that always makes one feel at home. He is worried because he wants to make a film, and will not make a film without form. The film will be talkie, and talkies have not yet any form. They need an entirely new type of form, and it has not yet been evolved. Chaplin taught them how to mime, Griffith taught them form for the silent picture, gave shape to what had flickered. The only thing that taught anything with sound was Mickey Mouse. The rest of the talkies are just "talking their heads off." He had seen some Mickey Mouses which burlesqued *The Guacho* and some of his films; the thrilling sequences in the burlesques were as thrilling as those same ones in his own films. From which one can gather that sound is all to the good? Not quite, because Greta Garbo's *Single Standard*

he had run through after his last talkie, and found the silent film more impressive. "Would he then ever make a silent picture again?" asked *The Morning Post*. "I might. The markets outside the English-speaking countries would justify it." But one does not want to limit one's self—one wants to reach out. One wants sound, if some one knows what to do with it. He confessed he was tired of being a pure hero, standing apart. "But those rôles are such a relief," said *The Morning Post*. "You at least will never make a backstage talkie." "I'd love to," said Doug. "I'd never be so happy. Rows and rows of girls." He laughed. Laughter.

He had been phoning Eisenstein. He would be the man to do something about this basic form for a talking film. He hoped to fix up with him. The Paramount contract did not prevent it. From Eisenstein or (important) from some young man quite unconnected with stage or studio the new pictures must take form. He knew of a theme Eisenstein wanted to film. It fitted with his own ideas exactly. It was something he wanted to see done. He could not say what it was, it was Eisenstein's idea.

Privately, I asked him if Eisenstein would take out Alexandrov and Tisse. He said certainly. My spirits rose. He also said, answering a tactful enquiry of mine, that if Eisenstein worked for him he would have no bother with supervisors; he could go ahead on his own line. And if he, Fairbanks, had anything to contribute, there he was, Eisenstein could have it. What could be fairer?

Returning to the official interview, he said that the slowing up of the camera for talkies did him wrong, because he always depended on action. This tempo . . . he illustrated it. What

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he felt was that as action had to be formalized, so speech and sound must be. Speech must come to have a musical beat. *Blackmail* came into this. I thought this a good idea. But then I would, for I was hearing myself say, "Speech must not be literal." *The Morning Post* said, "Aren't you being rather highbrow, Mr. Fairbanks?" Mr. Fairbanks indignantly said no. If you depend on the public for the success of your films, you can't be too highbrow.

I did so like hearing that said to a London film-reviewer.

The public may not be conscious of what you are doing, but they are conscious of what you do. They may not know, as you know, how and why you are to get your effects, but they get them just the same. They may not know as you know, the planning, the timing, cutting, juxtaposition, but they respond to the result which you know they would respond to in no other way. The public are just as highbrow as we are, said the star, only they are unconscious of it. Mr. Fairbanks has no idea what his next film will be, because there is no use settling that while the form of the picture remains unsettled. The idea was what mattered. He told a story about a Chinese philosopher, which the monopolizing gentleman took to mean he might do a Chinese film. This took some straightening out, and then he said that, in any case, he wanted to do Eisenstein's story. Eisenstein would stay six months with him.

Alone, I asked him if he might do one in straight dress. "You bet," he said, with a terrific sweep of a golf club.

I liked hearing a film-star say it was no good going on making films until some one achieved a form for talkies. How

much the Eisenstein scoop means honest endeavour for this or simply a little of that plus the American idea of getting the best money can buy, I can't say. But I liked Mr. Fairbanks. After all, he did go to Russia before most of the people who will be reading this had ever heard of it as a film country.

R. H.

A BRITISH EYE ON PARIS

Along the Boulevards American films, which one already knows, and French sound-film experiments, all super and sonore; also the expensive but highly comfortable new Olympia cinema, which although avoiding atmosphere and chandeliers has managed some rather tasteless masses of green and gold.

The French are very exact with the terms they use to describe the various types of sound-film. The "film sonore" represents the film, either old or new, which has been ruined by a loud-speaker accompaniment of cinema music—a tendency towards the return of the days of the piano cum fiddle flea-palaces. The "film sonore" may also contain some true to nature noises. The synchronized locomotive-puffing-out-of-station scenes are as much a *sine qua non* of continental sound-films as the dancing-girl and backstage episodes are of British and American productions respectively. The train growls, puffs, roars and whistles and makes all the noises which at a railway-station would pass unnoticed but which in the quiet and enclosed atmosphere of the cinema

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startle and aggravate. Sound has not been analysed. The combination of fundamental sounds must be artificially represented in the sound-film in such a way that it becomes unconsciously instead of consciously absorbed when heard inside a cinema. Great scope for the experimentalists. Streets, railways, cafés, circuses and fairs.

The "film parlant" or more pedantically "film parlé" is, as its name implies, the talking-film proper. The "film parlant cent pour cent français" usually refers to a production directed by a German in America, in which the characters speak French or broken French as in Lubitsch's *Parade d'Amour* with Chevalier and Jeannette Mac Donald, which played to crowded houses at the large Paramount cinema, whose attendants dressed in expensive replicas of Chevalier's uniform encouraged one to enter via the carpeted pavement! This film has since been succeeded by Harold Lloyd's *Welcome Danger*, the appropriate title of which has been translated into French by the meaningless *Quel Phénomène*, while Pabst's *Diary of a Lost Woman* has been absurdly translated into *Trois pages d'un Journal* and at the same time completely ruined in the cutting.

Tobis has presented *Sous les Toits de Paris* by René Clair assisted by Georges Lacombe, at the colossal Moulin Rouge Cinema. The film is almost a sign that Clair will one day produce a great talky. The prologue and epilogue of chimney pots are delightful, though the beauty is cinematic and not enhanced by sound, but all the more remarkable is the fact that these old-world buildings are not bits of real Paris but sets erected in the gardens of the studio at Epinay. Clair, like the others, has experi-

mented with noise, novelty and tone tricks. A scene in the dark accompanied by the noise of passing trains achieves good effects, and in another scene a strong atmosphere is obtained by a bar of music repeated by a gramophone needle catching in a groove of a record. In a vertical panorama shot of a block of apartments, Clair shows the inhabitants of each room each singing the catching refrain of the air " Sous les Toits de Paris," the music of which Albert Préjean, the hero, is selling from the street corner below. In this shot, indeed, sound has been cleverly mounted, for the song is carried on from the voice of one woman to that of a man and then to the discordant tone of another woman. Another effect: Préjean goes up to Pola Illery in the streets and whispers to her; here the picture is seen but the words not heard—a clever little touch which probably saved the censor's scissors. The basis of the story is hero-villain stuff, but the details are original, and throughout the film there is an air of Clair-Lacombe freshness and adept combining of tragedy and humour.

Marcel l'Herbier's *Nuits des Princes* is based on a thin story and contains fewer tricks and experiments to enable it to be classed amongst the pioneers. Disappointing are his scenes of horsemanship from which we had expected so much, they are mere strivings after grand effect as was his immense world-map décor in *L'Argent* and are not as powerful as another scene in which a gloriously executed Russian knife-dance is greatly enhanced by a continuous repetition of rapid music and clapping. We were, perhaps because in the mood, roused almost as much as by Dovjenko's montage.

Criticize these films as wholes and one arrives at the para-

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dox that they are nothings; search for their small redeeming features and they are more liable to convert one into the appreciation of future possibilities than any American effort up to date. This statement made without having seen King Vidor's attempts.

A final French talking-film, *Prix de Beauté* by A. Génina and with Louise Brooks looking very photogenic as Miss France but not acting as well as when directed by Pabst. Never has one of Pabst's discoveries achieved more than when under his inspiring influence. Greta Garbo! Brigitte Helm! And now Louise Brooks! The big trick in *Prix de Beauté* is its remarkable ending, which redeems the previous passages whose very mediocrity emphasizes the ending's splendour. An exceptional end and for once not a happy one. Louise, who has won a beauty prize, accepts a talking-film engagement against the will of the man with whom she is living. The evening arrives when she is to attend the private viewing of her film. She is seated in the little projection room watching herself on the screen and hearing herself sing a popular melody. The villain-prince seated beside her is caressing her hand. Semi-darkness broken by the flickering beams of the projector. Her lover arrives, is guided to the door by her talky-voice. In jealousy he shoots, she falls, but her figure on the screen-within-a-screen continues to move and to sing over her dead body the words of the song:

Ne sois pas jaloux, tais-toi . . .
Je n'ai qu'un amour, c'est toi!

A trick—but really one of beauty and irony, and at last a

morsel of true sound-film technique. For the rest, there are a lot of grand-scale portions and the dialogue is childish but Louise has developed a talky-laugh which appeals both visually and orally, although as the film has been post-synchronized credit for the oral part may be due to her unknown French "double." What a state of affairs.

* * *

At the studio-cinemas the tendency to appreciate American underworld dramas persists and consequently the programmes are seldom of a very startling nature. L'Oeil de Paris is always excellent with its policy of showing classics which one wishes to see again or which one has previously missed. Recent programmes have included *Dans la Rue* which was known in its country of origin as *Jenseits der Strasse* and which makes an attractive addition to the group of wonderful "Rue" dramas, *The Street*, *Joyless Street*, and the *Tragedy of the Street*. In the same programme Germaine Dulac made an attempt in her film *Theme and Variation* to compare the rhythm of a dancing-girl with that of machinery, or rather, she makes the girl revolve her legs and the camera-man his camera in such a way that the resultant movements can be linked up with pictures of pulley wheels and pistons. In a later programme, the Oeil presented *Finis Terrae*, one of the few beautiful French films which one has had the opportunity of seeing in England and, thanks to the Dundee Film Society, also in Scotland. This masterpiece was accompanied by another masterpiece, a comparatively little known film of Germaine Dulac's entitled *La Souriante Madame Beudet*, a film by which she should be recognized and thus admired. It is neither surrealist nor

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symphonic but is a simple tale of a simple woman living with her extraordinary husband in a provincial town. Made at about the same time as Chaplin's great film *A Woman of Paris* it represents in the same way an enormous advancement in screen technique and consequently can never become entirely dated. During recent weeks the Oeil de Paris has revived *Thérèse Raquin*, *The Private Life of Helen of Troy*, and *La Coquille et le Clergyman*, and has published a long list of films promised for future programmes which includes *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*, *Les Deux Timides*, *Force et Beauté* and *Pori*.

The Studio 28 having presented *Bed and Sofa* and Bunuel's sadistic *Un Chien Andalou* in the same programme has now turned to policier drama and has for a month been offering *Alibi* with Chester Morris. For those who enthuse over all that is surreal, be it noted that the authentic manuscript of *Un Chien Andalou* can be read in the latest number of "Le Surréaliste" obtainable from Librairie Corti; furthermore that Bunuel is in the course of producing *La Bête Andalouse* from which we hope to discover the source of surrealism!

Agriculteurs revives at regular intervals Lubitsch's *L'Eventail de Lady Windermere*; Chaplin's *L'Opinion Publique* (*A Woman of Paris*); Epstein's *La Glace à Trois faces* and the American novelties *Jazz* and *Club 73*, as well as providing an interesting "Beiprogramme" of shorts.

Ursulines is disappointing and has for a very long time been giving *Terror* featuring May MacAvoy, a film which may tend to discourage one from going to see *La Daphnie*,

Jean Painlevé's wonderful microscopic nature study which is in the same programme.

Vieux Colombier having concluded a run of the superb Renoir-Hessling *La Petite Marchande d'Allumettes* is now presenting the much discussed new German reportage *Les Hommes, le Dimanche (Menschen am Sonntag)*. An interesting documentaire and an old Chaplin comedy can also nearly always be seen.

* * *

The ciné-clubs and groups if not the most important are certainly the most amusing features of Parisian ciné life.

The Tribune Libre du Cinéma, that curious medley of snobs and students, which fortnightly overcrowds the Salle Adyar, recently held their first heated debate on the sound-film. Illustrations included worthless extracts from *Le Requin* produced by Henri Chomette who wishes to disassociate his name from the film in the state in which it was finally released. Ruttmann's *La Melodie du Monde* was enthusiastically received, although on analysing the applause it was evident that the cinematic touches were being appreciated more than the actual effects of sound.

During May, the Groupement de Spectateurs d'Avant-Garde gave an afternoon at Vieux Colombier for the jeunes. This was the first cinema event in Paris of real interest for over a month. The first film on the programme was *Naissance d'un Illustré* by Chenal, which was shot, so it is said, in seven hours but which remains, nevertheless, a quite thorough little document of how an illustrated weekly, the Cinémonde, is prepared and printed in heliographure. The photography is good, the shots well chosen, the details clear,

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and a certain feeling of the rhythm of machines apparent. Next, a fragment showing Carmen Boni shooting railway-station sequences for *Quartier Latin*. This film interestingly demonstrates the methods employed to produce moving-shots, and even a motor-car is seen moving along the platform of a Paris station in order to capture from a novel angle shots of the out-going train. At this stage the customary Parisian ciné uproar arose. *We* have come to see Avant-garde films! *These* are not Avant-garde films! After a policeman had removed three shrieking persons who should but have waited for the third item, the performance was continued amidst amazing peace and order.

The third film was *Histoire de Détective*, the latest film of the young Belgian cinéaste Charles Dekeukeleire, who had already made us impatient with his *Impatience* at Stuttgart. Dekeukeleire is without doubt the most extreme of the left-wingers and is, frankly, the least intelligible of all. Yet his work is sufficiently interesting for one to seek for a why and wherefore rather than to cast it aside with a superior shrug. This film opens with a long but intelligible title explaining that it represents part of the log-book of a certain detective who has been attempting to settle a divorce case by obtaining clues with his cinema camera. Moreover, throughout the film the titles are so intelligible in themselves that one expects a dramatic continuity instead of which we are treated to pictures which bear no resemblance (unless "latently visual") to the preceding text. The film may be based on theories of sex-psychology, for during one period the pictures are continuously interspersed with titles in the form of two visiting-cards upon which are printed "Monsieur"

and "Madame" respectively. If a visiting-card announces Monsieur, we are occasionally permitted to see Monsieur but are more usually presented with pictures of landscape and water. Matters become complicated when M. le détective shows a little avant-garde film which he made to amuse Madame but to bewilder us, and the film ends without our having even discovered whether a successful divorce resulted. We understood from M. Dekeukeleire himself that he is now working on a *simple* document of Belgian customs.

The next film on the "Spectateurs" programme and one which received an enthusiastic welcome was *Les Champs Elysées* by Jean Lod and Boris Kaufmann. All aspects of the Champs from Etoile to Concorde are wittily dealt with, and though it is not strictly "true cinema" it is for this reason so successful. Wit by contrasts: girl's legs—shocked parson. *Autour de l'Argent*, which followed, is an excellently mounted document of shots taken by Jean Dréville during the production of l'Herbier's *Argent*. Described modestly as an "indiscretion cinégraphique" it is a film of masterly technique and an organized montage of shots with which one will associate Dréville's name as a great cinéaste with a future. The sixth film *Nogent, Eldorado du Dimanche* is one of those unpretentious documentaires of pictures which an amateur can record on his Baby-Pathé; Marcel Carné has, however, joined his shots to form a quite pleasing little film of Parisian trippers spending their Sunday on the banks of the Marne. Eugene Deslaw's *La Nuit Électrique* followed. It is no longer new and is known even in England. Deslaw has not been able to find many bright electric lights in Paris, and all his most striking shots

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are those of the extraordinary bands of white light to be found advertising the cafés and cinemas of Berlin west. The final film was *La Zone*. Georges Lacombe in his essay of Paris's flea-market has delved into the reality of the life of the "chiffoniers," who at five in the morning, search for rags and bones amongst the débris of the dustbins. A spectator indignantly declared that this film was making fun of tragedy; but it does not, for it has been made with the most obvious sincerity and an entire lack of superficiality. We have not been stirred so much by a "short" since seeing René Clair's *Entr'acte*, and now the producers of these two rare morsels of pictorialism have combined in making a talking-film!!

* * *

Paris waking up. Three days later we saw *The General Line* in uncut version and including even the banned black-cat sequence. Since the film was scandalously banned at the Sorbonne, it has been shown only once in Paris, to a private audience at the Russian Embassy, but this time the Cercle de la Russie Neuve presented it. M. Autant and Mme. Lara, the founders of this group are the true artists-for-art's-sake. On paying 10 frcs. per annum one can see without additional charge all the most marvellous and latest Russian films. The performances take place in their tiny fourth-floor studio "Art et Action," where the most advanced Theatre in Paris is also presented, the actors often being chosen in Eisenstein manner from the workers themselves. The circle is in possession of original versions of *Arsenal* and *Stump of an Empire*, which films have already been presented on various occasions this year. A banned film, an unprotected projector,

one narrow exit, two policemen outside but unable to enter the house—it is thus that one overcomes the Censor in Paris, the Censor which allowed the revolutionary *Storm over Asia* to be shown at every little cinema in Paris, but who would not allow a private group of scientists to view an agricultural document. For those who love petition-signing, there is the petition against “La Campagne contre l’U.R.S.S.,” which cites the Koutepof scandal, the Eisenstein scandal, the Deterding scandal, and which is obtainable from 12, rue Guy-de-la-Brosse, Paris, (5e.).

An interval of three more days and then Jean Painlevé’s excellent conference at the Sorbonne on the scientific film. His illustrative programme opened with *Le Bernard l’Hermite*, a film of the housing problems of crab-like creatures who make their homes in empty molluscs. The vivisection of a dog and an operation on a human nose followed; these films must be of immense value to the scientist, but are gruesome for the mere cinéophile and the audience groaned. Next was given Painlevé’s unreleased film *Caprelles et Pantopodes*, describing the life of Caprelles which are undefinable submarine creatures whose curious manner of bowing gives them a distinguished appearance; and of Pantopodes, a type of aquatic daddy-long-legs whose eggs are contained under the feet of the female. The applause with which his latest film was received proves that he will have a success with it as great as with his previous film *Crabes et Crevettes*, which has for so long been appreciated at the Oeil de Paris. He next showed a German X-ray film which had just been received by air; the great moment arrives at the end, when the movements of jaws, tongue and throat are seen when a man

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speaks. The final film and that which we considered the most beautiful was *Hyas et Steroninques*, which also included pictures of Spirographs. Painlevé explained that these long names were only inserted because the public demanded to know exactly what they were seeing! Hyas and steroninques are creatures who cover themselves with sponge, the spirograph is an anemone-like creature which opens and shuts in the manner of a peacock's tail and produces the most beautiful movements we have ever seen on the screen. Experimenters in lights, shades, and the abstract should really commence with nature under the sea.

A survey of Paris would become eternal if press-day did not arrive. Mention must, however, be made of one more film, *La Servante* produced by Jean Choux; the sincerity of Jean Camara's acting and the beauty of the natural scenery of Saint-Tropez makes this one of the most valuable French films of the year. Also having advertised cinemas, films, and producers, let us, though quite independent, stress the value when in Paris of obtaining each Friday "La Semaine à Paris," the booklet which not only gives the full programmes of all cinemas but also collects under separate headings the names of all producers and actors whose works can be seen during the current week. Often with the aid of this booklet a Russian masterpiece or German classic can be discovered, in fact, during the last month such films as *Expiation*, *Yellow Identity Card*, and *Tragédie de la Rue* have been revived at quite ordinary quartier cinemas. Then there is M. Corti's libraire where a welcome is given to cinéphiles who are at liberty to examine at their leisure and without

obligation the very many shelves of books dealing exclusively with Cinema.

The future? Abel Gance has just commenced the montage of the long awaited *Fin Du Monde*, and Jacques de Baroncelli has completed the sound-film *l'Arlésienne*; French studios are otherwise comparatively inactive. The Tribune Libre announces a Cavalcanti soirée de gala; the group l'Effort advertises an evening of Méliès' early filmlets and Valeska Gert returns soon again to provide an afternoon of eccentricity.

CHARLES E. STENHOUSE.

COMMENT AND REVIEW

SOUVENIR.

Librairie Gallimard issue booklets called *Peintres Nouveaux*. Man Ray's volume has just reached a third edition. Stills from *L'Etoile de Mer* and film strips from *Emak Bakia*; photograms, paintings and constructions in cork: words of appreciation and press cuttings.

"Man Ray fait mieux que Lourdes ou le fakir hindou."

Glancing at the collected photos one would say that his greatest miracle has been in influencing other artists of so many different schools!!

O. B.

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TRY OUT FILMS.

A HINT TO THE AVANT-GARDE.

Miss Barbara Gott told me that Sinclair Hill intends to re-make *Mr. Smith Wakes Up* on account of its cheering reception on Broadway.

"I wonder," Miss Gott suggested, "if short films will always be used to try out the success of story and atmosphere in the efficient days to come. The public flock to see a film of which they have read the story, and they don't let the fact that they have seen a play of the same name stop their cinema attendance. So why should they not turn up for the extended version of a two reeler?"

O. B.

BOOK REVIEW.

A colleague handed us a copy of *Motion Picture Continuities* (Columbia University Press. 15s.) which he had just received for review.

The book is made up of three continuities; *A Kiss for Cinderella*, *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Last Command*. A play, a book, an original script; kinematic gestation. What the director can do to the scenarist and what the scenarist can do to the author is here clearly shown. Sternberg cut John Goodrich's Rotterdam and Ellis Island episodes with all their

sequelae ; killed off the heroine and improved most of the situations. Ebullient scenarists found plenty of comedy for Hawthorn's grisly tale of Hester. Barrie, the annotator declares, has " a moving picture mind." " But the movies couldn't bear to give up the traditional golden hair and stary wand of the fairy tale. The blonde Esther Ralston glitters and shines in the most approved manner of the fairy godmother."

O. B.

EXHIBITION.

Sur-realist at the Leicester Galleries ; paintings by Jean-Pierre Viollier.

While we wait for Bunuel's sequel to *Le Chien Andalou* we can look at Viollier's beautiful paintings and learn that cinematography has scarcely touched the field of the Sur-realists.

The hagiographers remind us that Viollier reminds us that there is nothing vague in a dream, that a dream is all detail and drama. We are reminded.

There is an odd root, looking like an octopus, from which beaked lilies spring. Blood drops from the beaks. Two tiny figures dart away amongst toppling houses ; one waves a red flag. The left hand foreground is filled with a large column and a stone ball. Another canvas shows a giant wing, with disordered feathers, spread in a magic forest. Large, red blood-drops are spattered. Another shows a

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queer nest, on which a scarlet spider crawls, with a hand above which the blood-drops glow like a diadem. Another shows a face inside the twisted wire frame of a mirror resting on a tomb from which a tree trunk sprouts. A cream cup, candles, and a yellow lily make nightmare proportions. Blood drops take on their inner light. And so on.

Let one of the Paris bunch give us a short with a close up as moving as the boy's face, with the sanity bars, and the bird offering a feather, and the hand holding out a dagger, and we will hail a *point du départ* in production.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

THE MANUSCRIPT OF A MASTERPIECE.

The Schmidt Verlag of Berlin have published an interesting and inexpensive "buchlein," entitled *Der Kampf Um die Erde* by S. M. Eisenstein and G. W. Alexandroff, being the scenario of *The General Line* illustrated by twenty-one well reproduced photographs.

In the place of a Preface, Eisenstein has written an article "Drehbuch? Nein: Kinonovelle!" in which he favours the form of the literary cinema novelette rather than the traditional detailed film manuscript.

The author of a scenario has the right to speak his own language, from which the Regisseur should reach the same level of expression through the medium of his profession and his special art. It is the task of the Regisseur to make visible the emotions set down in the manuscript; to find a cinematographic equivalent to the written word.

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The first attempt at the cinema-novelette, which reaches back to 1926, is that of *The General Line*, which follows the article, and which, combined with the resulting film itself, aptly exemplifies Eisenstein's theory that the film scenario is the champagne bottle, whose only purpose is to let the cork pop out in order that the over-sparkling temperament of the wine may flow into the thirsty throats.

The little book is printed in Latin characters and, owing to its simple style, can be appreciated by those with only an elementary knowledge of German.

CHARLES E. STENHOUSE.

Only two amateur film societies were represented at the Photographic Fair in London. The London A.C.A. had prepared specially a well constructed but poorly lighted short on 16 mm. illustrating the various stages in the production of an amateur film. Ace Movies, a new but ambitious Society of forty members ran a poorly constructed but well lighted short on similar lines. Both attracted continuous and considerable attention, and results should justify the enterprising publicity.

It seems a pity that the federation of amateur societies set up by the amateur convention in the autumn of last year was not represented. Here would have been an opportunity of presenting the amateurs as a national movement, instead of leaving it to a couple of independent units to exhibit. Perhaps next year it will be done. It should be.

Bell and Howell, Kodak and the other equipment com-

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panies ran daily demonstrations, regaling the public with the usual incredibly dull travel films that don't travel, and abominations of the *Two Hours in the Zoo* and *Through Kamkatta with a Camera* school. We fled.

The most interesting piece of equipment on the stands was the De Vry Cine-Tone, a 16 mm. projector with a gramophone attachment and electric pick-up. A revolving shaft connects the projector with the gramophone record turntable, and perfect synchronization is claimed. It was difficult to check this in the demonstration room, but in any case its price (£85) places it outside the reach of most amateurs.

R. BOND.

WAKE UP AND DREAM!

On a certain day in the merry month of May a small item of news appeared in a couple of London newspapers. It was to the effect that three Russian films were being publicly exhibited in three separate London cinemas. The universe did not exactly tremble at the announcement, and the riot act was not proclaimed from police headquarters.

No, it was not a dream, but a solid, sober fact. Three Russian films showing in London at one and the same time! *Mother*, *The End of St. Petersburg*, *Turksib!* And less than twelve months ago your friends would have laughed derisively if you had dared to suggest that some day,

perhaps, a Russian film might, only *might*, somehow or other, find its way into a cinema programme.

The End of St Petersburg was given a fortnight's public run at a West End Theatre. Sceptics gloomily forecasted a failure. The Press will kill it, they said. The Scala Theatre is off the beaten track, tucked away in a side street, they said. It might last a week, but two weeks—never, they said. It's not entertainment, they said. The public only wants leg shows, they said.

The End of St. Petersburg ran for its allotted span of two weeks, and made money.

Mother was banned by the Censor and the London County Council. The West Ham Town Council granted it a local licence. It ran with conspicuous success in no less than five West Ham cinemas.

Now *Turksib* is going the rounds. The Manchester trade show was a sensation, and *Turksib* has been booked widely in the textile towns of Lancashire. Only a few London cinemas seem to have taken it so far. What Manchester does to-day, London does to-morrow. Or won't it?

There are a lot of barriers to break down. Take this for example. A cinema in Liverpool (it shall be nameless) booked *Turksib* and advertised it in the local paper thus :

KARL DANE and GEORGE K. ARTHUR

ALL AT SEA.

Also *Turksib*, a real silent super.

Next Thursday : *The Naughty Princess*.

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If *Close Up* ever offers a prize bun there will be little difficulty in selecting the first recipient.

A little cinema in the East End ran *Shanghai Document* for a week. *The General Line*, shown to the Film Society, has been passed by the Censor with an "A" certificate. The London Workers' Film Society has shown the delightful Soviet cultural film *Men of the Woods*. Workers' Film Societies have been founded in Liverpool, Cardiff, Edinburg, Manchester, Bradford.

The world moves on.

R. BOND.

HOLLYWOOD NOTES.

A year and a half ago the erratic tide of filmdom was carrying Europeans back from Hollywood to their native shores. With a few individual exceptions, there appeared to be no place for them in the newly arrived talking pictures. Now the tide has turned, and Hollywood, with its present inflow of foreigners, is becoming more numerously cosmopolitan than it ever was in its days of pantomime. This immigration includes not only actors and directors, but also many other types of artistes—composers, novelists, playwrights, impresarios, as well as voice culturists, language teachers and various other specialists now required by the studios in their production of films for the different foreign markets.

* * *

Der Blaue Engel, directed for UFA by Joseph von Sternberg of Paramount-Lasky, is responsible for the recent

arrival in Hollywood of Marlene Dietrich. Her performance in this picture with Emil Jannings, in addition to her ability to speak English, won for her an immediate call to America under contract with Paramount studio. Her first picture here, *Morocco*, is already in production, under the direction of von Sternberg.

Hollywood is now regretting that it ever allowed Jannings to leave; and it is more than likely that he will be induced to return, in view of the success of his first German talking picture, with Fraulein Dietrich, as well as that of its English version, *The Blue Angel*. Nor is he the only one whose shortsighted exiling is now repented. The need for real actors is daily becoming more apparent, and Hollywood has no native duplicates of Jannings, Varconi, Veidt, Baclonova, Negri, Nazimova and other like émigrés.

* * *

Emile de Recat, a French theatrical producer, with extensive experience in South America and Australia, as well as in Europe, has been engaged by Pathé to supervise the foreign-language productions of that company. For the present Pathé is confining such productions to Spanish, and for this purpose de Recat has gathered together a troupe of actors from Spain and South America—the first exclusively Spanish stock company to be established by any of the leading studios.

* * *

In the filming of *Monsieur Le Fox*, a story of Northwest Canada, M-G-M are making a novel experiment in the production of foreign versions of a picture. The film is being made simultaneously in five different languages—English,

CLOSE UP

French, German, Italian, and Spanish. As one language company of players finishes a scene, another at once takes its place on the set and goes through the same scene. The picture thus progresses in all five versions at the same time. Twenty-five players are enacting the seven principal rôles. Barbara Leonard, a native American but educated in Europe and a fluent linguist, plays the leading feminine part in each of the series except Spanish. In this particular version she is replaced by Rosita Ballestero. The principal male part is taken by Gilbert Roland in English and Spanish. John Reinhardt plays it in German, Andre Luguet in French, and Franco Corsaro in Italian.

* * *

As a further indication of Hollywood's determination to compete with, if not actually to dominate, the entire foreign market in talking films, Paramount studios have recently completed thirty-seven preliminary short pictures in eleven different languages—Spanish, German, French, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Japanese, Finnish, Swedish, Czech, and Esperanto. Universal Company early this year added Hungarian to their list of foreign-language versions. The first in this tongue—*Féltékenység*, directed by Paul Fejos—is reported to have been enthusiastically received upon its premiere showing in Budapest.

* * *

D. W. Griffith has completed his *Abraham Lincoln*. Many months were devoted to gathering historical data and the preparing of the scenario by the American poet, Stephen Vincent Benét. The actual filming of the picture was accomplished in the remarkably short time of thirty-one days. The

cast is of unusual length, containing more than a hundred speaking parts.

* * *

Oscar Strauss, the Viennese composer, having finished for Warner Brothers his first screen operetta, *The Danube Love Song*, is now under contract with M-G-M. He is at present preparing for this company an elaborate musical score for a film version of Schnitzler's *Daybreak*. In consenting to compose for the screen, Strauss states that he has done so because of his conviction that the audible film far exceeds the stage as a medium for the popular presentation of music, notwithstanding the fame and financial success achieved by his light operas on the stage.

* * *

Universal Company have decided to abandon the making of "Westerns" and serials, which have heretofore occupied a prominent place on their production programmes. Aside now from news reels and a few comedies, the company will hereafter devote themselves to feature pictures, as exemplified by *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *King of Jazz Revue*. Their 1930-31 production budget of \$12,000,000 will accordingly be expended on but twenty films, as compared with the fifty which this amount of money would formerly have covered.

* * *

Harold Lloyd's next picture, *Feet First*, will all be carefully worked out in script continuity before shooting. This innovation in the making of comedies has been made necessary by the introduction of speech. In the free and easy days of pantomime, comedy was largely extemporaneous.

CLOSE UP

The larger part of it was "written" directly by the camera; the spoken titles being added afterwards and made to accord with the action of the finished picture.

* * *

Now that Lon Chaney has consented to talk he will make up for lost time by being even more than garrulous in his first audible film, *The Unholy Three*. He will be nothing short of multi-vocal in this talking edition of one of his former most successful silent pictures, for he will use five separate and distinct voices—as a ventriloquist, a dummy, an old woman, a parrot, and a baker. The picture, which is being made by M-G-M, will lay claim to still further uniqueness and oddity by introducing with characteristic speech the characters of a circus side-show, including a giant and a midget, a five-hundred-pound "fat-lady," a living skeleton, a fire-eater, and other engaging freaks.

* * *

Hollywood has graciously bowed to the forces of righteousness and declared itself reformed. In token thereof it has adopted, amid much newspaper publicity, a self-imposed code of film morals three times as long as the Decalogue. Since the pictures have taken to talking, the fear of their uttering naughty words, in addition to indulging in naughty action, has so stirred the ministerial unions and other conscientious objectors that they have besieged the State legislature as well as the Federal Congress with clamorous demands for wholesale censorship. In self-defence, therefore, and as a means of averting the threatened calamity of over-zealous interference, Hollywood has voluntarily undertaken to make itself chemically pure. For the time

being, at any rate, it promises to be no longer amorous, brutal or vulgar. It will neither violate nor ridicule the laws of God and man. No kiss will exceed a foot and a half; no lady will hereafter take a bath in public, and no gentleman will cast illicit glances at some other gentleman's wife, nor will any ruffian crack another ruffian over the head without apologizing. Decorum, refinement, etiquette, culture, gentleness, purity will henceforward dominate the films, from custard-pie comedy to *Journey's End* drama, even if it means the employment of high-salaried specialists to instruct Hollywood in these social arts.

* * *

The University of California at Los Angeles is offering a course of study in film broadcasting, under the direction of Dyonis Morandini, a television technical expert. Recent demonstrations of the radio broadcasting of motion pictures have proven the practicability of this latest scientific marvel, and it is anticipated that it will not be long before there is a commercial demand for men trained in the operation of ikonophones and of all the other intricate apparatus involved in cinema television.

C. H.

At the fourth meeting of the Commission on Educational and Cultural films it was agreed that it would be useful to enquire whether particular films shown affected in any way books chosen by the public from the libraries. Various associations of boys' and girls' clubs, large stores, the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. were to be approached as well as

CLOSE UP

the libraries, and the replies were to be classified under the general headings of "adults" and "adolescents." It was also decided to enquire of Evening Institutes in London for men and women, and of the National Federation of Women's Institutes, how far films assisted their educational work. The Committee requested as well that information might be obtained as to what enquiries resulted from the exhibition of films provided by such bodies as Canada House and Australia House, and that evidence should be collected from firms and individuals who had had experience of educational cinema. Among those first to be consulted were to be the British Instructional Films, British Empire Film Institute, Polytechnic Theatre, Avenue Pavilion, (London), and Mr. S. Bernstein.

It is obvious that an enquiry on so large a scale must yield a great amount of valuable information. But as we are one of the most backward nations with regard to the use of the cinema in education, we again urge *Close Up* readers to submit their impressions of educational films in England and abroad together with their opinion as to how far these films were successful, to the Commission. For educational films can be a dull and sorry spectacle or they can offer the richest material to the cinema. And if we are not interested enough to present our views we shall find that the valuable field of the cultural film, that the greatest directors abroad have been glad to use, will pass in England into the hands of the makers of commercial and boring text books. The Commission is anxious to find out the real feelings of English lovers of the cinema. Send a postcard or a letter, containing your opinions to 39, Bedford Square, London, W.C.1.

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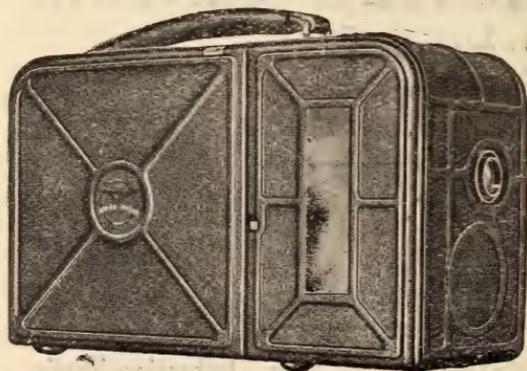
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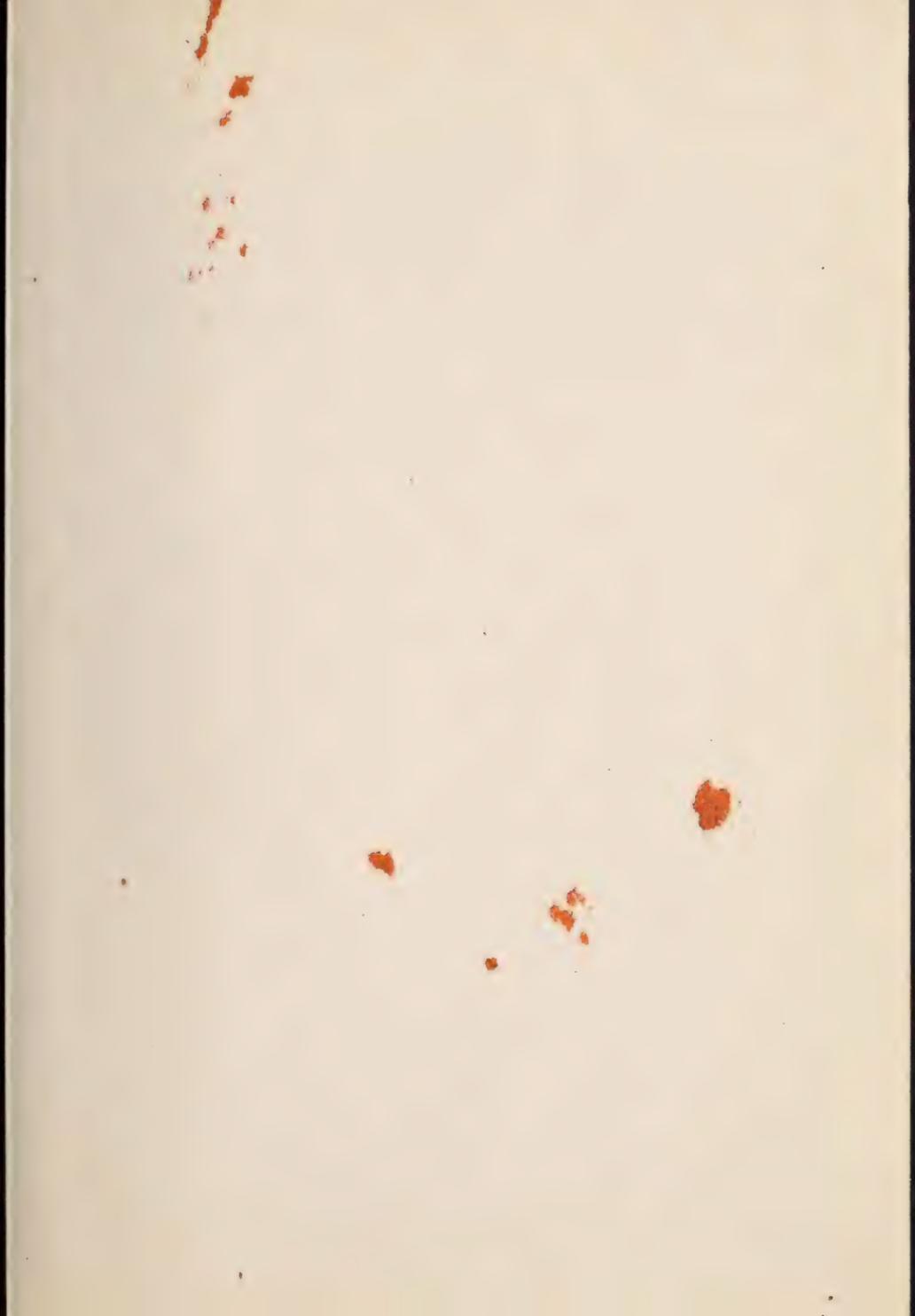
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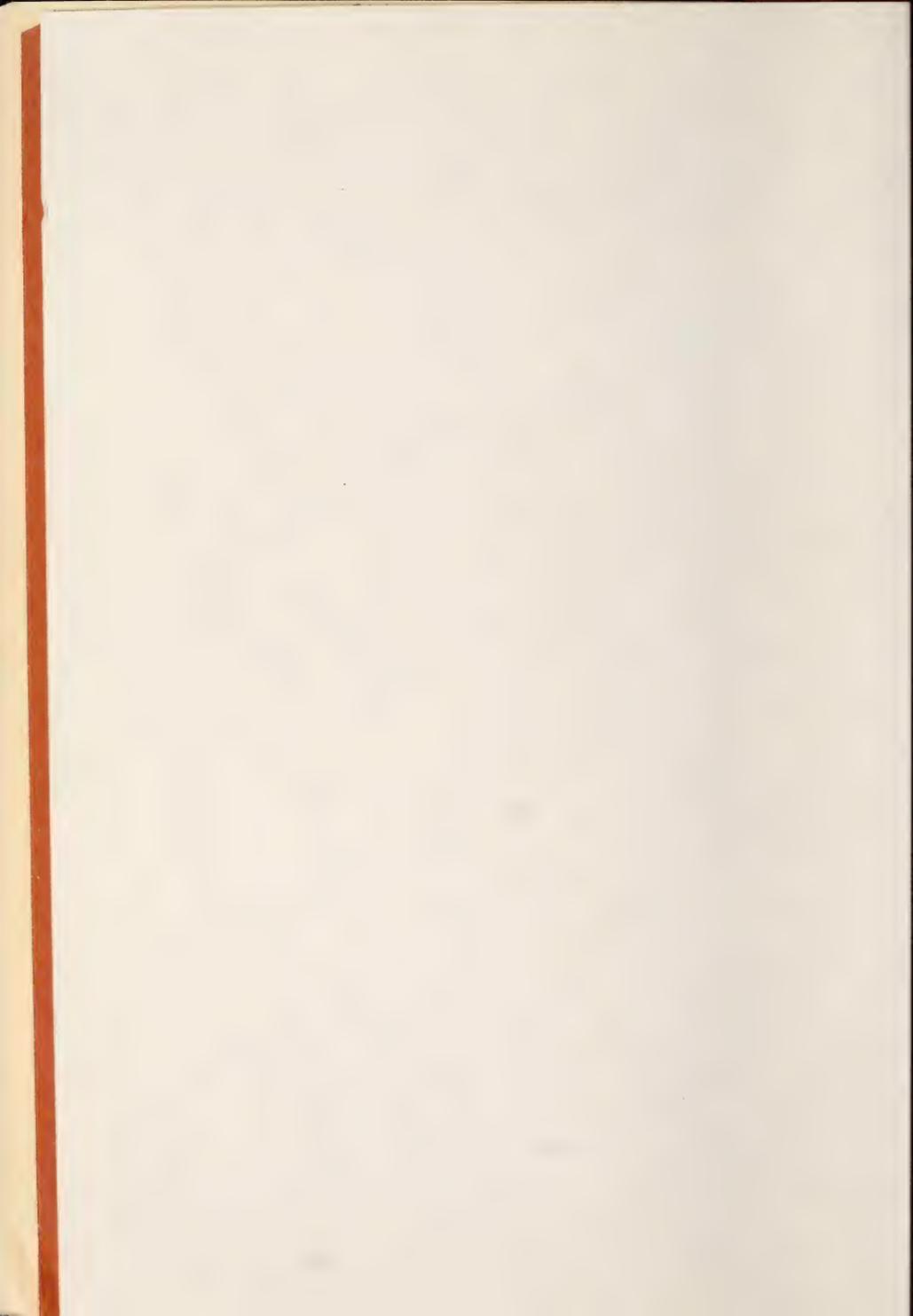
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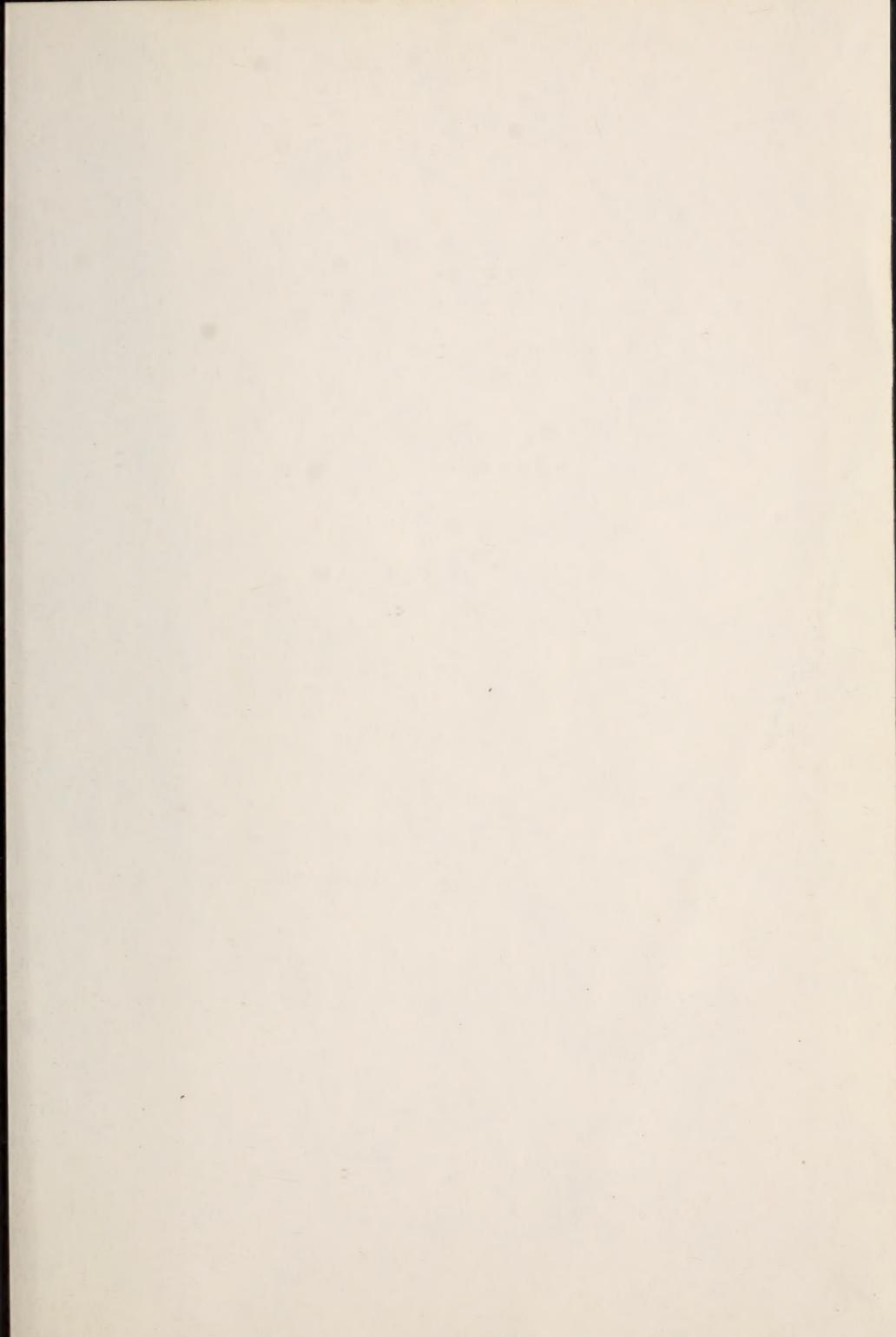
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