

SCREEN GOSSIP

By T.H.E.

Our Freedom from "Immoral" Films

"Honest Vulgarity," But Absence of Obscenity

ANGRY TIRADE UNJUSTIFIED



JEANETTE MACDONALD

I HAVE come back home after a short stay on the Continent to find that the film world is as tame and pious as ever. I have heard the loudest and most angry tirade against immoral films. I have even heard it said that my favourite Miss West is doomed, and we shall never have the pleasure of smiling at her clever art again.

This last, I hope, is but rumour's echo. I have visited the cinema on several occasions during my very rare trips abroad, and as an honest person attempting to give an equally honest view on this "immoral" situation, I say very firmly that we in this country have nothing to complain about as far as film entertainment is concerned.

The pictures that have been labelled "blue" with a vengeance, have really little in them to offend any normal, clean and broadminded Englishman.

Miss West's work, I suppose, is the most sexually sensational of the day, yet I defy anyone to say that her material

more interesting topic. But generally speaking, the theatre is left alone nowadays—only the cinema has to face the music.

If there were such grounds for complaint here as abroad one might listen patiently to the decorator's rhetoric; but there is nothing to fear.

Immoral films are always being complained about, and, of course, we have to put up with a lot of boring nonsense, but we have not as much to fear as, say, the Spaniards.

In Spain

I recently went to the pictures in Spain, and there was not a single item on the programme in Spanish. The films were either in English—or, should I say, American—and French.

Only a very small percentage of films shown in Southern countries are in the native language. They have to rely on sub-titles which can scarcely be termed satisfactory.

British films are tolerated more than American ones. People laughed themselves hoarse at "The Private Life of Henry VIII" and "Catherine the Great." I understand, was also tremendously applauded.

The Spaniard does not disguise his feelings and when he does not like his fare, he tells the world.

During the showing of "A Bedtime Story," with Maurice Chevalier, in the Alhambra cinema, I was surprised when a large section of the audience began to stamp their feet and leave the auditorium as noisily as they could.

This is a frequent occurrence, I was given to understand.

At this very performance I was the centre of an amusing situation. The evening had failed to bring with it the long-for coolness, and when I entered the theatre with my friends I removed my jacket, hoping thereby to be a little more comfortable.

When a torch was shown along the aisle and a young Spaniard attentively poured a torrent of reproach into my ears.

Indecorous

I was hustled into donning the coat and at the same time listened with mingled embarrassment and amusement while I was told that it was considered, by way of the least of it, "extremely indecorous" that I should remove my jacket in public.

I never so much wished that I had a command of the language as on that occasion.

British films are going from strength to strength. It is heartening to learn that owing to the wide success of London Film Productions' "Henry VIII" and "Catherine of Russia," the company has decided to build its own studios at Boreham Wood.

Up to the present the company have been renting studios from British and Dominion Film Corporation at Boreham Wood.

They have secured a 40-acre site in a most advantageous position, and the studios will be equipped with the latest



ELISSA LANDI

is disgusting and likely to warp the same outlook of the average citizen.

Like Mr George Robey, I am riotously entertained by "honest vulgarity." I dislike obscenity as much as the most spirited Puritan, and this we have yet to discover in British picture houses.

Abroad there are disgusting pictures shown. These films are so outrageous that I have seen seemingly hard-boiled seamen turn up their lips in disgust.

We are never, thank heaven, likely to have our entertainment taste polluted by such in this country.

Torn to Shreds

I repeat that we have nothing to complain about. Anything new that catches on with the public is almost certainly bound to be derided and torn to shreds by soured people with little minds.

When Wagner first presented his enchanting music to the world there were several people who said that it sounded immoral and was "the noises of hell let loose."

There were all kinds of arguments for and against, and eventually the trouble faded out and people settled themselves down to normal toleration, which gradually grew into intense enthusiasm.

This present controversy is but another phase of an antagonism which has persisted for many years, against pictures.

It will come to nothing. People will talk and talk, and over-sensitive enthusiasts will voice their indignation so volubly as to give our ears a good dose of noise, but the picture business will continue to flourish as ever. The picture business will continue to flourish as ever. The picture business will continue to flourish as ever.



ANNA MAY WONG



JACK BUCHANAN

THEY SAY THAT:

Gertrude Michael, appearing in "Murder at the Vanities," founded a radio station when she was 17.

Charlie Ruggles is a qualified chemist.

Miriam Hopkins began her theatrical career through a broken ankle, and that she has been chosen by Mabel Rochas, French designer, as Hollywood's best-dressed woman.

Bing Crosby is one of Hollywood's best golfers.

Gary Cooper always rehearses his lines with the script girl before going in front of the camera.

Del Henderson, former director, now actor, has been added to the cast of "The Notorious Sophie Lang."

Barbara Bonanos began her theatrical career at the age of two.

Willie Gargan is an enthusiastic philatelist.

Flores de Breton, the pretty little English screen actress who has spent the last three years on the stage in America, has come to London in search of a play which she wishes to present in New York in the autumn.

Western Electric apparatus called Wide Range, which includes a new technical improvement known as "phase shift."

I learn that Jeanette Macdonald is delighting everyone in the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios by her performances on the set in "The Merry Widow," and that her next film will be a version of the popular operetta, "Naughty Marietta."

I also learn that relations are very much strained between Miss Macdonald and her leading man, Maurice Chevalier.

Maurice, they say, cannot reconcile himself to the fact that Jeanette is as popular an artist in France as he is himself.

Anna Leaves

I had a letter from Anna May Wong the other day in which she tells me that she leaves England for America on Saturday. That means that by now she is on her way.

She has completed starring with Elizabeth Allan in "Java Head," a version of Hergeshelmer's remarkable novel of a sea captain who returns home with a Chinese wife, which I imagine will prove her best film since her memorable performance in "Shanghai Express."

She goes on to say, "I shall be able to spend a week in New York before proceeding to Hollywood to make a Paramount picture entitled 'Lamphouse Nights,' starting on August 1."

Miss Wong expects to be back in this country some time during the winter after she completes an Italian tour, which is due to start on November 1.

She is thus unable to make her first trip to China, as she had hoped to do this summer.

Critics may not pay, but Hollywood is convinced of the value of pictures dealing with crime and its penalties.

Definite Demand

The fact that Hollywood studios approximate an average of 50 to 75 detective pictures each year, proves that there is ample demand for them, according to Edgar Rogers, of Paramount's writing staff.

"We endeavour to balance our yearly programmes with at least ten per cent of pictures with such plots," Rogers explains. "Like magazines specializing in detective stories, popular appeal is always assured for motion pictures in the same category."

It makes little difference whether the audience has read the story or is familiar with the mystery climax. Screen presentations always give new

BRITISH STUDIO'S NEW MOVE

life to familiar stories and lend new character to the principals.

"There is a definite demand for this type of picture as long as audiences are familiar with such characters as Philo Vance, Charlie Chan, or Sherlock Holmes. They look forward to each adventure of these detectives of fiction with new interest."

Any new twist that can be placed on a mystery play, such as the musical background in "Murder at the Vanities," wins immediate acclaim.

With the production of Eddie Cantor's fifth annual screen musical comedy for Samuel Goldwyn (tentatively called "The Treasure Hunt"), getting close to its starting date movement and activity is already beginning.

Eddie is in San Francisco, trying out the new songs that Walter Donaldson and Gus Kahn have written for the picture, and Eliza Merman is leaving New York this week for Hollywood to begin rehearsals opposite Eddie.

She and Ann Sothern will have the feminine leads in Eddie's new comedy of adventure in the pyramids and the desert of Egypt.

Murray Johnston, Arthur Sheekman, and Nat Perrin are writing the story. Seymour Felix is staging the ensemble, and Roy Del Ruth is directing the picture.

"Monte Cristo"

When Robert Donal, the young London screen and stage star who was in "Henry VIII" and who plays the title role in Edward Small's spectacular production of "The Count of Monte Cristo" for Reliance Pictures and United Artists, arrived in Hollywood, there were three things he couldn't get used to.

One was piloting a left-hand drive automobile on the right side of the street instead of the left, and asking for gasoline when he bought petrol; another was American money, and the third, birds that sing all night.

He finally mastered American traffic rules by driving at dawn and practising on deserted streets, but he never did get over the fact that a dime is smaller than a nickel but buys twice as much.

As for the California night birds, Donal is a lover of nature, but a very light sleeper, and he moved four times during the filming of "The Count of



EDDIE CANTOR

Monte Cristo" before he found a place where, featured melody didn't float through his open windows from dusk till dawn.

Donal brings Alexandre Dumas's immortal hero, Edmond Dantes, to the screen as a member of a cast of hundreds that includes Elissa Landi, Louis Calhern, and O. P. Heggie.

"Brewster's Millions," Jack Buchanan's new starring film for British and Dominions, is to be produced on the most lavish international scale.

Playing opposite him is glamorous Lili Damita, Continental and Hollywood actress; the director is the American, Thornton Freeland, whose outstanding Hollywood musical successes include "Whoopee" and "Flying Down to Rio."

Sunderland Shows at a Glance

- BLACK'S REGAL THEATRE:** "Fashions of 1894," William Powell, Bette Davis; "White Wings," British Naval Epic. On the stage: Evelyn Hardy, England's greatest lady trumpeter; and her Ladies Band.
- HAVELOCK:** "Wild Boy," Sonnie Hale, Gwyneth Lloyd, Leonora Corbett, Flanagan and Allen and Mick the Miller.
- PALACE:** "Advice to the Lovelorn," Lee Tracy, Sally Blane; "Cross-country Cruise," Lew Ayres.
- KINGS:** "Bobby Mall," Edmund Lowe and Ralph Forbes; "Beloved," John Boes and Gloria Stuart.
- PICTURE HOUSE:** "One Secret Service," Greta Nissen, Don Alvarado; "For Love of You," Arthur Risco and Naumion Wayne.
- MILFIELD:** "A Shrike in the Night," Ginger Rogers; "Between Fighting Men," Ken Murray (Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday); "Meet the Baron," Zasu Pitts, Edna May Oliver, and "Schneizle Durante" (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday).
- ROKER:** "Broadway Singer," Claudette Colbert and Ricardo Cortez (Monday and Tuesday); "I'm No Angel," Mae West (Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday).
- VILLIERS:** "King of the Wild," William Janney, Rex, the wonder horse; "Thrill Hunter," Ben Jones (Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday); "Pride of the Force," Leslie Fuller (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday).