

is comedy, too, although it is much nearer than the others to straight comedy, and contains some dramatic situations. It is a very fine example of British screen art and may well be included among the outstanding films of the year.

**T**HE Hepworth quality is adequately maintained in "Tansy," a simple and charming picture, with all the beauty of English landscapes well photographed.

Sporting dramas are essentially a British product, and although most of them run on conventional lines and have a certain general similarity, there is a lot of good work in all of them, and they undoubtedly are popular features in this country.

Two or three firms have contributed to the output of such pictures, and there is little to choose between them; they are all at least good, clean entertainment. "The Sporting Double," "The Sporting Instinct" and "The Sport of Kings" (Granger-Davidson), "Stable Companions" (Jury), "The White Hope" (Butchers), "Long Odds" (Stoll) and "The Son of Kissing Cup" (Butchers).

For ordinary dramatic features, which, although not always of high artistic merit, but, nevertheless, normally containing good technical work and enough entertainment value to make them worth while, Stoll must be credited with the biggest output. They are usually well acted and maintain a uniform level below which they rarely sink. Perhaps the most outstanding are "The Passionate Friends," "The Peacemaker" and "Dick Turpin's Ride to York."

**G**EORGE CLARK productions, handled by the same firm, are well represented by "The Persistent Lovers" and "Fox Farm," the latter having all the charm of the English countryside and a simple human story, well told and well acted; but in "Boy Woodburn" and "The Maid of the Silver Sea" the standard was lowered by weak stories, and in the former, at least, by excessive footage.

The film of the year, as far as program features are concerned, is undoubtedly "The Wonderful Story," and it is not only a credit to all concerned, but to the British Industry. This, at least, is a picture worthy to compete with any foreign production in all respects, always excepting those of the "super" variety, which involve lavish settings and crowd handling.

Although this is the film of the year, it is run close for pride of place by "The Bill of Divorcement" (Ideal) and "The Card" (Ideal), both of which merit the highest praise.

**Q**UALITY FILM PLAYS made an auspicious start with "His Wife's Husband" (Walturdaw), which tells an ordinary melodramatic story, but has excellent technical qualities and splendid direction and acting.

One of the most noticeable features of the latter part of the year has been the increase in short stuff, and good short stuff at that. British producers have not been very successful with slapstick comedy, but in more serious offerings they have done very good work. First and foremost are "Secrets of Nature" (Regent), which are the best type of natural history interest pictures screened. They deserve all the success that is coming to them, both for their educational and their entertainment qualities.

Short comedies and dramas produced by Quality Film Plays are outstanding short material, and show the care usually only expected in larger subjects. Masters' subjects of potted operas and incidents from well-known books and plays also provide good short material for a varied program, as does Butchers' "Romance of History" series.

It is impossible in a short review of the British output to deal with every film produced, but the general tendency seems to be a distinct improvement from all viewpoints, especially in photography and lighting generally, while the weaknesses are still indifferent scenarios, with all the faults that they entail.—LIONEL COLLIER.

# FOUNDATIONS OF PRODUCTION

## VIII. — Showing the Picture

by FRANK CRANE

The question will probably be asked what the deuce has the producer to do with showing the picture. It is made, edited, jointed up, his work is done. His job is to find another story, engage some more artistes, find the money, and get busy. Still, the showing may interfere with these things, and turn him from a cheerful optimist, the man who has seen his work privately and knows it to be good, into a cynical dyspeptic with a bad heart-ache, the man who has seen his work ruined by careless or indifferent showing.

### Improving Exploitation.

Things are a hundred per cent. better than they were. Showmen are waking up to the fact that the kinema is not a penny show for children, and that the patrons of the village picture-house are as entitled to their money-worth just as well as those of the city's gorgeous picture palace. They have not, however, all got wise to the absolute necessity of good projection and of the employment of trained operators and electricians. A man who has taken to projection as a "spare time" means of earning a few more shillings a week when his union refuses him work any longer as a plumber, and who has learned the picture-showing game from a text book or through the unhappy medium of a correspondence college, can easily wreck the finest picture a producer ever made. Genius has little chance against a heaven-born capacity for solid incompetence.

### The Screen Expression.

Projection cannot be undertaken with too much care. It is an art in itself, and should

be regarded as such. Nor are the little kinemas the only ones to blame. In one of the best kinemas in London during the showing of a single picture I have seen the frame line shown half a dozen times, the thing was out of focus on several occasions, and the light died down. While at some places, not usually devoted to pictures, the projection has been on lines calculated to make the most austere saint forget his halo and his saintliness.

### Prologues.

"Presentation" is a new idea born of the fertile minds of American showmen, brought over here with supers, or so-called supers, within the last few years, and heralded joyfully as a novelty with an attraction value all its own.

I don't believe it has any value, or, if any, very little.

Most prologues partake of the nature of miniature stage plays. These are chiefly remarkable for their worthlessness, the badness of the acting, and the fact that they have little, if anything, to do with the picture they are supposed to herald. The play should be the thing in a theatre, not a broad-casting set or a tape machine, and a picture should get over without the aid of ineffective tableau, snatches of opera, or thin slices of melodramatic piffle.

Of course, this presentation idea may have a more subtle meaning than a mere managerial desire to give the public a lot for its money, especially when a picture

is being shown in a fully-licensed theatre. I have heard it whispered that the production of a little play or such-like as a sort of curtain-raiser, retains the building's excise licence and enables the bars to remain open.

### Dramatic Unity.

If stage prologues are necessary, and I know many showmen consider they are, let them be plays. Let them have a bearing on the picture that is destined to follow, be carefully written, produced and acted. The legitimate theatres of late years have adopted many of the picture's best lighting effects, therefore let the kinema take of the best the theatre has. If it is worth doing at all it is worth doing well. But do let the prologue keep in touch with the theme of the picture.

As little scenery as possible should be used. For the kinema scenic draperies are best, a suggestion of thematic setting should be all that is necessary. "Effects off" are also often a pitfall, although effective enough when properly rehearsed to synchronise with the action of the picture.

Care should also be taken when vocal accompaniment is necessary for some scene—don't have a church choir singing modern Methodist hymns when a dead Viking chieftain is being carried to his grave—it wasn't really done and your audience knows it. In the same way an organ playing Tosti's "Good-bye" or "Rock of Ages" when a convict is dying in his cell is somewhat out of place, however helpful it may be in getting the sob-stuff over.