Stage & Screen

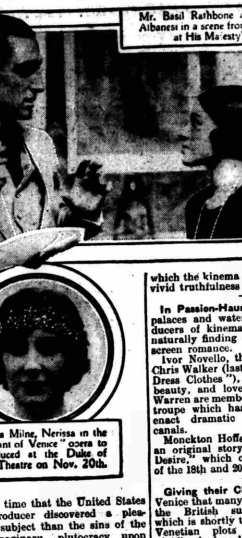
Miss Julie Faber and Miss Lorrie Dorndike in a scene from "The Scandal" at the New Theatre.

Miss Frances Carson as Doris Reade in "Glamour," the new comedy at the Apollo Theatre.

Miss Corinne Griffith, the pretty young Vitagraph film star, in "Moral Fibre," just released.

Mr. Basil Rathbone and Miss Meggie Albanesi in a scene from "East of Suez" at His Majesty's Theatre.

Miss Lena King, appearing in "The Smith Family" at the Empire Theatre.



Miss Ella Milne, Nerissa in the "Merchant of Venice" opera to be produced at the Duke of York's Theatre on Nov. 20th.

THE NEW BOX-OFFICE PEST.

THE autumn theatrical season has brought with it a particularly objectionable kind of theatre bug. This is the person, sometimes a man, sometimes a woman, with more money than sense of fair play, who telephones to about half a dozen theatres during the day and asks that a certain number of stalls shall be reserved for him or her at the evening performance.

The object of this practice is to be able to pose as a very important person in theatrical circles. One or two managers who have recently been victimised by this pestilential form of "patron" have taken pains to track it down.

Impressing His Friends.—It seems that what happens is this. The "hog" is entertaining a party of friends to dinner. Towards the end of the meal, he (or she) says with assumed casualness: "Now what theatre shall we go on to? I have seats for —"; and he rattles off a list. "How on earth do you manage to get such a pick as that?" remarks someone, in admiration. "Oh, well, I happen to have a bit of a pull with theatre managers," is the mock modest reply.

Result, up goes the "hog's" stock with the impressed guests—and down go the receipts of four or five theatres, unless the box-offices concerned can happen to get rid of the "reserved" seats at the last minute.

The Gallery Critic.—Mlle. Marie Leconte's company from the Comédie Française had a rather surprising reception during the first performance of "Venise" at the Coliseum. Underestimating the size of the theatre, they played somewhat too intimately and certain sections of the audience became "restless."

One gallery malcontent, so the manager of the Coliseum told me, made no secret about his desire for Little Tich to come on instead of "this here frenchy stuff."

For my own part, I enjoyed the "Frenchy stuff" enormously—and so, apparently, did a great many others. There is nothing but talk in "Venise"—but what delightful talk much of it is! And how excellently it is carried off, with that Gallic sense of humour in which a look, a gesture counts for a lot.

A Little Machine-like.—Undoubtedly there is a certain public for the Swedish Ballet, at the Court Theatre for a month, but I do not think that the entertainment which M. Jean Borlin and his company have to offer will go down among the big successes of the season.

Parts of it are very good indeed, notably a traditional Swedish dance by the corps de ballet, and a Grecian dance in which six attractive young women move to music by Grieg; but a good deal of the opening performance was dull and uninspired. Some of the dancing to Chopin meant nothing to me, for instance.

The Ballet lacks an outstanding personality; it is inclined to be machine-like; and some of the examples of scenic art and lighting, "brought straight from Germany," so an English expert in these matters told me, are not very impressive or beautiful.

Nice to Know Again.—Peter Garland (who is really a woman) has not written a very original play in "Glamour," brought to the Apollo Theatre during the week. It is our old friends the wicked earl (this time Sir George Knowsley, K.C.B.), and the trusting maiden once again.

True, they have climbed to the environment of the 7s. 6d. novel, and true, also, they have added the well-known question of "Should a young woman tell?" to their complications, but they can't disguise themselves. Still, they have all been to such good schools and universities, got such good jobs, and been dressed by such fastidious tailors that they are quite nice to know again.

The Inveterate Voyager.—It is a special pleasure to make the acquaintance of the leading girl in "Glamour" in the person of Miss Frances Carson. Miss Carson, extraordinarily like Miss Fay Compton at certain angles, is a British actress who comes to London by way of the United States. Added to her looks, she has those two very important assets, charm and talent.

Mr. C. Aubrey Smith is the middle-aged gentleman in the play. As usual, he is none too happy at home, and—again as usual—he is about to go off to a far country. Mr. Smith is surely the champion traveller of the stage: he is always going to Ceylon, or Siam, or East Africa, or Timbuctoo, or somewhere miles away.

A Revue with Ideas.—Not since "The Co-Optimists" burst upon a delighted London have I seen a new musical show start with higher promise of complete popular success than "The Nine O'Clock Revue" at the Little Theatre.

Ideas literally tumble over each other in it, and a great deal of the material employed is refreshingly first-class. Almost every skit, for example, works up to a genuinely funny ending—a rare thing in revue as it has come to be.

Kept Laughing.—The whole company in "The Nine O'Clock Revue" is so good that in singling out Miss Beatrice Lillie, Miss Irene Browne, and Mr. Morris Harvey for special mention I am paying them a big compliment.

Miss Lillie has one song, "William the Conk," which is so absurdly funny that the laughter of the audience almost drowned the words on the first night; Miss Browne confirms the impression that, given chances, she is among the cleverest actresses in revue we have, and I have never seen Mr. Harvey to such complete advantage.

Making Good at the End.—"The Balance" is an appropriate name for the new play at the Strand Theatre, for its chances of a London success appear to lie in whether a finely realistic Old Bailey scene at the finish can weigh down all the crude drama that comes before.

Five of the seven scenes almost made one think that the authors, Messrs. Frank Dix and Leon M. Lion, ought to be arraigned in the Criminal Court and made to answer for their sins, but in the end they mended good part of began when the hitherto clerk to the villainous Theodore Cornell. got his employer at the end of a pistol.

Of course the wrong man was held guilty of the murder; and with such fidelity was the trial scene carried out—even to the putting on of the black cap by the judge, Mr. "Handsome Jack" Barnes, that when the little clerk jumps up in court, confessed, and then committed suicide, the tense silence which had come over the theatre was broken by a great burst of relieved applause. The scene is a real triumph in stagecraft.

Big Company's Best.—"The Balance" is played by a big company, and the acting is uneven. Some of the players go almost to the lengths of burlesque.

Mr. Elton is very good—a sort of Uriah Heap, without the cunning; but, for my part, I thought that no others were quite so good as were Mr. Sebastian Smith as an old man and Mr. Edward Rigby as a young man who preferred betting to working.

The Week's Plays:

Monday: "Mid-Channel" (Irene Vanbrugh) Royalty.
Monday: "Hamlet" (Comedie Française). Coliseum.
Tuesday: "The Cat and the Canary" (Mary Glynne). Shaftesbury.
Thursday: "The Beggar's Opera" (1,000th Performance). Lyric, Hammersmith.
Thursday: "The Secret Agent" (from Conrad's novel). Ambassadors.

W. P.

IS it not time that the United States film producer discovered a pleasanter subject than the sins of the mainly imaginary plutocracy upon which he focuses his camera week by week with monotonous insistence?

With these burlesqued studies of New York's "smart" world, he is not only slandering his own countrymen, but is also performing a serious social disservice by deliberately promoting misunderstandings between classes.

Spectacular at Cost of Truth.—Only the "capitalist" of Bolshevik conception riots away his days in the superRoman orgies favoured by the wealthy wasters of screen fiction. Yet, apart from the dull vulgarity of such spectacles, there is always the danger of too-credulous picturegoers believing that some of it must be true.

In "The Beautiful Liar," (just shown privately), life at a fashionable hotel, where the idle rich find employment in the endless pursuit of pleasure," we are told that the hero is "wealthy enough to be rude to people."

That even a rich man's wife "often wears a real mother's heart beneath her butterfly mask" is the covert gibe of "Rich Men's Wives," another recently imported production, which concentrates upon the boorish excesses of "thoroughbred" pleasure seekers.

Poor Substitutes for Reality.—Such instances, in exaggerated forms, could be multiplied indefinitely. The fact that these films are produced innocently enough, with the object of providing dazzling dress displays and sensational entertainment, does not lessen the harm they may do as a direct incitement to class-warfare.

Besides which, the misdeeds of millionaires who make fortunes by bawling through telephones, and the foolish frailties of their neglected wives, are a poor substitute for the real-life tales which the kinema can shadow with such vivid truthfulness and penetration.

In Passion-Haunted Palaces.—In the palaces and waterways of Venice producers of kinema emotions are very naturally finding an ideal birthplace of screen romance.

Ivor Novello, the composer-film star, Chris Walker (last seen in "The Man in Dress Clothes"), Yazikova, a Russian beauty, and lovely English Dorothy Warren are members of a British kinema troupe which has just left London to enact dramatic deeds on Venetian canals.

Monckton Hoffe has written for them an original story, "The Man without Desire," which contrasts the manners of the 18th and 20th centuries.

Giving their City a Lift.—It was in Venice that many scenes were staged for the British super-film "Carnival," which is shortly to be reissued. Ancient Venetian plots and passions were vividly shadowed, also, in a remarkable version (shown privately during the week of Michael Zevaco's novel, "The Bridge of Sighs," wherein the famous bridge to the dread prison-house is prominently "featured."

Produced by Italians, with the eager co-operation of all modern Venice (which takes great pride in its past), the film is full of marvellously beautiful settings which should swell the rush of film-folk to the Adriatic already begun.

The Truculent Captain.—Half a dozen Englishmen went adventuring last spring to the sun-bathed Canary Islands, where for two months they organised alarming battles of swarthy natives in the peaceful banana groves.

The result of their disturbing activities in this haunt of lazy bliss was seen during the week in a lively "Captain Kettle" film which depicts the exploits of C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne's well-known hero as king of a quarrelsome island community. Many of the scenes were staged aboard a tramp steamer on which the players passed uncomfortable weeks amid rolling seas off the African coast.

A D'Annunzio Touch.—Dead empires rise from their ruins to war again upon the screen in "Cabiria," the Italian film epic of Rome's struggles with the dusky hordes of Carthage, which opened a month's run at the Philharmonic Hall, W., yesterday.

Produced nearly ten years ago, this impressive pageant play is comparable in magnitude with the most elaborate screen spectacles of to-day.

The story was sketched by the Italian poet, Gabriele d'Annunzio, who also wrote characteristically florid sub-titles for the original version. This somewhat intricate screen poetry has now wisely been replaced by plain British prose.

RECIPES FOR FILM PASSIONS.

I SPENT an instructive afternoon during the week watching a scene of high-powered passion generated by Hugh Miller and Madge Stuart in the studio of Quality Plays, a young British producing concern which is specialising in short-story films.

In the torrid glare of the spluttering arc lamps, Mr. Miller staggered towards a "property" window with clenched hands and trembling lips, while an assistant unemotionally checked his positions for the close-up with a tape measure.

For two hours Mr. Miller and Miss Stuart stormed each other with extempore invective until, fever point satisfactorily attained, the camera filmed a breathless but adequate half-minute scene for "The Letters."

Try Strong Tea!—Over a coffee cup of tea, Mr. Miller told me that in the United States of America on one occasion he had been compelled to stay up all night in order to reach the pitch of nervous tension necessary for an exacting emotional scene.

The entire company assembled at nine in the evening, drank coffee till midnight, and, as dawn broke, finally enacted the episode in a condition of hysteria.

Romeo's screen anguish may be inspired by strong tea and sleeplessness, but it is usually the real thing.

Testing the Wordless Story.—That there is at present no scope for authors in filmland is the opinion of Rafael Sabatini, the well-known novelist-historian, who recently tested the possibilities of wordless stories by adapting three of his own tales to the screen.

"Blue," the first of the trio, which is to be released this week, distinctly bears the mark of an experienced literary craftsman in its constructional qualities and stylistic sub-titling. Yet Mr. Sabatini is dissatisfied with the result.

Fettered Authors.—"Apart from the sale of film rights in my books, I shall take no further interest in pictures," Mr. Sabatini told me. "A scenario takes longer to write than a novel. If I had continued studio work I should have been forced to abandon my career as an author. Until the writer has the same position in the studio as he occupies in the theatre and controls the production of his plays, there can be no future for him in work in film-land."

When the Hero is Needy.—Overturnished homes for needy heroes are a not infrequent paradox of film settings which, on one occasion, drew a criticism. I am told, from Sir H. Rider Haggard.

Watching an Italian version of his own novel, "Beatrice," in which are depicted the monetary troubles of an impoverished clergyman, he remarked that his parson's screen house contained a magnificent table of obviously great value.

"If only he had the sense to sell that table," commented the author, "he could easily escape all the worries with which I provided him."

Scoundrels French.—Studying the French accent without learning the language has been occupying the attention of Cameron Carr, the notorious screen villain, who recently played a French role in Brittany for Guy Newall's latest picture, "A Maid of the Silver Sea."

"French lip movements differ very patently from English, and are quite clearly distinguishable in close-ups before the camera," he pointed out to me. "Although I do not know a word of the tongue, I pride myself that my accent French is perfect."

L. Y.

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