

THE past three weeks of British Trade shows have provided excellent support to the Prince of Wales' dictum that the film industry should be taken seriously. A very high level of production has been maintained, and there is not a single picture that does not deserve to be taken seriously, or is not good entertainment.

Amongst the enormous influx of foreign films, there is a very large proportion which it is not worth while criticising; it is not that they are intrinsically bad, but that they are unsatisfying and puerile, and on occasions an insult to the intelligence.

### Worthy of Criticism.

Every one of the British pictures invites criticism and is worthy of being criticised. Every one of them has a sincerity of purpose behind it, and discloses a real endeavour to make something really worth while. The technical quality is on a very high level, and many of the productions are scenically and photographically artistic and beautiful, and need fear no comparison with the best the world can show.

There are a number of pictures available for the British Film Weeks still to be Trade shown, but this appears to be an opportune time to discuss the various tendencies and qualities of the majority that have already appeared. Without making any invidious comparisons, the productions that have broken new ground

### Breaking New Ground.

more particularly, and are the most interesting from the point of view of the possibilities and art of the screen, are George Cooper's "Quality Plays" (Gaumont). Four out of a series of six were shown, one a comedy which, though amusing enough, was not particularly distinctive. The three dramas all agree in being intensely dramatic and splendidly constructed. Moreover, they demonstrate that Cooper has a fine sense of direction, in that he has got the best out of every artiste in the cast. "The Reverse of the Medal" resolves itself into the physiological study of a general's mind during the planning of a campaign, and is a brilliant example of story construction, artistic restraint and forcible drama; there is a complete economy of action and a clear and concise intensity of purpose. Of a satire by Guy de Maupassant, entitled "Finished," it is enough to say that the author's aim and intention has been entirely translated on the screen.

In screening W. W. Jacobs' short stories (Artistic), Manning Haynes has also managed to reproduce the characteristics and atmosphere of his author's writing. This is especially noticeable in "The Constable's Move" and "The Convert." Both of these are delightful and express W. W. Jacobs' rich and typically English humour, as well as the undoubted philosophical truths that underlie it. Compared with comedies from any other country there is always a balance in favour of these. As in Quality Plays there is a marked economy of action and an evident intention to keep to the point without side-tracking.

### Economy of Action.

"Armageddon" (New Era) is in a category by itself, and is the most illuminating picturisation of a campaign that one could imagine. H. Bruce Woolfe has managed to combine tactical operations with an epic that will rouse the enthusiasm of every Englishman. The producer has treated his subject with dignity and

### The Empire's Part.

a lack of mock heroics, and there is quite a difficulty in determining which are the war topicals and which the

# SCREEN VALUES

## A Survey of Current Tendencies and Qualities

by LIONEL COLLIER, M.A., Review Editor.

noteworthy picture is "Woman to Woman" (Balcon, Freedman and Savile). The producer, Graham Cutts, has avoided shibboleths and conventions which a story of this type would have undoubtedly been invested with by an American producer. What is more,

### A Broken Convention.

he has given us an ending which is entirely logical, and an improvement on the one in the stage play from which the film was adapted; he has had the courage to let his heroine die, and by so doing has kept the dramatic impression of the whole conception. There has been no attempt to follow the convention of over elaboration and spectacular imbecility where a cabaret scene offers the opportunity. The breaking of these conventions is not confined to this picture, but is common to the majority of British producers and is a very distinct gain, both to conviction and artistry; if lack of money, and one hopes it is not, is the reason for this, then the longer the money is short the better for the dramatic qualities of British pictures.

There have been quite a number of costume and historical films, and considering the material that is available in this country it is not to be wondered at. Of these "Becket" (Stoll) is really outstanding. Germany so far has been the most prolific in this type of picture, and where the national bias has not been unduly stressed, and the period to be covered has not been too long, they have been singularly impressive. "Becket" is worthy to be ranked among them, for while holding to historical facts or accepted traditions, it succeeds in presenting a dramatic story, well unfolded and thoroughly interesting. George Ridgwell is to be congratulated for his direction.

### History and Drama.

Other costume plays, "M'Lord o' the White Road" (Granger) and "In the Blood" (Butcher) have many excellent qualities. The former, however, is deficient in story value, and Arthur Rooke can hardly be blamed for not having done more with the material at his command. He has succeeded in keeping a romantic atmosphere. "In the Blood" is a typical English boxing story and provides excellent entertainment; no other country could so successfully interpret the sporting spirit which is peculiarly our own. More pictures of this type are needed to counteract the influence of pictures from other countries, which are quite markedly having an effect on our national life.

### Costume Plays.

Finally, "A Couple of Down and Outs" (Samuelson) shows that a British producer is capable of a really fine spectacular effect. There have been no better war scenes than those produced in this picture, and while the story is sentimental, it has sincerity and an object. Hepworth gives two pictures, "Comin' Thro' the Rye" and "The Naked Man," both of which are delightfully pleasant to look at. The former is beautiful scenically, if not particularly arresting in story, while the latter is whimsical and amusing in a much more novel way than the majority of film comedies. There need be no fear of the future of the industry if the level of the pictures shown during these last three weeks is maintained, and there should be every reason to take British films seriously—and support them.

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