

▶▶ The Movies ◀◀

▶▶ "My Man"

ALL admirers of the art of Fannie Brice (and this should include every sensible member of the human race) can now see and hear the première gamine of the American stage singing, grinning and clowning her way through a rather inadequate talkie named for her most famous song. They will be a bit disappointed at the reproduction of Miss Brice's voice and they will find the story that the Warner Brothers have had written for her fairly sloppy in spots.

But these factors will, we venture to say, make very little difference to them. Fannie Brice will hold and charm them just as effectively as she ever did on the stage, because her abilities as an entertainer are so extraordinary that they could pull her over many more rough spots than she has to negotiate in "My Man."

Archie Mayo directed this picture and again proved that he has a better conception of pace than any other man in the business. "My Man" moves along through many different scenes with refreshing speed and pep and lags only in those parts where the script grows too heavy to carry, or where the picture turns silent. As in "On Trial" Mr. Mayo made all his people act with the most commendable naturalness and practically eliminated from his action all such faults as stage waits and slow cues. In Guinn Williams and Edna Murphy he had two performers of rare ability to help him out. Williams, an actor new to us, brought a rugged, clumsy honesty to his part that looked easy, so skilfully did he develop it, but which we hereby applaud as unusually able acting. Watch this young man, with his hefty frame and authentic Southern drawl; he will make a good thing out of the talking movies.

Since they had to write a story for Miss Brice, it's hard to see how it could have been other than a Jewish story. But sometimes we think that one more crack about surreptitious indulgence in ham and we'll be out in the street talking to ourself. But—there, there! Miss Brice recites "Mrs. Cohen at the Beach;" she sings "My Man" twice, and "I'm an Indian" and "The Boidies that Sing in the Spring" and, above all, she sings "Second Hand Rose." And

By A. M. SHERWOOD, JR.

for what you have to pay to see "My Man," that's an awful, awful lot.

▶▶ "The Circus Kid"

WE have here an elaborately manufactured story of circus life, the central figure of which is that talented child actor, Frankie Darro, and which includes in its cast Joe E. Brown and Helene Costello. We can't say we cared for it.

Every scene in "The Circus Kid" ended in an anti-climax of one sort or another and gave the impression that the persons responsible for the continuity were getting the flu, and growing weaker and less able to be about their



FANNIE BRICE

The première gamine of the American stage

business with each reel. Long before the final anti-climax was reached, one knew all too well what was going to happen and, sure enough, it did; and (as Mr. Lardner has so pertinently put it) what of it?

▶▶ "The Haunted House"

CHESTER CONKLIN and an assorted gang of comedians, villains and spooks make of this rather meaningless comedy-mystery-melodrama a thing not entirely devoid of merit.

It's one of those yarns about the rich

relative who tries, by testing out the nerves of all his prospective heirs, to find out which one of them it was that put the arsenic in his highball. So he tricks them all into coming to his spooky country house and puts them through a series of supposedly hair-raising experiences to find the culprit.

Forget to keep track of the plot—and you may get laughs enough out of this picture to compensate you for going, but this will depend on how capable a forgetter you are.

▶▶ "Prep and Pep"

CULVER MILITARY ACADEMY is the scene of this attempt by William Counselman and David Butler to duplicate the success of "The High School Hero." "Prep and Pep" is a very nice picture, but it isn't "The High School Hero" by a long shotput.

One thing "Prep and Pep" has got, however, is a singularly accomplished boy comedian. His name is Frank Albertson and some of our more mature comics would do well to take note of his methods, and observe the unflagging attention to business that marks his handling of his part.

David Rollins, who has the lead, is not a favorite juvenile of ours. He seems a little too la-de-da to be credible in the parts he plays. John Darrow, on the other hand strikes us as being one of the most attractive and able of the younger screen actors.

We hope David Butler will do some more stories of youth and that Mr. Counselman will write them; but we should like to see them work their stories out with a little more care.

▶▶ "Riley the Cop"

IT NOW BECOMES necessary to take notice of a spotty comedy from the Fox lots entitled "Riley the Cop" featuring Farrell McDonald and Louise Fazenda.

Of this production we should say that Officer Riley's inability to conceal his identity, in any guise, because of his police feet, and a momentary scene wherein he and Miss Fazenda make faces at each other, with a hurried private rehearsal before each face, are fairly bright features of an otherwise sad attempt at fun-making.

Speaking of Books

Edited by FRANCES LAMONT ROBBINS

A Week's Reading

The Magic Island. By W. B. SEABROOK: Harcourt, Brace. Published January 3.

JUST AS dragon lizards, great shambling things left over from prehistoric days, still live on a remote Pacific island, so, on an island near at hand there flourish today religions such as one reads of in "The Golden Bough." In "The Magic Island" a courageous, imaginative and skilful man who has investigated the soul of Haiti, reports upon it, brilliantly. The same success which attended the Seabrook book on Arabia should fall to "The Magic Island." It is a prize among travel books. Considering its contents in the wrong order, the second half of the book is given over to an engaging account of the "civilized" part of Haitian society where the United States Marines, the representatives of foreign commerce, the black leaders and the mixed creole population mingle in a sort of comic opera performance against a magnificent scenic drop. Here there are familiar tropic tunes. But in the first half, the music is macabre. Haiti must be a startling place. Electricity lights in roads, and in the ditches a sleek black bull, with candles blazing on his horns is sacrificed to ancient gods. Exquisite brown girls dance in Paris clothes in the cosmopolitan ball rooms of Port au Prince and hurry home to concoct love philtres. Seabrook, by his own gracious tact and sympathy as well as by good fortune met, lived with and was confided in by the high priests of Voodoo. His adventures carried him farther, presumably, than non-believers have gone before. He witnessed the celebration of sacred mysteries. And he saw, too, the performances of necromancers. He touched primitive faith, and the charlatanry that exploits the gullible. He found no sacrilege in the Voodoo religion, an extremely emotional and apparently solacing faith, a curious conjunction of medieval catholicism and Dionysiac or Mithraic-like beliefs. He separates Voodoo definitely from sorcery and the practice of the Black Mass with which it is usually confused. The material

which he secured is remarkable and valuable. He writes with imagination and sympathy and with considerable knowledge of primitive and orgiastic cults and of folklore. The stories he tells are wierd, often frightful. But in reading "The Magic Island" one is reminded of "The Emperor Jones," and not to the advantage of the Seabrook book. The scenes which Seabrook describes must have been awful to witness but they do not make the hair rise and the flesh creep as did that

With this issue, Speaking of Books will inaugurate a new policy in book reviewing. All important books will be reviewed in the issue immediately following the date of publication, so that you will be able to read about the new books as soon as they come out.

We believe this will be of considerable value to you. Book reviews are as much news as are accounts of current events. We want our book columns to reflect the immediate book situation, not the book situation of six weeks back. So far as we know, no magazine in the field consistently attempts to do this. In addition, in each issue will be found a list of interesting and important books forthcoming in the week following.

terrifying play. The illustrations, unfortunately, are inane and merely vulgar. Looking at them, we are again reminded that it takes an artist to transmit to his audience the mystery and terror of dark things.

Another Part of the Wood. By DENIS MACKAIL: Houghton, Mifflin. Published January 4.

THIS is what is usually described as Hammock literature. It concerns some English boys and girls who play in quite another part of the wood from the strange, secret glades where wander the youths and maidens celebrated by

Mary Butts, Helen Simpson and Rosamund Lehmann, and from the grove of monkey trees which Aldous Huxley spies upon. These adolescents would be easier to live with than the others but are not so interesting to read about. Or perhaps it is only that they do not attract such skilful reporting. Beaky, Noddles, Stubbs and Sylvia; school mistresses, an aunt, a dishonest guardian, a bounder and some small-time show people; a small motor car and a large one, a girls school, an English village, a London flat: these are the settings, and those the characters who carry out the simple plot provided by a competent constructor of very light and mildly humorous fiction.

The Way the World Is Going. By H. G. WELLS: Doubleday, Doran. Published January 4.

EVERYONE who writes, however humbly, for a journal will be prejudiced in Wells's favor immediately upon reading his prefatory note. The papers assembled in this book originally appeared under the auspices of a newspaper syndicate, and Mr. Wells rejoices that, here, they may now appear without cuts or mutilations. The jacket of "The Way the World Is Going" describes Mr. Wells as "the best-informed man alive." Information is rather overcommon, nowadays. What Mr. Wells is, is something far more rare, he is a most thoughtful and a most courageous man.

Wells has surveyed the activities of men everywhere and he discusses them and the direction in which they tend brilliantly and fearlessly in this book. He is not afraid to express his doubts of democracy, doubts which are shared by an increasing number of people. He dares to describe the "present uselessness and danger" of aviation, to question the tyranny of broadcasting, the imbecilities of "super-films," to mention some of the delusions of world peace, and to talk frankly about the possibilities of war between America and Great Britain. In his paper on that subject he says: "Now is the time for people who want to delay and avert a catastrophe . . . to make it clear that the war-makers will have to reckon