

▷▷ The New Movies ◁◁

▷▷ Super-Sensitive

EASTMAN research technicians have evolved a new "super-sensitive" high-speed film for motion picture work which requires but from one-third to a half as much light as is needed at present. This is an extremely important development, more important than you might think. The studios welcome it because it will reduce their excessively high electric light bills by more than a half, and enable them to make pictures with fewer lamps and smaller stage crews. Sets will not take so long to "dress" and dismantle, and the whole studio routine will be simplified. The actors welcome it because they will no longer have to work in a suffocating, inhuman heat generated by thousands and thousands of candle power glaring down upon them every time they murmur words of love or shoot another gunman. They will now have a little less trouble in behaving like human beings. The acute physical discomfort suffered by movie actors has never, it seems to me, had sufficient publicity. Between scenes assistants often go about with blotting paper (in order not to disturb makeup), blotting beads of perspiration from the faces of unhappy players who are going through a scene for the third, fourth and fifth times. After a few hours under these cruel lights, newspapers, letters and other papers used in a scene are as yellow and brittle as though they had lain in a hot sun all summer.

It didn't use to be so hot in movie studios, for in the old days they used "kleigs" and ordinary arc lights. But when sound came in they quickly discovered that these made hissing noises which were picked up by the microphones. Consequently they resorted to incandescent lighting by enormous 10,000 watt lamps. But here was still another difficulty. The old kleig lights, strong in ultra-violet and blue rays, register perfectly on the regular orthochromatic film—while the incandescent lamps, which are strong in red and yellow rays, are weak in blue and ultra-violet rays. The result was that the studios had to use a great many more lamps since sound came in, to make up for this shortage of the necessary blue and ultra-violet rays. This increased number of lamps naturally turned the studios into veritable ovens where innocent actors were rapidly broiled alive even while endeavoring to look cool and collected.

The next move came from the East-

man laboratories, where about half the film used in Hollywood is made (the other half being supplied by Dupont). The Rochester engineers produced an

Worth Seeing

Cimarron: Colorful and exciting story of early days in Oklahoma. From Edna Ferber's novel.

Connecticut Yankee: Will Rogers, King Arthur, Merlin and the boys.

City Lights: Sometimes Chaplin is funny and sometimes he is sad.

Dirigible: Fine pictures of planes and dirigibles surrounded by a sappy Hollywood story.

The Front Page: Grand entertainment and some dialogue which will make your hair stand on end. Adolphe Menjou as a city editor.

Range: Pleasant pictures of apes and monkeys, made in Sumatra.

Skippy: A picture about children which is never cute or coy, yet always delightful. Percy Crosby's cartoon characters.

Strangers May Kiss: The latest bulletin on we-girls' love problems. Norma Shearer tries to lead her own life and runs into difficulties.

Tabu: A beautiful and moving story of primitive peoples filmed by the late F. W. Murnau in the South Seas. Silent.

emulsion (the sensitive coating on a film) which responded to yellow rays—in other words, artificial light. This is the new "super-sensitive" film. Fox newsreel cameramen have already used about a hundred thousand feet of this new negative, and in four or five months it (or another brand fulfilling the same requirements) will undoubtedly be in use in all the studios. The Fox cameramen have discovered some curious things about this "raw stock," as it is known in the studios. It actually works better in twilight than at high noon, because there are more yellow rays in the sun at that time. By way of experiment they set up a camera in the balcony of a theatre in New York and photographed the show without a single extra light. The results were about what you yourself would see if you were sitting in the theatre. Then they went out onto Broadway and made shots of people, taxis, street cars, electric signs and street lights. For once you could see distinctly what was going on. Electric lights looked like electric lights, not hazy splotches. Furthermore, you could see the foreground with pavement, people and store windows all quite visible. Usually night shots of city streets are made very slowly in order to give the film time to register. The result



is that when shown at a normal rate of speed the action is tremendously accelerated. The "super-sensitive" film can be taken and shown at the same speed.

To the movie-going public the new film is important in so far as it simplifies and cheapens the production of motion pictures. Every invention which eliminates even a few of the thousands of technical difficulties which stand between the director with an idea and the completed film is valuable. Three years ago the late F. W. Murnau expressed the opinion that the cinema would progress just as rapidly as the manufacturers produced more and more sensitive film. Well, I am afraid that is an exaggeration. What we really need are more and more sensitive movie magnates. But for the time being at least, the new film is something we should be thankful for.

▷▷ "The Millionaire"

George Arliss' fourth talking film is again a new edition of an earlier silent picture, a pleasant and graciously acted but never very exciting or convincing story of a retired millionaire automobile manufacturer who runs a corner filling station to escape boredom. Back in his factory he had been a cross between Henry Ford and John D. Rockefeller, Sr., but after hiding his identity under a shabby suit and a false name he goes into business with a poor but honest young man who thinks he is just a nice old fellow out of work. His wife (played by Mrs. Arliss herself) and his daughter (Evelyn Knapp) think he is spending his days loafing with a friend, while he is really polishing windshields and filling cars with gasoline. *The Millionaire* gives Mr. Arliss just about the same opportunities to be quaint and sly and shrewd which he enjoyed in his earlier films. In fact, a number of times during the picture I had the feeling that I was seeing *Old English* done over again, but this time in fancy dress. Mr. Arliss never changes.

▷▷ Baclanova's Baby

Variety, the theatrical newspaper with the strangle hold on the English language, offers the following information: "Olga Baclanova, off the screen for several months for motherhood purposes, is expected to go back with a Metro contract. Miss Baclanova has been tested for a part in *Great Lover* and is probable for the femme lead."

►► The Latest Plays ◄◄

By OTIS CHATFIELD-TAYLOR

A NEW writer, Mr. Sheridan Gibney, has given us the first really amusing play for weeks. It is called *The Wiser They Are* and it has been presented to us by Jed Harris with his two standbys, Ruth Gordon and Osgood Perkins, in the leading parts. As to plot the thing is slight indeed but it shares another characteristic with Noel Coward's *Private Lives*—it is full of lines which in themselves are nothing but which in their context bring hearty and spontaneous laughter. In other words, comparative novice though Mr. Gibney may be he has a fine ear for the theatrical, as opposed to the literary, phrase.

For the rest of the incomplete title I presume we are expected to supply, "the harder they fall" and thus justify the author's flattering faith in our brightness, for the theme of *The Wiser They Are* is the one about the philandering young man-about-town and the almost promiscuous lass-about-the-same-village who get married all in a spirit of fun and end by being in love. The locale is one of those awfully smart bachelor penthouse apartments in New York and the bridal suite aboard ship.

However, the production which Jed Harris has given *The Wiser They Are* is not entirely worthy of the witty manuscript. The acting ranges from the near perfection of Osgood Perkins, through the painfully affected but often effective work of Ruth Gordon, down to some very amateurish emoting by a young Mr. Ben Lackland. That Perkins man is, of course, coming more and more to be recognized as technically our finest younger actor in a variety of parts. Miss Gordon, on the other hand, except for her fine work last year in *Hotel Universe* under the tasteful direction of Philip Moeller, has been getting more and more irritatingly kitchy. Since playing *Serena Blandish* she has also taken to sprinkling her speeches with a profusion of broad "a's"—in all the wrong places—"Fahncy

that," for example. My agents haven't reported to me whether Jed Harris directed *The Wiser They Are* himself or whether, as has been previously the case, he simply gave the director no credit on the program. At any rate I know it wasn't

George Kaufman or Worthington Miner who staged it, either of whom I'm sure would have established better tempo and avoided some transparent efforts at elegance that did the play no good. But I'm just being a carping old crab (if such miscegenation is possible), as the show's many merits make it a most welcome relief from some of the other vernal offerings.

A late addition to the unusually large number of the sea-

son's revivals is *Peter Ibbetson*, Lee Shubert's presentation of Constance Collier's revision of John N. Raphael's dramatization of George du Maurier's novel—if you see what I mean. I'm the fellow who never read the book, saw the play with John and Lionel Barrymore fourteen years ago, nor had the price to see the opera this past winter. Deplorable as such ignorance may be it at least enables me to judge the current production as a play being presented in the spring of 1931. Admittedly a rank sentimentalist, it is a pleasure to be able to report to others who don't mind a snuffle or two now and then that Dennis King as Peter Ibbetson is truly heartbreaking at times and that Valerie Taylor and Jessie Royce Landis lend him fine support.

The two motifs of *Peter Ibbetson*, love unfulfilled except in dreams and after death, and the story of the boy who stood everything from his foster parent except a slander on his mother's name, may seem to some old-fashioned or overly romantic, but such is the feeling of sincerity which the generally fine company under the direction of Miss Constance Collier herself manage to impart to the lines that I am sure there are many who will be really touched—even in this year of little grace.

Recommended Current Shows

Admirable Crichton: Competent production of Barrie's satire.
As Husbands Go: Typical John Golden-Rachel Crothers clean and bright comedy.
Civic Repertory: Last month before this excellent troupe takes a year off.
Fine and Dandy: Joe Cook nonsense and some good songs and dances.
Five Star Final: Arthur Byron in an earnest and exciting play about the tabloids.
Girl Crazy: Best words and music in town, by the Gershwins.
Grand Hotel: Skillfully presented thrilling events in a German hotel.
Mrs. Moonlight: Sweet, teary and occasionally witty comedy well acted.
Once in a Lifetime: Hollywood expertly kidded.
Private Lives: Deft acting in a brilliant comedy by and with Noel Coward with Gertrude Lawrence.
Sweet and Low: Rough and funny revue with some catchy songs.
The Barretts of Wimpole Street: Interesting, if spotty, play with Katharine Cornell at her best.
The Silent Witness: For those who like to guess who killed whom.
The Wonder Bar: Al Jolson as an engaging night club proprietor. No mammy songs!
Tomorrow and Tomorrow: Philip Barry's sensitively penetrating play. Beautiful acting by Herbert Marshall.
Vinegar Tree: Smart slapstick farce about Long Island life.



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