

## >> The New Movies <<

### >> "Le Million"

**R**ENÉ CLAIR, the French director who gave us *Sous Les Toits de Paris*, has done another and even more charming film, a sort of wild Gallic Mack Sennett farce with snatches of light-hearted music thrown in for good measure. And this time you need absolutely no French at all to follow the story. In the first place there is very little talking, and in the second place M. Clair has two English characters in his story who clear up the few passages which might cause confusion. *Le Million* is a pretty swell piece of work from everybody's point of view. It is light and gay and amusing and foolish and full of smart satire—and the action runs as fast as an early Chaplin. Sounds, music and songs are used skilfully, and not always literally. For example, there is a scene in which some ten or fifteen people are fighting for the possession of an old coat, backstage in the Paris Opera. As they rush excitedly back and forth you suddenly hear a shrill whistle like that used on a football field. Again, the characters often hear songs in one scene which are particularly connected with a previous one. The action is wild and quite mad. *Le Million* starts out simply enough. A poor artist is besieged on all sides by creditors, and is about to be thrown out of his room, when the newspapers announce that his lottery ticket has won the million florin prize. At this point it develops that the gentleman's girl friend had given the old coat containing the ticket to a thief who was trying to escape the police. The search for the coat makes up the rest of the action and takes the characters on a fantastic chase. Without telling too much of the story, it may be said that among those who gain possession of the coat for a short time is a singer who wears it onto the stage of the Paris Opera as a part of his costume. During these scenes M. Clair takes some extremely sly jabs at opera and opera singers. At other times he amuses himself by satirizing the police. Always he escapes the sappy, sweetish love interest which saps the vitality of most American screen comedies. There is a girl in the story, even two girls, one of whom is quite pretty, but the principles never go into a clinch. *Le Million* is a farce made to amuse you. The ultimate sex life of its characters has very properly not been brought up for consideration. The principal rôles are played by Annabella, René Lefebvre and Louis Allibert.

### By CREIGHTON PEET

### >> "The Smiling Lieutenant"

Another Frenchman has produced a witty and sparkling film this week—Maurice Chevalier, working in Paramount's Long Island studio under the

#### Worth Seeing

**Beggar's Opera:** Modernistic German version of the old English classic. Sinister rather than gay, but very unusual.  
**Connecticut Yankee:** Pleasant nonsense with Will Rogers as Sir Boss in Mark Twain's old story.  
**City Streets:** Gary Cooper and Sylvia Sidney in a smooth and rather dressy gangster yarn.  
**The Millionaire:** George Arliss and about fifteen cents' worth of plot.  
**Public Enemy:** One of the more realistic gangster films.  
**Quick Millions:** Showing how racketeers make us support them.  
**The Secret Six:** Wallace Beery, a big beer baron, gets himself elected mayor.  
**Skippy:** Percy Crosby's shambling little boy brought to life without a trace of coyness.  
**Tabu:** Beautiful South Sea Islanders in a simple and touching story.

#### Minority Report

**Dirigible:** Good air pictures—stupid story.  
**Indiscreet:** Gloria Swanson, slickety clothes and sex shop talk.  
**Seed:** A dull little movie about a man and two women.  
**Svengali:** John Barrymore amusing himself with makeup in a theatrical old story.

deft direction of Ernst Lubitsch. Other considerable factors in his success are the lovely Claudette Colbert, the pert Miriam Hopkins and Oscar Strauss' melodious music. And while the story is not so much, the lines are often good enough to bring down the house. Just as a matter of information it may be said that *The Smiling Lieutenant* tells of a princess from one of those small theatrical kingdoms, who falls in love with a handsome lieutenant and marries him off-hand without consulting him about the matter. When the royal wedding night proves a disappointment (Chevalier leaves Miriam Hopkins to play checkers with her father, the old king) the bride tries various plans to capture his attention. The Lieutenant, in the meanwhile, has returned to his old mistress (Claudette Colbert) who plays the violin in a beer garden.

A good many of the traditional Lubitsch touches are evident in *The Smiling Lieutenant*. In fact many of the scenes, if done by the ordinary mechanic movie director, would be stupid and bring censorial shears snipping almost immediately. As it is, some of our more pompous censors will probably dig into it before it gets very far. Censors, you know, don't approve of love affairs unless the lady holds her marriage license in one hand at all times. And in this film M. Chevalier has an affair with a girl he isn't married to.

### >> "Kick In"

Far be it from me to kick a lady when she's down—but the truth seems to be that Clara Vo-do-deVoe Bow is about to go out like a light, and that because she is a bad, bad actress. Until recently Clara's routine was to remove every item of clothing except her pants at least once during each picture, thereby keeping a majority of the customers awake. Now she is trying to be a real actress—a serious actress in a gang movie. God knows—that's fair enough. Anybody has a right to *try*. All I can report is that I saw a rather dumpy little woman with grotesquely penciled eyebrows reciting unbelievably stupid lines in a flat and slightly nasal voice.

### >> "A Free Soul"

Some people may think they have had their money's worth when they have seen Norma Shearer silhouetted in a doorway wrapped in a skin-tight gold lamé negligee, her knee archly kinked, her hair coyly fluffed and her chin in her palm—but I don't. I resent the fact that *A Free Soul* is a preposterous, illogical, over-talkative and frequently motionless motion picture, and not even Lionel Barrymore's melodramatic wigwagging convinces me.

Today's lesson for we-girls tells of the dreadful, dreadful things which happen to Norma Shearer when she tries to lead her own life and forgets about her aristocratic San Francisco family. Mr. Barrymore, her father, is a famous lawyer who drinks too much and defends notorious criminals. Norma takes up with one of his clients (Clark Gable) and soon we see her lolling about in negligee in the boudoir of his luxurious gambling den.

Then comes the big father and daughter scene. Lionel Barrymore discovers Norma in the gunman's apartment and Norma finds him reeling drunk again. She takes Poppa home and makes a bargain with him that if he will give up his liquor she will give up her lover. Wagging his head in the best Barrymore manner, Lionel agrees and in the next scene father and daughter are out camping in the fine clear air of the mountains in an effort to forget it all.

I like melodrama as well as anybody, but I must point out that Director Clarence Brown has about five times too much talk in *A Free Soul*, that his scenes are long and dull and that his disregard for logic is often fatal.

# The Latest Plays

By OTIS CHATFIELD-TAYLOR

"BRIGHTER LONDON" used to be the slogan plastered on all the hoardings a few years ago. Well, it must be said that in the face of a good deal of silly legislation, heavy taxation and the persevering climate the British have made great strides in the direction of their goal. Compared to the static night life and theatre of Paris, London is now positively effervescent.

Of the pieces I was fortunate enough to see, *Tantivy Towers* is probably the most entertaining. It is a light opera with a sparkling and just a little bit malicious libretto by A. P. Herbert and what I am afraid is only adequate music by Thomas F. Dunhill.

However, Mr. Dunhill has done what few musicians since Sullivan have done in that he has so composed his tunes that the words are always plainly to be heard. Mr. Herbert makes fun of both the County huntin' set and the "artists" of Chelsea. In a Bohemian studio the Earl of Tantivy remarks about a modern painting, "I do not believe that the daughters of Eve have such very triangular thighs," and later at Tantivy His Lordship says, "I have dined so well, my dear, not even Good Music could annoy me now." I do hope that the whole delightfully satirical production will be brought to New York intact with the same cast and no attempt at adaptation.

In *Payment Deferred* Charles Laughton, a young character actor of whom I had heard a great deal, quite lives up to expectations. The play is a gruesome thing about a thoroughly unattractive man who commits a murder, cannot leave the scene of it, regrets it, finally gets to appreciate the good qualities of his wife, unwittingly causes her to commit suicide so that it looks as though he had killed her and is hanged for that instead of the actual murder that he did do. Cheery, isn't it? The play, which is a dramatization of C. S. Forester's novel by Jeffrey Dell, affords Mr. Laughton opportunity for characterization and an exhibition of

dramatic technique of which he takes full advantage. Several moments are among the most harrowing that I have spent in a theatre—even when thought back to in broad daylight days after.

One of the two main sources from

## Recommended Current Shows

**As Husbands Go:** Pleasant little comedy of life in Paris and Dubuque.

**Five Star Final:** The season's most intense and exciting American play.

**Girl Crazy:** Gershwin score with Willie Howard and Ethel Merman.

**Grand Hotel:** Effective continental melodrama on a revolving stage.

**Melo:** American production of Henry Bernstein's problem play with Edna Best, Basil Rathbone and Earle Larimore as three sides of the eternal triangle.

**Mrs. Moonlight:** Sentimental English comedy well acted.

**Once in a Lifetime:** Practically everything that should be said at the expense of Hollywood.

**Precedent:** Dramatic presentation of the record of the Mooney-Billings case.

**Private Lives:** The season's most amusing comedy—with Otto Kruger and Madge Kennedy.

**The Barretts of Wimpole Street:** Absorbing, if unpleasant, play with Katharine Cornell brilliant.

**The Green Pastures:** Now well into its second year and deservedly so.

**The Silent Witness:** A well-acted crime play that does not insult the intelligence.

**The Wonder Bar:** Al Jolson practically the whole of a novel piece.

**Tomorrow and Tomorrow:** Philip Barry's best serious work.

**Vinegar Tree:** Gay farce about Long Island. Worth seeing.

sympathetic mirth to the eyes of the most hardened observer. Speaking of Miss Lillie, I'm sorry Miss Maisie Gay is not in town. I'll never forget how she used to do *March With Me*.

*The Immoral Duchess*, by J. B. Fagan, is among the London plays definitely slated for New York production but I am none too sanguine about its chances for success, even if Yvonne Arnaud comes over to play the thinly disguised rôle of Queen Marie of Roumania trying to get American financial assistance for her country through somewhat dubious means. Miss Arnaud, however, is always worth watching and the play has got amusingly illuminating lines about what the English and Continentals think of us Americans.



## Colleges for Crooks

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who resort to the gun and the torch? Can such men be reclaimed with a kind word and a pat on the back?

As for the neurologists and the psychiatrists—well, I'll admit that many criminals are sick men in need of treatment. I have no doubt that the men of science can normalize many of them—the helpless, unfortunate boys who are doing life terms on the installment plan; the boys who are in today and out tomorrow. But when it comes to the big shots, I take issue with the men of science. I never knew a "big shot," a Capone, a Chapman, an Anderson, a Bugs Moran, a Jimmy Nannery, a Jack ("Legs") Diamond, a Frankie Yale or a "Boston Billy" Monahan who had anything wrong with their thyroids, pituitaries and endocrines. Every "big shot" that I ever knew was sound mentally and physically. They all ate well, slept well and were the personification of industry when they were after the loot. At other times they were lazy.

There has never been anything wrong with my glands. I have never been addicted to drugs or afflicted with disease. I am and always have been sound mentally and physically. I, and my friends the big shots, were adventurers. What would the men of science have done with me if they had got me when I was crooking? What would they have done with my friends, Chapman and Anderson, who used to sit for hours at a stretch discussing Herbert Spencer's First Principles, Swinburne's poetry and Anatole France.

I wonder, too, what would have been the diagnosis of the men of science in the case of my old pal "Frisco Eddie" who adored Brahms and Wagner and cried like a baby when he heard the Tannhauser Overture? Subjects for treatment? Men whom the sentimentalists could redeem with a pat on the back and a kind word? Nonsense! We required the rod. All crooks fear the rod. I know, for example, that I never robbed a bank in Delaware. Why? The whipping post always scared me. I never burglarized a bank in Alabama, either. Why? The coal mines of the Alabama "stir" always scared me. I avoided the Dominion of Canada, too. Why? Canada is noted for its "here-he-comes-and-there-he-goes" method of dealing with crooks. Furthermore, they have whipping posts. And the Spartan discipline of the Canadian "big houses" gave me pause. I always avoided states wherein crooks were treated with firmness and severity. I played the states wherein crooks were