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►► The Latest Plays ◄◄

By O. D. C.

IN DU BOSE HEYWARD'S *Brass Ankle*, Alice Brady has added another to the long list of harassed heroines who have comprised her repertory, for as Ruth Leamer she is called upon to play the part of a member of a group of southern Negroes who contain an Indian blood strain and are almost white. These are the "Brass Ankles." Although neither she nor her husband realize it and although she is passing as white and is the mother of an apparently white daughter, Ruth Leamer is one of them.

The action takes place in a small southern village where the traditional southern code is all-powerful. The opening scene depicts the husband, Larry Leamer, as a self-elected defender of the white man's supremacy and a member of the school board, insisting upon the expulsion from the school of the children of a family, which, while long suspected of having a Negro strain, had previously passed for white. Never shall his daughter, June, be contaminated by co-education with those suspected of having Negro blood. When Ruth shortly afterwards gives birth to a child showing unmistakable Negro characteristics, his feelings, as well as the opinion of the community, are outraged. The neighbors, with whom Ruth has previously been intimate, turn from her. Larry goes almost crazy. Worst of all, as the result of the strictness of the southern code in a provincial village, their daughter June is faced with a lifetime of ostracism as a Negro. To clear her daughter's name, Ruth hysterically proclaims to the natives that she has had a Negro lover and that the baby is his child. Whereupon Larry shoots her and the baby, and her daughter's name is cleared.

A tragic theme, but only in the scene at the end of the first act, in which Larry Leamer's love for his wife and daughter struggles with his horror at their taint, does it attain the semblance

of reality. Thereafter, Mr. Heyward's writing is uneven and depends too much on stage trickery, noticeably in the matter of the loaded shotgun which Ruth conveniently leaves in her husband's way and which is the instrument of her death.

Recommended Current Shows

As Husbands Go: Pleasant little comedy of life in Paris and Dubuque.
Civic Repertory: Last week of this admirable company before a year's rest.
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.
Peter Ibbetson: Dennis King in a good revival of the famous dream play.
Precedent: Dramatic presentation of the record of the Mooney-Billings case.
Private Lives: This most amusing comedy positively closes May 9, worse luck!
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 Wiser They Are: Spotty production of a witty comedy.
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.

Even Miss Brady as the discovered mulatto failed to convince the audience of the desperation of her position. As a result it is difficult to appreciate the full horror of the tragedy. In spite of the fine performances of Ben Smith as Larry and Lester Longergan as a friendly doctor, *Brass Ankle* is encumbered by too much stagecraft.

Why at this date Broadway should be interested in who killed Madeline Bellamy in the garden-er's cottage on the Ives estate at Rose-

mont, New York, is hard to understand considering that Frances Noyes Hart's novel, *The Bellamy Trial*, was published more than three years ago; her play by the same name, written in collaboration with Frank E. Carstarphen, appeared in Boston three years ago, and a silent film version of the story was shown in 1929. Nevertheless, in case you don't know who stabbed Madeline Bellamy, or what she was up to in the gardener's cottage on the night of June 19, or why her friends had such trouble establishing alibis, you can find out at the 48th Street Theatre, where the entire evening is devoted to the trial of Susan Ives and Stephen Bellamy, Madeline's husband, for first degree murder. As the trial proceeds (the entire play takes place in the courtroom) it soon becomes obvious that the case against the two defendants is weak. Finally, after the finger of suspicion has pointed to every one, the truth comes out. And not through any process of deduction either. No Sherlock Holmes or Philo Vance does his stuff. The mystery is solved by the simple process of making the murderer confess. Far be it from me to divulge his name. But if you follow the old rule and bet on the least suspected character, you'll make money.

▶▶ The New Movies ◀◀

By CREIGHTON PEET

▶▶ "Quick Millions"

STILL another tribe of gangs come up for consideration in this film—milk, building, trucking, and tailoring racketeers. In spite of an occasional confusion in the editing, *Quick Millions* is decidedly interesting. It was written by Courtenay Terrett, a New York newspaperman who got his material at first hand, and the leading rôle is played by Spencer Tracy, all but new to the films. Starting as a loud-mouthed truck driver, Tracy reaches a point at which he can ruin any building contractor who refuses to join his "protective" association. Soon he is "protecting" all sorts of industries, and we see hoses playing on the cement sacks of contractors who have not joined, machine guns drilling holes in a truckload of milk cans, and many other "accidents" by means of which gang discipline is maintained. Director Rowland Brown has edited his film very rapidly—and if you understand just how rackets work, this is fine—but if you don't it's often confusing.

▶▶ "Doctors' Wives"

Any physician or surgeon who is unlucky enough to witness this latest report on we-girls' love problems is likely to leave the theatre suffering from an acute case of movie nausea, a complaint with which film reviewers are all too well acquainted. Having examined we-girls' sex problems from nearly every known angle, we are now treated to the sufferings which go on in the breast of a doctor's wife when she knows that her husband is alone in his office with a lady patient attired in nothing but a sheet. Pretty Joan Bennett is the wife while Warner Baxter is the doctor who attracts so many "nervous" women patients. Only when Joan gets a job as trained nurse and sees her husband perform a difficult operation does she understand that a great surgeon has other things on his mind than staying home and making love. A very pretty lesson which all you young wives should take to

heart. The dialogue is written with a nasty leer and none of the acting comes to anything.

▶▶ "Dude Ranch"

Worth Seeing

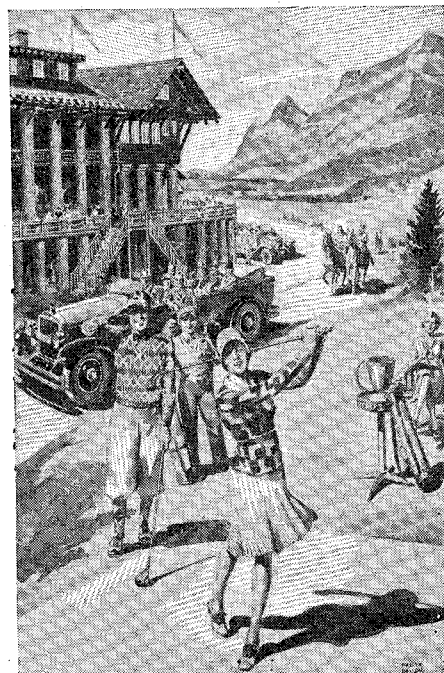
Cimarron: Edna Ferber's novel of pioneer days in Oklahoma.
Connecticut Yankee: Will Rogers overwhelms Merlin with a cigarette lighter that works.
City Lights: Charlie Chaplin—not his best but one of the few comedies of the past year.
City Streets: Entertaining if theatrical crook picture directed by Rouben Mamoulian.
Dirigible: Spectacular air photography; not much else.
The Front Page: Excitement in the reporters' room in Chicago's city hall. Menjou as city editor.
Secret Six: Wallace Beery as the big shot in Chicago's beer racket. More murders than in *Hamlet*.
Skippy: The finest picture of children ever made. Honest, unaffected and altogether satisfactory.
The Millionaire: George Arliss being whimsical and charming.
Tabu: Love and tragedy among South Sea Islanders—F. W. Murnau's last film.

great green open spaces. Life is so dull in this particular resort that the management hires a troupe of traveling actors to stage a running drama of the *Old Homestead* school. The actors are Mitzi Green, Jack Oakie and Eugene Pallette, and they do their best to make things exciting. Then, for some reason which escapes me, a gang of bank robbers comes to stay at the hotel, and for awhile suspicion is cast on Mr. Oakie. Not so good.

Gun Smoke is also from the Paramount studios, and also deals with a gang of crooks who go out into the fine clean West with their guns and crooked morals. Ideas seem to have been scarce on the Paramount lot that week.

▶▶ "Skandal Um Eva"

If you speak German you should be moderately entertained by Henny Porten's latest, directed by G. W. Pabst, a comedy about a small-town school teacher who discovers that her fiancé has a four-year-old son. The young lady's reaction to this news is not quite what you might expect. She thinks it is all very funny, and brings the little fellow to live with her. Both her fiancé (who has never seen his child), and the good people of the little German town, are terribly upset when she goes for a walk in the park on Sunday with a strange little boy who calls her "Mama." A scandal-sheet gets hold of the news and demands her dismissal. Naturally complications follow. Miss Porten is beautiful and has a sense of comedy.



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