

who is carrying on the work begun by his talented father in the development of gyroscopic instruments for airplanes, we have evidence of the remarkable progress that is constantly being made in reducing the hazards of commercial aviation.

The veteran flyer, now an executive in one of the largest aeronautic enterprises in the world, is proud of the fact that the American air transport lines have hung up a total of 26,000,000 miles of flying without a fatal accident to a passenger. Much of the credit, he says, belongs to the Sperry instruments, which are now part of the equipment of virtually every commercial plane used in the United States.

The elder Sperry's interest in the gyroscopic principle developed from observation of a top with which one of his children was playing. He combed the libraries for information and found very little of it. The subject fascinated him so that he devoted most of his working hours to it, and the result is a set of instruments which come very close to giving the airplane the chief thing it has always needed—automatic control.

Fog, rain and darkness will not much longer interfere with the safe flying and landing of heavier-than-air machines. Thanks to the Sperry instruments, passengers in commercial planes will soon be as safe as if they were in folding beds. Safer.

►► More Gold

THE gold rush continues. Professor James Harvey Rogers of Yale, with *America Weighs Her Gold* (Yale University Press, \$2.50) tosses his hat into the ring beside that of Dr. Lionel D. Edie, whose contribution was reviewed on this page recently.

Professor Rogers finished his manuscript before Great Britain's decision was announced in September, but he saw quite clearly the writing on the wall, and subsequent developments have brought no necessity to change either his premises or his conclusions.

On one point he is sure to be questioned. He discerns a "rock bottom of liquidation." When prices, he says, have ceased their rapid decline and the always lagging costs of American business have adjusted themselves to lower selling prices, reappearing profits will dispel the nightmare of further liquidation. "Toward this price-determined rock bottom liquidation is now tending." But how long must we wait, Professor Rogers? How long?

FRANK A. FALL.

►► The New Movies ◀◀



►► Hating the Hun

WHILE the troops are marching through the capitals of the world this Armistice Day, it seems fitting that this department, also, should blow a toot on Memory's Bugle. Let us have a moment of silent prayer while we recall a few of the films which taught an amiable and indifferent population to hate the horrible Hun. Thanks



Worth Seeing

DREYFUS CASE: Surprisingly interesting film drama based on the old treason trial.
FIVE STAR FINAL: Effective blasts directed at the tabloids and other cheap papers. Edward G. Robinson does a swell job.
THE GUARDSMAN: Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne in delightfully effervescent nonsense.
MONKEY BUSINESS: The Marx boys practically destroy an ocean liner before your very eyes.
STREET SCENE: Sylvia Sidney is grand in King Vidor's highly dramatic film. Play by Elmer Rice.
GET-RICH-QUICK WALLINGFORD: William Haines in a part which fits him exactly. Entertaining.



to the motion picture (that great aid in visual education) we witnessed, among others, such thrilling dramas as *The Claws of the Hun*, *The Prussian Cur*, *The Kaiser's Finish*, *The Hun Within*, *My Four Years in Germany*, *To Hell With the Kaiser* and *The Kaiser (The Beast of Berlin)*. And now, dear children, if you will open your books, we will go on with today's lesson.

►► "The Mad Genius"

John Barrymore probably has more innocent fun than anybody in Hollywood. He gets behind impressive beards and yells about such items as "art," "genius" and "temperament" while pretty little blondes shiver and quake. *The Mad Genius* is very much like Svengali, except that in this case Mr. Barrymore is a master in the Russian ballet instead of a singing teacher. There is a lot of talk about art *vs.* love, Miss Marion Marsh being interested in one of the mad master's pupils. Finally Mr. Barrymore is done in with a fire axe

backstage, and love is left free to find a way. *The Mad Genius* may amuse you, but it's nothing special.

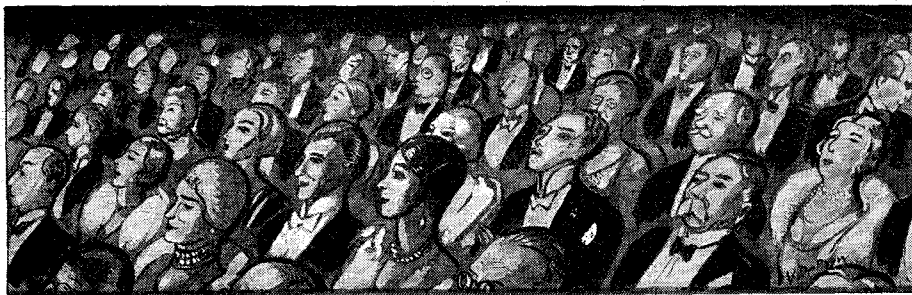
►► "The Song of Life"

The Germans have a Russian director about whom they are quite excited—Alexis Granowski. His first picture in German (he was a theatrical director in Russia) has just reached America. The subject is so extraordinary that I am afraid it won't go far, but it is so beautiful and so exciting that it deserves mention. *The Song of Life* is mostly a silent film with a fine musical score and a number of choruses chanted during the action by unseen singers. The central figure is a girl who is so disgusted by the leering relatives at her wedding—and so terrified at the idea of sex, that she runs away and attempts suicide. Then she finds a nice young man, and after some agonizing hospital scenes has a baby and finds that life can be ripe and full joyous all at once. The orchestral score is really grand and Granowski's highly stylized direction is up to the best Russian standard. He works entirely in cinematic terms. The choruses are somewhat like those used by the Greeks, in that they are abstract comment and advice on the story.

Granowski is now making another film which should interest Americans, for it is about the depression. It is called *Mr. O. F.'s Thirteen Trunks*. Thirteen trunks marked "O. F." are delivered to the hotel of a sleepy little town, and although nobody has ever heard of Mr. O. F., the town is so impressed that the hotel builds additional rooms, business picks up, the stores expand and the town becomes a thriving center . . . all on the basis of the thirteen mysterious trunks. It then turns out that the trunks had been sent to that town by accident. In other words, "prosperity" is only an idea—and comes through an idea—the trunks. The Republicans should get hold of Mr. Granowski.

OLIVER CLAXTON.

▶▶ The Latest Plays ◀◀



"**M**OURNING Becomes Electra," or *The Greeks Had a Word for It*, is Eugene O'Neill's fourteen-act trilogy on the classic theme of the doomed family. You go to the Guild Theatre at five-fifteen and, with an hour off for dinner, the thing is finally finished at about eleven-thirty. On account of its length, it is the easiest play in the world to make gags about (see above), but it is impossible to laugh it off completely. Mr. O'Neill says everything in the play at least seven times, but so powerful is his pounding that about the fifth time he repeats a point even those of us who prefer neater playwriting are willing to cry "Kamerad!" and admit that what he is saying is worth saying. It is, furthermore, eminently actable and of the theatre. A captious Russian gentleman of my acquaintance, who attended the same performance I did, had occasion to observe that the author had put an example of every sort of bad playwriting from the Greeks to the present day into *Mourning Becomes Electra*. That is not true. He does not use asides and this time leaves it more or less up to the actors to show us what they are really thinking. But he does use soliloquies and his building for an entrance is naively crude. His two attempts at comic relief are anything but comic. Editing would unquestionably improve the play, etc., etc., etc. If one says that it is not a play to be thought about, but to be half thought about, it can be replied that that is no valid criticism of a work for the theatre.

I say again that *Mourning Becomes Electra* is actable and of the theatre. That is all that really matters and it is the first play this year of which that can be said without reservations. Alla Nazimova, Alice Brady, Earle Larimore and Thomas Chalmers all do the best acting I have seen them do, but it is because Eugene O'Neill has given them something to act. Robert Edmond Jones is given an opportunity to design significant and symbolic settings and he, too, rises to the occasion. Philip Moeller, the director, must have had misgivings when he approached his task, but he has been

gloriously successful in overcoming the difficulties of the unwieldy manuscript with vigor and fine understanding.

The essentials of the story of *Mourning Becomes Electra* can be compressed into a few words: The Mannons are a New England family destined by fate to self-destruction. The daughter, corresponding to Electra in the old stories on the theme, makes life intolerable for everyone, including herself, but after the mother has killed the father, the mother herself and the younger brother himself, she is both strong and weak enough to have to live the rest of her life in the accursed house. Gruesome and unnecessarily revolting though the action is, especially the gratuitous incest motif in the last play of the trilogy, it must also again be repeated that the performances of Nazimova as the mother, Alice Brady as the daughter and Earle Larimore as the son are rare experiences in the contemporary theatre.

Wonder Boy, which Jed Harris is currently presenting, is a combination of *Merton of the Movies*, *Once in a Lifetime*, *The Man on Stilts* and a few other plays which have satirized the movies and the publicity racket. It contains several very funny scenes, a lot of good Yiddish dialect and a deal of coarseness of speech which is insisted on apparently solely to find out if there are any words left which will make people walk out of a playhouse. As a reporter, I must say that nobody seemed very shocked on the second night. Everybody appeared to think that one more slap at Hollywood was in order.

John Galsworthy has not finished his job in *The Roof*. It has an interesting technical device of showing what goes on in several rooms in a hotel at the same time, but by the time he is through playing with it the author hasn't left himself time to prove his point of the effect of a crisis, such as a fire, on his characters. Mr. Galsworthy clings to the old-fashioned notion that three hours in a theatre is enough. *East Wind* is another routine operetta with a score better sung than it deserves.

OTIS CHATFIELD-TAYLOR.

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