

tentious, effective and on several occasions funny on purpose. The show has fine pace and even some of the sketches are amusing without being too crude. Apart from a pretty goofy first act finale the only apparent weakness in the *Scandals* is the lyrics of the songs. Nevertheless, so catchy are the tunes, so pretty the girls and so laugh-provoking, handsome, capable or beautiful the principals you really ought to put it on your list.

What made Chester Erskin go to all that bother about *I Love an Actress* is pretty mysterious. He adapted it from the Hungarian of Laszlo Fodor into something slightly resembling English; he produced it himself although the Erlangers, his usual backers, would have none of it; and he directed it. His casting was ridiculous in the most important rôles, there was no style or tempo in his direction—only an insistence on distracting and unessential details—and even Jo Mielziner had a lapse and designed settings which would have swamped a far more vigorous play. However, I have great doubts as to *I Love an Actress* being very good. It serves to strengthen my suspicion—started by *Subway Express* and deepened by *Stepdaughters of War*—that Mr. Erskin's reputation as a director is founded on the fact that for his first production he stumbled on a fool-proof play. *The Last Mile*, for which he received such praise, belongs in the category that includes *Journey's End*. They are both written with such sincerity, simplicity and actual knowledge of their subject matter that no production could quite ruin them. Even Chester Erskin's attention to detail does not cover the English language, to which he is tone deaf. Such clumsy, warped lines and so many varieties of mispronunciation I'm sure have rarely been heard on Broadway.

The other offerings of the week, *Fast and Furious*, a negro revue, and *The Constant Sinner*, by and with Mae West, are, if possible, of even less importance. For about twenty minutes the darkies in the former are allowed to be themselves, but most of the time they are forced to sing second-rate Broadway-Hebraic songs with dismal consequences. As for the West exhibit, she doesn't seem to have succeeded in getting the police in this time, so the thing will probably shortly disappear into the oblivion to which such things deserve to attain. Let's all hope for relief in the very near future. With plays by or with Somerset Maugham, Alfred Savoir and Charles Laughton scheduled for next week (as I write) it may be at hand.

OTIS CHATFIELD-TAYLOR.

▷▷ The New Movies ◁◁



▷▷ The Guardsman

ALFRED LUNT and Lynn Fontanne, the bright, bright lights of the Theatre Guild, make their talking picture début in this. Mr. Lunt gives an active and generally entertaining performance, and Miss Fontanne does her best under handicap—the handicap being the camera, and a part that does not permit her to prosper too fully. The story, as you must know by now, deals with the actor in that gay Vienna who made love to his wife disguised as a guardsman to settle some doubts he had in his mind as to her fidelity. Due to his inflated ego he comes to a happy conclusion, but the audience is permitted to leave the theatre wondering. The dialogue is gay and very amusing, but "The Guardsman" is not—shall I say—very cinematic. It is a fairly well photographed stage play, that would have been just about as good by television as by camera.

▷▷ Side Show

This has two débuts, one good and one painful. Charles Butterworth, comic superior, does handsomely, and Winnie Lightner bursts forth as a dramatic actress. Hers is the other début. Don't bother to go and see either. "Side Show" is very bad.

▷▷ The Brothers Karamazov

To make my point, consider the old favorite dealing with the glum antics of the Karamazov clan. Made in Germany, and in German, by Terra, this one has all the flow, effective lighting and detail peculiar to a well done film. As for the tale itself I can only extend my hoopla to the first hour of the film. In the first place the story has been heard before, in the second place it drags and, lastly, the producer threw away his good effects and relapsed into the set, slow pace of most films at the very end. The Germans are inclined to be a touch flat-footed in their story telling. Anna Sten

was fine as Gruschenka, and her support was excellent.

In South America the language problem of films is solved by inserting Spanish subtitles. Why doesn't some importer of foreign films try the same plan in this country? You can get the drift of Karamazov without them, but largely, I expect, because the story is so well known.

▷▷ My Sin

You probably would be warned by the title without my having to tell you that here is another bowl of Hollywood mush. Miss Tallulah Bankhead, recently imported to these shores from England by Paramount, and probably at great labor and expense, plays the lead. She fails to demonstrate whether or not she is an actress, but "My Sin" failed to give her the chance. The dialogue sounds as if it might have been written by Horatio Alger gone a touch pixie. Some of the worst, lads, some of the worst!

▷▷ Five-Star Final

Here is a rousing, ripping attack upon tabloid journalism that you should indubitably see. It is highly theatrical, with a plot of slight credibility, but none the less the idea gets over, and with a smash.

The *Gazette*, tabloid, finds its circulation dropping. To revive it the tale of a murder committed by Nancy Voorhies twenty years back is told. The murderess, respectable and married, has this thrown into her life the day before her daughter is to marry. She and her husband commit suicide, as the parents of her child's fiancé break the engagement.

There is a rare viciousness to the unfurling of this film that leaves you a little haggard at the end. Edward G. Robinson is superb as the managing editor of the sheet, and Marian Marsh as the tortured daughter of the murderess is excellent. The others fit in most suitably.

To repeat myself, here is a picture with meat to it, a rare accomplishment.

OLIVER CLAXTON.

▷▷ The New Books ◁◁



The Week's Reading

The Scientific Outlook
By Bertrand Russell
Norton, \$3.00

All literature is based on life. Approach the Professor of Literature with some novel theory or hitherto unheralded statement, and he bubbles over with skepticism. He wants to see the original, to investigate the handwriting. He takes nothing for granted. Go to the same Professor, however, with a morsel of gossip about some colleague, and he accepts it without reserve and repeats it without delay. The former is the scientific method which Mr. Russell champions with such clarity and competence in this book, itself so full of goodness and life. The latter is the human method at which he levels his fatal shots. If he slays an occasional Eddington or Jeans, he disposes of loose, windy and prejudiced talkers by the thousands. The first part—there are 277 pages in all—explains in 5 chapters the scientific method, the second part elucidates, in 6 chapters, the rôle of science in technique, nature, biology, physiology, psychology and society, the third, in 6 chapters, predicts what the world may be like in a few more centuries if science sees fit to become tyrannical. There is nothing either dull or dumb in the entire volume. Whereas art and religion have both wielded a formative influence on the lives of men for thousands of years, science, starting with Galileo, has been effective for only three centuries and, Mr. Russell contends, has proved more explosive in the last century and a half than five millenniums of pre-scientific culture. The book is so convincing that, were Mr. Russell to welcome all that science is after, there would be room for anguish and despair. But he does not do this; he is in fact extremely modest. He himself bemoans the day that science may be allowed to take the joy out of life and living. His sole defect lies in his inability to suspend judgment on all issues including the purely cultural ones. It is not true that ninety per cent of all civilized peoples would starve if they took Rousseau's "return to Nature" seriously.

Rousseau meant by his heavy command nothing more than "Be yourself," be natural. His assertion that the Jesuits were the first Freudians, with a mild leaning toward the behaviorists, will not be accepted by the followers of Loyola without protest. That the Arabs had to make fewer readjustments when they succumbed to Mahomet than the American people when they subscribed to Volstead is true only for certain Arabs and certain Americans. As to his prophecies, Mr. Russell should remember that Dante in his *Divine Comedy* had the heads of the prophets wrenched backwards as punishment for their presumptuousness. And to set down Aristotle as one of the greatest misfortunes of the human race is merely amusing. It was not Aristotle's fault, it was the fault of his followers who twisted his words so as to make them compatible with their own wish-fulfillments. This applies even to the Aristotelian unities in drama. But even so, this book should be read by every person interested in increasing happiness and decreasing distress.

ALLEN W. PORTERFIELD.

The Life and Times of Marc Antony
By Arthur Weigall
Putnam, \$5.00

With the scientists assuring us that the world has been a few million years in the making, it seems like a brief vacation back to the lusty Roman days when Consuls pulled the hairs from their bodies with tweezers so as not to resemble O'Neill apes, when Cicero was murdered, Caesar assassinated, and Cleopatra and Marc Antony done to death because their love was enduring. The 475 pages of Mr. Weigall's superb volume tell the story of those times with a succinctness and objectivity that cannot be too highly commended. His main sources are Plutarch, Don Casius and the contemporary Roman writers. Where the evidence is lacking the author conjectures, but never wildly or dogmatically. The reader may be surprised to see Mr. Weigall coming so gallantly to the defence of Cleopatra with "her rather prominent though finely chiselled nose." He regards her as a

woman wholly superior to the average in mental attainments and general intellectual equipment and not without her redeeming features in moral matters. His final chapters dealing with her death and that of Antony are intensely dramatic and not at all theatrical. If the book becomes mildly tedious on any count, it is in the protracted rehearsals of the many battles that distracted the age. But the study was written primarily to show that great nations don't rush off to war because of the silly ambition of some sideline scion or diplomat's wife. The study departs radically from those by Ferrero and Ferval, neither of whom enjoys Mr. Weigall's familiarity with the field.

ALLEN W. PORTERFIELD.

The Coming Forth by Day of Osiris Jones
By Conrad Aiken
Scribners, \$2.00

From a universal aspect the life of a man is no more than a brief flash, a meteor upon the horizon, a momentary light that blazes and burns out before your eyes. The incredible swiftness and brightness of life in its passing are set down in an entirely new way by Conrad Aiken in this most unusual book. In it the life of a man is told by a series of reflections, impressions and reverberations among all those things that surround him and are for a moment changed by his being.

Conrad Aiken's book is a poem in fifteen short sections, which tell consecutively the whole experience of the man Jones. First there is the stage set for the event of his birth, then his growing consciousness of all around him. You have the costumes he wears, the comments made about him by people, by things, by places. You see him evolve through ever-changing stages of physical, emotional and spiritual growth to young manhood,



Fiction Worth Reading

The Corn King and the Spring Queen, by Naomi Mitchison: Harcourt, Brace. A highly readable historical novel which vividly recreates Grecian civilization in the third century B. C.

Pan's Parish, by Louise Redfield Peattie: Century. A charming and exotic tale of the strange happenings in the little Provencal village of Fantosque.

Shadows On the Rock, by Willa Cather: Knopf. A charming, sensitive picture of life in Quebec in the days of Frontenac.

The Story of Julian, by Susan Ertz: Appleton. Young love and its problems in an English village, by the author of *Madame Claire* and *The Galaxy*.

All Passion Spent, by V. Sackville-West: Doubleday, Doran. A witty and lovely fantasy of old age.

NON-FICTION

Coconut Oil, by Corey Ford: Brewer, Warren & Putnam. June Triplett's latest adventures told in the manner of the best known African explorers.

The Tragic Queen, by Andrew Dakers: Houghton Mifflin. Lovers of English history will enjoy this excellent biography of Mary, Queen of Scots.

Washington Merry-Go-Round, Anonymous: Liveright. Official Washington irreverently and entertainingly exposed. The Congressional Library's present most popular book.

Living Philosophies, A Symposium: Simon & Schuster. The personal credos of some of the world's foremost thinkers.

Most Women, by Alec Waugh: Farrar & Rinehart. Anecdotes and impressions suggested by the author's wanderings in many countries.