

HOW *the* MOVIES GET *to* YOUR TOWN

CANADA has 900 picture houses, most of them running 300 and odd days a year, attended by hundreds of thousands of people. Did you ever go to a show to find the wicket-keeper gone home and the lights out because of no-show for that evening? Probably not. The fact is, that in this vast complication of services, including hundreds of miles of reels, all operating at once, the chances of a breakdown in the service are more remote than they are in the case of a lighting circuit or a street-car system. And why?

Because the system of entertainment is backed all the way through by a colossal system of business. The average "movie fan" never thinks of this. The unflinching regularity of the film seems to belong to it. Dealing with the most temperamental people on earth, the actor crowd, the film enterprise is itself as untemperamental—apparently—as a clock.

Outside of press agents' stories and notices (mostly camouflage) which appear in American M. P. magazines about the leading players and the productions in which they will shortly appear, the public have but little knowledge of how this colossal business is conducted. The average picture fan may tell you that Mary Pickford has a Pomeranian pup know as Mike, and that she read that a recent production was held up for several days, because Mary would not leave Mike's bedside until he recovered from the croup. The same fan may know that Pearl White owns a violet-colored Pierce Arrow car, that Francis X. Bushman looks like an angel on the screen, but that his wife is suing him for a divorce. Or observation and press agents' dope may have impressed the photoplay follower that Kitty Gordon possesses more clothes than any other screen artist, and that Theda Bara wears less. You probably have heard that Charlie Chaplin earns \$1,000,000 a year because he can walk or run bow-legged or throw a custard pie so sure and straight that nine times out of ten it entirely changes the "map" of one of the supporting cast. But ask any of the thousands how the finished productions get from Hollywood, Cal., to New Glasgow, N.S., and you will probably get, "You can search me," for an answer.

Now there are some features about How the M. P. Gets to Your Town that may have already aroused your curiosity. People in small towns and the "neighborhood" localities of large towns often wonder why the manager of the local theatre does not play a new picture as soon as it is released. They read in the Toronto or Montreal newspapers that a certain picture is being shown at the Imperial Theatre, Montreal, or the Allan in Toronto, and they cannot understand why the showing in their city is delayed for several weeks. This is not hard to explain. The Exchange does not buy more than one or two prints of each subject, and it naturally takes several months for this picture to cover all the theatres in that territory. Of course, the larger theatres and towns have the first run on the pictures, as with a larger seating capacity and clientele they can afford to pay more money. And the resident of a small town must remember that in many cases they pay only 10 or 15 cents to see productions that are shown in the larger cities at admission prices ranging from 20 to 35 cents. In fact, moving pictures are the only form of amusement that has been brought to the smaller towns and villages at the same price of admission as charged in the larger centres.

Again, you may have noticed that the movies operate over a much greater territory than actor-companies. Only the big centres get the really high-class stage companies. But the players in the movies are the same in North Bay, Ont., as they are on Broadway, N.Y. The film is a democracy. It goes everywhere, on practically an even keel. Seldom does a musical comedy or drama leave New York or Chicago for a road tour with the same cast and star that had a great deal to do with its artistic and commercial Metropolitan success. The high salaried artists are always taken out

THIS is the second of a Series of Articles by Merrick R. Nutting, dealing with the Motion Picture Industry. The complete series will treat every phase of this important subject. Mr. Nutting is an authority on this subject, as he has followed the business from its inception. He founded, published, and until recently was Managing Editor of the Canadian Moving Picture Digest, the only M. P. Trade Paper in Canada.—The Editor.

By MERRICK R. NUTTING

of the cast and lower priced and less known players rehearsed for the road tour. And because of the high transportation cost of bringing a road show in Canada and the few towns large enough to support a road company for more than a one night stand, the admission prices are usually raised while the company is in Canada.

Even the "Big Time" vaudeville theatres in Montreal and Toronto seldom play any of the real high priced vaudeville artists that are programmed at theatres like the Palace and Colonial in New York, or the Majestic, Chicago. The visits of stars like Eva Tanguay, Eddie Foy, Nora Bayes, Blanche Ring, the Dolly Sisters, McIntyre and Heath, Gertrude Hoffman, Bessie Clayton, Stella Mayhew, Annette Kellerman, Wilton Lackaye, Robert Edeson, Lina Cavaleiri, Nazimova, Sarah Bernhardt are few and far between to the vaudeville theatres of Canada, but many of these mentioned together with picture stars like Madame Petrova, Mary Pickford, Mrs. Vernon Castle, Mary Garden, Marguerite Clark, Mary Miles Minter, Douglas Fairbanks, William Farnum, Pearl White, Anita Stewart, William Hart, Clara Kimball Young and a hundred others are known to

Canadians who have seen their faces and work night after night in their local picture show.

Moving pictures are distributed to the theatres throughout the country by branch offices known as exchanges. These exchanges are located in the larger cities or shipping centres. There are six of these shipping centres in Canada—Montreal, Toronto, St. John, Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver.

Nearly all the films shipped into Canada enter at Montreal or Toronto. Practically all the multiple-reel subjects are shipped through these points, though some of the one and two-reel subjects are shipped direct from New York or Chicago to the branch exchanges. There are several reasons for this.

First: The head offices of the various distributing agencies being either in Montreal or Toronto, it is necessary for the film to be shipped where it can be inspected before being shipped to the branches.

Second: Montreal and Toronto being the largest cities in Canada, naturally, the larger theatres in these cities have the first showing of the new pictures.

Third: Over half of the theatres in Canada are in Ontario and Quebec Provinces, and it is necessary to have the film censored by the Boards in Montreal and Toronto before it can be shown in the smaller towns throughout the Provinces.

THE duty levied on films imported into Canada has been changed from time to time, but every change has brought an increase. At present the duty is 3 cents a foot, or \$30 a reel. This makes the duty of a five-reel feature about \$150. The duty on photographs and advertising matter is 15 cents a pound, with an extra tax of seven and one-half per cent on the invoiced value. The exchanges in the majority of cases employ a broker to clear their film and advertising matter at Customs, as this department of the Government grinds as slow as the mills of the gods. Within the last year the express service from New York has been very slow, and the delay in receiving film has been a great source of worry to the exchange managers.

Every film exchange doing business in Canada must be licensed in the various Provinces in which they are doing business. The license fees in the various Provinces are: Ontario, \$200 a year; Quebec, \$200 a year; New Brunswick, \$100 a year; Nova Scotia, \$200 a year; Manitoba, \$250 a year; Alberta, \$250 a year; Saskatchewan, \$200 a year; British Columbia, \$300 a year.

On top of this the exchange in each territory must pay a fee to the Provincial Censor Board for each reel of film submitted, whether passed or condemned by the Board. This fee varies from \$1 to \$3: Ontario Censor fee, \$2 a reel; Quebec Censor fee, \$3 a reel; New Brunswick Censor fee, \$1 a reel; Nova Scotia Censor fee, \$1 a reel; Manitoba Censor fee, \$2 a reel; Saskatchewan Censor fee, \$1 a reel; Alberta Censor fee, \$1 a reel; British Columbia Censor fee, \$1 a reel.

Then there are the various municipal and business taxes to add to this. One of the representative exchanges doing business in Canada showed me its books and their taxes for six offices last year were \$4,900.85, and this same company paid \$10,075.25 in Censor fees, and \$26,842.60 in Custom duties. Multiply this gross amount by the number of exchanges operating in Canada, and it will give you the approximate amount of revenue the Canadian Government collects from the film exchanges every year.

An exchange has to carry a large staff of employees in proportion to the gross business. The exact detail of each transaction, contract, shipment, etc., must be recorded. The average staff of a branch office consists of an office manager, booker, shipper, cashier, reviser, book-keeper, stenographers and salesmen who travel the territory in that exchange district. The booker receives all the applications from the

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TO OUST THE DRAMA?

By JOHN GALSWORTHY

In the Fortnightly Review

LET us stray for a frivolous moment into the realms of Art, since the word Art is claimed for what we know as the "film." This discovery went as it pleased for a few years, in the hands of inventors and commercial agents. In these few years such a raging taste for cowboy, crime, and Chaplin films has been developed, that a Commission which has just been sitting on the matter finds that the public will not put up with more than a ten per cent. proportion of educational film in the course of an evening's entertainment. Now, the film as a means of transcribing actual life is admittedly of absorbing interest and great educational value; but, owing to this false start, we cannot get it swallowed in more than extremely small doses as a food and stimulant, while it is being gulped down to the dregs as a drug or irritant. Of the film's claim to the word Art, I am frankly skeptical. My mind is open—and when one says that, one generally means it is shut. Still, the film is a restless thing, and I cannot think of any form of Art, as hitherto we have understood the word, to which that description could be applied, unless it be those Wagner operas which I have disliked not merely since the war began, but from childhood up. During the filming of the play Justice I attended rehearsal to see Mr. Gerald du Maurier play the cell scene. Since in that scene there is not a word spoken in the play itself, there is no difference in kind between the appeal of play or film. But the live rehearsal for the filming was at least twice as affecting as the dead result of that rehearsal on the screen. The film, of course, is in its first youth, but I see no signs as yet that it will ever overcome the handicap of its physical conditions, and attain the real emotionalizing powers of Art. Since, however, the film takes the line of least resistance, and makes a rapid, lazy, superficial appeal, it may very well oust the drama. And, to my thinking, of course, that will be all to the bad, and intensely characteristic of machine-made civilization, whose motto seems to be: "Down with Shakespeare and Euripides—up with the Movies!"