

multiply the points of attack. And even should such attacks have no other immediate result than to bulge the enemy lines there is still a marked advantage to the offensive since bulged lines are longer than straight ones and need more men for their defence. Nor must we overlook the fact that the British forces in France are steadily increasing in numbers and that the supply of ammunition with increasing facilities for its production must also be growing in volume.

The outlook for the Allies in the new year is a good one, but it would be absurd to speak as though the ball were at their feet and they had nothing to do but to kick it. There must have been grave miscalculations and mistakes on the Somme, and they were probably made in the territory to the north of the Ancre, which seems to have been the weak link in the movement, as it was certainly the scene of the heaviest losses. The German lines were pushed back, but they were not pierced, and if the strongest of the front line trench defences were taken, it is evident that the fortifications in the rear were at least powerful enough to resist the continued advance. The gains were real enough, but we may doubt now if they were worth the cost. Indeed, we may doubt if the attempt would have been made at all but for the conviction that it would be in some way decisive. And since it failed to reach its objective it must be counted as a failure, however stolid a base may have been left for future successes. That such a basis has been laid can hardly be doubted. The hitherto untried British troops have learned that their enemies are in no way invincible. The victories, it is true, have been small, but to a certain extent they have become habitual, and no army can have a more valuable moral asset than the expectation to win. Observers speak of a new and perfect co-ordination between artillery and infantry, and of an elaboration of material mechanism wholly unlike anything to be seen a year ago. A new Allied

offensive will start, therefore, under propitious omens and with the probability of success. None the less, it is a tremendous undertaking in which there are no foregone conclusions.

The eastern situation must be less satisfactory to the Allies than the western, and we may reasonably

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**Editor's Note:** The recent visit of Lloyd George to Italy with the rumoured object of getting Italy to transfer some of her weight to the Balkans, looks as though the new War Council realize what Mr. Coryn has been pointing out for several weeks—that the Germans expect to get their real decision in the East and must be dealt with on that front accordingly.

believe that it is also much more important. For it is in the east alone that Germany is fighting for what she intends permanently to hold. In the west she is doing no more than struggle to retain the cards that she means to use for barter. That she

should keep Belgium or any part of France is out of the question, and her responsible statesmen have known that from the first. But in the east she is adding to what she believes will be her permanent territory, or at least to the territory that will be under her permanent direction. Naturally enough she does not intend lightly to lose her western cards until they shall have been duly played, but her eastern aims may be considered as much more serious, because here she is fighting for a greater territorial empire and for permanent additions to her power. She must conquer Roumania, not only because Roumania gives her control of the Danube to its mouth, and therefore of the Black Sea, but also because she needs Roumania with which to reward Bulgaria. Germany is therefore far more dangerous in the east than she is in the west. It is nearly impossible to inflict upon her a deadly wound in the west, except indirectly, but if she should be worsted in the east she would bid farewell to even the appearance of profit from the war. That England and France have been so seemingly supine in the conduct of the eastern war is one of those problems that cannot now be solved, but we must suppose that it has been due to divided counsels. That there has been an eastern and western "party" in England is evident enough, and to this we must attribute the fact that the Saloniki army is large enough to be an important loss to other fronts, and not large enough to be seriously effective on its own front. Whether the Lloyd George regime means an increase of activity in the east remains to be seen, but friends of the Entente can hardly view without concern the daily tale of German successes in Roumania, successes that have not yet disclosed any definite military gain to the Central Powers, but that none the less tend more and more to confirm Germany in her place as the "man in possession." The east is still the weak link in the Allied chain, and its ultimate strength may turn the scale.

## MIX BRAINS WITH THE MOVIES

**A**S a "movie fan," I have often been minded to ask a question of the film producers which a recent experience has made too insistent to keep bottled up any longer; and that question is—Why do they spend hundreds of thousands of dollars creating the often lovely pictures to which they treat us, and then frequently spoil the whole effect for people of any appreciation of dramatic values by cutting their expenditure on brains, as applied to the plot, down to about ten cents? You often go to a "movie," the pictures of which you would say had been posed by a committee consisting of Corot, Delacroix and Watteau, while the plot of the piece had apparently been drafted by the brakeman on the train which the "movie" actors had taken to the scene of the drama. It is crude, impossible, pathetic and absurd, and almost makes you forget the lovely landscapes and magnificent castles and beautifully dressed people with which the plot is unfolded.

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**I** WENT the other night to see "Intolerance," which is undoubtedly one of the finest motion pictures that has yet been offered to the public. They charge a dollar and a half to see it—and they get the money, which is evidence that it is super-excellent when a ten-cent piece will commonly get you a "movie" show. The cost of production must have been enormous. They show you the ancient city of Babylon being besieged by the army of Cyrus, all correct from the accounts found in the cylinders dug up in the ruins of that great city. There are immense walls, tremendous implements of war, great halls and temples, and armies of people who seem to be countless. They have got enough, in the form of action and groupings, to make "movie" scenes that would last a week of nights. They constantly exasperate you by flashing on the screen scenes of great beauty and intricate detail, and then flashing them off again before you have half-seen them, even superficially. This illustrates their wealth of pictorial material. And, in spite of all this, the ideas presented by the picture, where there are any ideas at all, would disgrace the intelligence of a school boy.

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**T**HE play is a protest against "Intolerance." Every man knows that "Intolerance" is an evil and has evil results. But most men would be amazed to be told, in cold blood, that, among these evils, are sanitary nursing homes for neglected children. Yet that is the sermon that the film preaches. It shows

*When a man who believes in good drama, good politics, real war and national unity takes time to criticize the "movies," there must be a reason. There is. The Monocle Man wants moving picture producers to live up to their opportunities*

By THE MONOCLE MAN

you the case of a baby, born to a poorly educated and girlish mother in a slum district, with a father who is in prison on a conviction of robbery. This baby is taken out of what is apparently a very poverty-ridden room from her mother, found on both occasions by the committee of ladies with liquor in her hands, and carried off to a well-equipped institution for the care of such babies and placed in a clean crib in a great dormitory. But you know, from having seen the rest of the story, that the mother is not a drunkard, that she was merely taking an old-fashioned remedy for a cold, that the father is innocent of crime and is trying to do right, and that the baby would have been better cared for by her mother than by any hired nurse. So your sympathies—if you, too, lack brains—are turned against the charity of the nursing home. Yet a moment's thought will show you that this is a most exceptional case; and that, in ninety-nine such cases out of every hundred, the baby should be rescued and properly cared for.

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**H**OWEVER, we must not concentrate our fire on this one picture, which is by no means one of the worst examples. Patrons of "movies" are constantly complaining that the plots are silly, illogical, implying incredible stupidity on the part of the people whose supposed actions are represented. The pictures, regarded simply as pictures, are marvellously lovely; but the things that the people do in them would have disgraced a ten-twenty-third melodrama in the pre-movie days. Often, the more ambitious the picture, the more ambiguous the plot. Sometimes they are merely pointless. You sit through a series of scenes which seem to have no purpose at all except to allow the photographing of certain costumes or properties. Again, a really good story is ruined. Hall Caine's "Roma" has been filmed recently, for example. There is plot enough in that story in all conscience. The producers even

went to the expense of carrying their company over to Rome and London, and photographing them amidst the actual scenes of the tale. I was disappointed, as a traveller, that they did not show us more of Rome while they were there; but possibly most people would think little of the back-ground and much of the plot. But if they got to know what the plot really was, they are far cleverer than I. It is years since I read the book; so that I saw the picture with a more or less open mind. Result—much of the action was an unsolved mystery to me. The men who planned the scenes entirely failed to put the story over—to put any story over—so far as I was concerned.

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**I**T is rather too bad that I have had to mention by name two of the least badly-plotted of the pictures against which I have a grouch; but they are the ones that come to mind as I write—for they sinned against such splendid opportunities. The most and worst of the ruck I forget altogether. There was nothing in them to stick in the mind—though their production must often have cost a lot of money. Of course, the alleged "funny" ones are by far the saddest failures. They not only lack coherence, but humour as well. Except when a man is knocked down and turns three somersaults does anyone laugh at them—not even the ushers. That good comedies can be filmed, the delightful work of Mr. and Mrs. Sydney Drew proves irresistibly. Then there are the series that are built for the purpose of showing somebody—preferably a lady—leaping from the cab of a moving locomotive to a rushing motor car, or vice versa. Any sort of a stupid incident which will make this stunt excusable, is good enough for a plot. Just a little brains would turn it into a really thrilling story. A fire, too, often covers a multitude of dramatic sins. Or an impossible chase over roof-tops, especially if a uniformed policeman is mixed in the medley, is thought quite good enough, even if the provoking cause be too silly for a comic supplement. My point is, of course, that it is not necessary to so affront the intelligence of the audience. Almost any odd person in that audience could suggest valuable improvements at the first seeing of the picture. Why not hire some one of us at a few dollars a day to edit the pictures before they are photographed? It doesn't seem good judgment to pay even ten thousand dollars for the scenes, and then queer them for lack of five dollars spent on a critic.