THE HISTORY AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

of

THE CINEMA IN SOUTH AFRICA

by

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The University of Cape Town

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1895 - 1940

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AVANT-PROPOS

The origin of this work lies with Dr F.C.L. Bosman of the University of Cape Town who, during the course of a conversation in 1936, proposed the subject as a desirable field for research. During several years of investigation, writing and field work, I have been continuously indebted to Dr Bosman not only for sustained interest and encouragement but also for very real assistance in annotating the original manuscript.

At the outset of research, I was referred to the late Professor Hoernlé through whose kind offices Dr E.G. Malherbe, then director of the South African Bureau of Educational and Social Research, became interested in the subject. Through him, I am indebted to the South African Council for Educational and Social Research which gave me a grant of £120 by which I was able to conduct research in various parts of the Union and to purchase relative books. I am also deeply indebted to Dr Malherbe himself who, despite his appointment as Director of Census and Statistics and later as Director of Military Intelligence, continued to accord me kind encouragement and assistance.

The material was derived from a large variety of sources both in the Union and overseas. The assembly of the early part was greatly assisted by the coöperation of Mr Charles Urban of the erstwhile Warwick Trading Company whom I met in London in 1937 within a few days of returning to the Union. Having stated my request for information, Mr Urban required me to return the next day when he showed me much invaluable documentary material, notably the first catalogues of the Warwick Trading Company (specially bound for his private records in red morocco leather). It was impossible for me to copy out their contents and I therefore asked him flatly whether he would lend them to me. He hesitated for a moment, looked at me keenly and then pushed the pile towards me with "Please remember to return them". On my immediate return to South Africa, I had many of the pages photographed and typescripts taken of others. In due course, they were sent back to Charles Urban and by return of post, he sent me a collection of early film programmes (including one dated 1902 of an exhibition given to the Royal House at Balmoral including South African films), the souvenir issue of the Illustrated London News dealing with the Boer War, the satin-bound programme of the Royal Performance of Kinemacolor at the

Scala Theatre in London, and many other invaluable cinema reliquae with a covering letter stating that they were a gift in recognition of the safe return of his records (which he had evidently not expected again to see and which he subsequently presented to the Science Museum, South Kensington, London). This gift has been entitled "The Charles Urban Collection" and now forms part of the collection of documents, books, photographs, etc which will be presented to an appropriate national organisation as soon as it may be formed.

My researches in London were considerably assisted by numerous pioneers of the industry including the late Robert Paul, the late Cecil Hepworth, Emile Lauste, F.W. Baker and many others. I am also grateful to Mr Brooke-Wilkinson, secretary of the British Board of Film Censors; Mr Leslie Eveleigh of National Screen Services Ltd; and to the British Film Institute whose secretary Miss Olwen Vaughan and the director of whose National Film Library, Mr Ernest Lindgren, kindly enabled me to see the only two films of the Boer War still in existence. For further assistance overseas, I am particularly indebted to Mr Glenn Matthews of the Kodak Research Laboratories, Rochester, U.S.A. through whose kind researches it was possible to trace original bromide stills from Biograph films taken during the Boer War (copies of which were presented on his behalf to the Africana Museum, Johannesburg) as well as much valuable information conveyed in the form of photostat copies of letters, documents, etc. Mr Matthews also sponsored my enrolment as an Associate Member of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers, past issues of whose journal revealed interesting information.

The investigation necessitated the extensive use of newspaper files in libraries in various parts of the Union and of municipal records. I have therefore gratefully to acknowledge the assistance of the Librarian of the Johannesburg Public Library and more particularly of Miss G.F. Elliott, her assistants, the janitors and messengers of the Reference Department; Miss Traill, the janitors and messengers of the South African Public Library, Cape Town; Mr Stirling and Miss Weir of the State Library, Pretoria; Messrs Turner and Hooper of the Durban Public Library; Mr Paul Ribbink of the Parliamentary Library, Cape Town; Mr P. Freer of the Witwatersrand University Library; Mr H. Samuels of the Johannesburg Municipal Council Library; and Mr F. Norman of the Johannesburg Licensing Office as well as many others.

Considerable assistance was given me by innumerable people

connected with the entertainment industry and while it is impossible to mention them all individually, I am particularly indebted to Mr Arthur de Jong, the late Captain Geoffrey Malins, Mr H.V. Barnes, Mr B. Hawkins Mr Harry Fisher, Mr Louis M. Levin, Mr George Phillips and the late Mr R.G. Ross of the Union Board of Censors. Although in no way responsible for the presentation of the material, Mr Joseph Albrecht of African Film Productions Ltd gave me valuable assistance in carefully annotating relative parts of the original manuscript. No historical records have been kept by any film company in South Africa and I am therefore indebted to various pioneers of the industry for random reminiscences which contributed to the material. The cinema trade in South Africa proved uniformly courteous; but there were many individuals outside it to whom I am grateful such as Mrs Edgar Hyman, Mrs W.K.L. Dickson, Miss Vera Harris and members of the South African Press. At the outset of investigations, Mr G.H. Wilson, editor of the Cape Times, kindly took an interest in the subject and arranged the publication of a long series of articles in the Cape Times which evoked valuable reminiscences from various pioneers. I am also indebted to the late Mr R.J. Kingston Russell and to Mr John Cope, Editor-in-Chief of The Forum who, in permitting me to write freely in their paper and to make use of their newspaper files, greatly assisted me. The Cape Argus was also so kind as to publish appeals at my request for any available information on the history of the cinema. Finally I owe an immeasurable debt to my father, the late Dr J. Gutsche, who unquestioningly assisted me in every way in undertaking this work and who died before it was completed.

The difficulties of research into the subject have been doubled by the absence of historical record and the fact that, beginning inconsiderably, the cinema was accorded insufficient attention. It was seldom appreciated that "living pictures" would develop into an all-pervasive influence and the tracing of this development was accordingly rendered more tortuous and precarious. A definite result of research has been the outstanding need for a parallel work on the history of theatrical entertainment in South Africa and perhaps, more important, of radio. The advent of television and the social changes it implies, render this latter work even more necessitous. The radio is a comparatively new influence in the South African social scene; but the benefit of the reminiscences of its pioneers will not be available indefinitely and it is greatly to be hoped that the necessary research will immediately be

undertaken. In addition there has appeared in the course of research an equal need for an historical work on South African Manners and Customs on which the cinema has had considerable influence. The purpose of the present work has been confused by the periodic necessity of mentioning these aspects pari passu instead of referring to existing sources of reference.

Signed by candidate

THELMA JOUBERT

Cape Town

February 1946

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CHAPTER I

The Scene of the Cinema's Advent in South Africa

1895-1896

CHAPTER I

The Scene of the Cinema's Advent in South Africa

The nineteenth century culminated in a wealth of scientific inventiveness which resulted in a complete and fundamental change in social life within the following fifty years. The more widespread use of telegraphy, the expansion of the telephone service, the increased application of electhicity and the invention of the motor car, the sudden appearance and phenomenal development of the cinema, and finally the invention and speedy public utilisation of the aeroplane and the wireless have combined to obliterate (except in trivial instances such as its "naughtiness") appreciation of the atmosphere of the period in which motion pictures first appeared.(1)

In South Africa, a remarkable degree of self-reliance was practiced by the populations of comparatively isolated towns during the nineties. Despite the slowness of communication, the laboriousness of travel and the leisurely tempo of life in general, despite every adverse circumstance, people construed out of their immediate surroundings a cultural life far more enterprising than that produced by favourable modern conditions. The influences which determined the remarkably high standard of pre-cinema entertainment in South Africa

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(1) The advent of this age is foreshadowed in the only exhaustive and reliable work on the history of entertainment in South Africa - "Drama en Toneel in Suid Afrika 1652-1850" by Dr F.C.L. Bosman (I) but unfortunately for a proper appreciation of the actual conditions and social consciousness which the cinema (together with other influences such as the Great War) so speedily destroyed, there is no authoritative kind social history of the nineties in South Africa and the number of reliable memoirs and reminiscences is small. The lack of a chronicled history of South African entertainment from 1850 onwards is to be regretted but it is hoped that Dr Bosman will continue his scholarly work and bring it up to date. Other sources of references such as newspapers and periodicals such as the Cape Monthly Magazine are valuable but rare and biographical works covering the years between 1850 and about 1890 are too preoccupied with historical event to make much mention of the social background against which they occurred. An outstanding exception is Lou Cohen's "Reminiscences of Kimberley" which, owing to the late Sir J.B. Robinson's having brought a successful libel action against the author, was banned, any person party to its circulation having been liable to prosecution. Despite the distinctly journalistic flavour of this book, certain parts provide a valuable insight into the quasi-cultural life of the early diggings. Cohen was an extremely vivid writer and his descriptions of early amateur concerts (2), of the first performance at the ramshackle Theatre Royal in Kimberley at which Barney Barnato played leading parts(3) and of other theatrical enterprises such as Lanyon's Theatre one of whose programmes dated September 1877 he reprints (4), furnish a rare insight into a time whose diversions have since become more the object of speculation than of knowledge. Another illuminating account is "Mixed Humanity", a roman à clef by the famous gentleman-pugilist J.R. Couper, in which the chief characters, at the time of its publication, were easily identifiable. To these may be added "With a Show in Southern Africa" by Charles du Val and others (5).

were primarily physical. The discovery of diamonds at Kimberley in the sixties and the consequent influx of a large quasi-sophisticated population naturally resulted in a demand for amusement though, under then circumstances, amusement of a rather low order. Music halls in particular best served the prevalent need though the circus with its "spectacles", exhibitions of horsemanship, current entertainment novelties etc as well as performing animals and ladies in tights, closely approximated to them in popular appeal. With the commercial development of the diggings, reorganisation under big combines and the consequent advent of men of finer taste and discrimination, the demand for theatre proper and with it, good music arose as it already had in the main South African centres such as Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Grahamstown etc. The discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886 gave further impetus to this demand and where previously only the country's sea-port towns (Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London and Durban) could be considered as possible fields for professional entertainment, there now existed two developing towns (Kimberley and Johannesburg) in the interior whose demand for amusement was only too apparent. By adding Bloemfontein, Pretoria, Pietermaritzburg and the then prosperous Kingwilliamstown, the country presented fairly propitious prospects to touring artistes and theatrical companies. Furthermore the Imperial troops then quartered in South Africa could be relied on furnishing a sizeable addition to local audiences.

Difficulties however were many. The smallness of the population and the absence of suitable theatres in the towns discouraged consistent maintenance of dramatic entertainment during the late eighties. Transport alone presented almost unsuperable problems and even the most ambitious enterprises were forced to travel from town to town by ox-wagon. The development of rail communication (in 1880 to Bloemfontein, 1885 to Kimberley, 1892 to Johannesburg etc) improved conditions considerably. From about 1886 onwards, the demand for entertainment grew to such an extent that by 1895, there was not a single form of amusement that could not be found in one of the larger towns in South Africa. Typical of the times was the historic feat of one of the great pioneers of the South African theatre, Luscombe Searelle who in 1889 transported his theatre, his company, its scenery and effects from Durban to

Johannesburg by ox-wagon. On arrival, he built his Theatre Royal in Eloff Street of the corrugated iron he had brought and instituted "The Searelleries", a variable entertainment which oscillated between drama proper and vaudeville. (A gifted and enterprising man, Luscombe Searelle wrote a book about the Transvaal (6). He died overseas in 1907.)

Simultaneously the construction of excellent theatres was begun in almost all the large towns - Scotts Theatre in Maritzburg, the Theatre Royal in Durban (1882), the Standard in Johannesburg (1891), the Opera House in Pretoria, the Good Hope Hall and the Opera House (1893) in Cape Town and several others. Even before their opening, professional entertainment had reached a high level. The music-hall of low standard naturally predominated (particularly in Johannesburg where there were many dubious resorts for the undiscriminating diggers); but at increasingly frequent intervals, imported theatrical companies began to appear.

In Cape Town, Ben Wheeler, his wife and his son Frank had begun the enterprise which was to make them famous figures in South African theatrical history. In 1886, the Wheelers gave their first show, "The Mikado", at the Old Mutual Hall (later the Tivoli) and thereafter their companies became an outstanding feature of cultural life throughout the country. Laboriously touring the country towns by ox-wagon, the Wheelers overcame great difficulties to put on their shows; but in those days, when the drama came to town, it was an event of the first importance and was well supported by the public.(1)

The early enterprise of Luscombe Searelle and the Wheelers was occasionally supported by overseas artistes who braved the rigours of South African conditions and made the tedious journeys from town to town. Singers, instrumentalists but more often, raconteurs appeared and, apart from physical discomforts, were often forced to face rough treatment from audiences of countryfolk and diggers. Most ambitious of the early enterprises was the Verdi Opera Company which arrived in 1890 and played exceptionally long seasons to appreciative audiences.

(1)"Daddy" Wheeler died in Cape Town in August 1908 and Mrs Wheeler in June 1919.

(11) According to one Rand pioneer, he "can still hear their frightful screeching" ! Typical of the times this courageous company was forced to give its performances in Johannesburg in Fillis' Amphitheatre, a large corrugated iron building in Simmonds Street the only theatres at that time being Searelle's wood-and-iron Theatre Royal, the Globe having been burnt down the ground.)

While the theatre struggled to meet a growing demand, the circus continued to meet the need for amusement and to fill a unique place in South African social life. From the nineties onwards, Frank Fillis' Circus became a national institution. The opposition of Wirth's, Cooke's and Feeley's Circus and other similar enterprises could not shake the popular esteem which it enjoyed.(1) Fillis' Circus was in a category of its own. He was a man with the ideas of a Reinhardt. Not content with clowns, acrobats, performing animals, equestrian displays ("haute ecole" performed by Madame Fillis or trick riding by imported artistes) and the usual stock-in-trade of circuses, Fillis also produced "spectacles". One night's performance was stated to have cost him £2,000 and hundreds took part in it. In one display, he gave a representation of Niagara Falls by means of enormous tanks and thousands of gallons of water. In another depicting an English hunt, the riders had to swim a pool in the arena twenty feet deep (once a horse stumbled and, his foot caught in the stirrup, the rider was nearly drowned). Most famous was "Dick Turpin's Ride to York" closely followed by "Major Wilson's Last Stand", then very topical. Artistes from all over Europe would join the circus company at frequent intervals and every few years, Fillis himself would travel overseas to buy the best turns. His enormous equipage would travel slowly from town to town, staying weeks at a time but always moving on in time to arrive at the larger towns for Christmas or Easter. In Johannesburg, Fillis built the Amphitheatre in Simmonds Street in 1889, a huge wood and iron building (of which a drawing survives in a contemporary directory) which became a fashionable venue when the circus came to town. He instituted select "Gala Nights" to which social leaders were specially invited. The boxes and stalls cost far more than the usual theatre prices. On such occasions, the young bloods of the town were invited to enter their horses for competition in riding displays for which large cash prizes were given. Everybody went to the circus regardless of rank or financial worth and for many years, in Johannesburg at least, it took the place of drama and vaudeville combined.

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(1) Typical of the bill of contents is the following item from Val Simpson's Circus during the Christmas season of 1895 :

M'lle Norah Godfrey's New Act !
THE ETHEREAL COSMORAMIC ANGELIC FAIRY !
She was a trapeze artiste.

In Cape Town with its several old halls and theatres (the Theatre Royal, the old Vaudeville Theatre, the Exhibition Hall, etc), Fillis encountered more opposition; but early in I896, he opened another Amphitheatre - "a new commodious building specially erected for the season by Messrs W.& G. Scott on the reclaimed ground alongside the Central Jetty (at the foot of Adderley Street - historic ground for pitching circus tents). Here too there were "society nights" and the public swarmed to the circus.(1)

From about I890 until I896 when the first moving pictures appeared, entertainment developed rapidly. It was distinguished by two factors - the increasing number of imported dramatic and variety companies consequent both on a more specific demand for entertainment by a growing population and the organisation of theatrical enterprises such as the Wheelers, Frank and Arthur de Jong, A. Bonamici, the Hymans and other smaller concerns; and secondly, the initiative displayed by the public itself in devising its own entertainment.

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(1) In the case of Frank Fillis, there is again a regrettable gap in the chronicled history of South African entertainment. There is for instance, no record as to the date on which that great showman first entered the entertainment world though from the early nineties onwards, his Circus was a national institution. Almost perpetually bankrupt (he was once smuggled out of the country in a basket to escape his creditors), Frank Fillis was a rare type. His initiative and enterprise were boundless and he was in addition, an exceptionally charming man.whose talents were undoubtedly appreciated. Fillis' Circus in the days when variety ruled the boards and the drama had difficulty in competing with the music hall, provided an entertainment which compensated for many amusement deficiencies. It represented the outside world and perpetually novel, piqued the public curiosity without cease. Fillis' public was drawn from every class and if he were popular with the little boys who, now elderly men, still remember him fondly, he was equally beloved by the gilded society which adorned the mining towns.

In those spacious days, Frank Fillis' popularity was often given tangible expression. "At Fillis' benefit last night", says a newspaper of I895 (7),"hundreds were turned away from the Amphitheatre(Johannesburg). Mr Lionel Phillips presented Mr Fillis with a set of diamond studs and Madame Fillis with a magnificent diamond and ruby brooch on behalf of the Johannesburg residents. The artists and company presented him with a gold star set with diamonds." Two of the rare photographs of Frank Fillis known to exist (one in the possession of the Rand Pioneers Association and the other in the Africana Museum) show him in typical ring-master's costume liberally covered with such tokens.

In time both the theatre and his own prodigality obliterated Fillis' Circus. He suffered eclipse at the turn of the century, was re-introduced grandly by Bonamici in I90I with an "Imperial Circus"; but soon after again met difficult times. Fillis' Circus continued to be a public institution for some years after but he faced bankruptcy again and again and once his animals were sold over his head to pay his creditors. Finally Madame Fillis herself went into direct opposition and "Madame Fillis' Circus" and "Fillis Circus appeared simultaneously in Durban in I9I0. Thereafter Fillis disappeared from the South African scene, touring his circus in the East. He died in Bangkok in January I922 and Union newspapers devoted one or two inches of obituary notice on "a well known circus proprietor".

There was hardly a dorp that did not have its drama circle, its orchestra and its choral society. In the larger towns, amateur endeavour was expressed in an astounding number of ways. In Johannesburg alone, a military band conducted by Danie de Vries and later Stockton preceded the formation by James Hyde in I889 of an orchestra of 70 performers of whom all except about a dozen were amateurs.This famous orchestra was typical of other though smaller enterprises elsewhere. In Johannesburg, the Wanderers' Hall was the cultural focus of the town and it is said that on Sunday nights when concerts were regularly given there, burglars might freely have entered any house in the town. Undistracted by the motor car and barely bothered by the telephone, yet handicapped by the enforced use of carriage and horses or of walking when trams were not available, the public manifested a spontaneous desire for entertainment, even of its own contriving. Merely a lecture could attract a crowd.

Professionally, the legitimate stage flourished in the ninetie Company after company came out from England and drama of every description was played in the big towns. In Cape Town, the new Opera House opened in I893, seldom had bad houses and in Johannesburg which sui generis inclined towards vaudeville, the old Empire (opened in I895) held capacity houses night after night while the Standard Theatre (opened in I89I) played to the music- and drama-loving public Opera companies from England, Italy and elsewhere had successful seasons; Gilbert and Sullivan proved increasingly popular; light comedies, one-act plays, Dutch tragedies, German plays - drama of every kind was enacted in South African theatres before appreciative audiences. On the rare occasions when there were no visiting companies, amateur productions of high quality entertained the public

Apart from the musical entertainment purveyed by amateurs, promenade concerts were organised in all the big towns as well as municipal organ recitals (Roger Ascham of Port Elizabeth was famous as an organist throughout the country). Military bands performed regularly and their Sunday concerts were attended by people who sometimes travelled from far to hear them. Instrumental and vocal concerts were permanent feature of the weekly entertainments programme. From time to time, eminent European artistes visited South Africa. When Camillo Urso, the great violinist, played in Johannesbur in I895, his performance aroused such enthusiasm that he had to give

a double encore after each solo. Sims Reeve sang, Madame Antoinette Trebelli (Antonia Dolores) and later the great Albani ("the Queen's favourite songstress"). Pianists and cellists periodically gave recitals and when there was no "maestro" or "diva" visiting the town, the local teachers of music staged concerts by their pupils or "kindly consented to appear" themselves.

The "illegitimate" forms of entertainment were many and various. Vaudeville, though immensely popular in Johannesburg, was never much at home in the coast towns, particularly at the Cape until the Boer War when the cinema already showed signs of becoming an established form of public amusement. Concert and variety parties toured the country and the Christy Minstrels and Orpheus Macadoo's Company (whose specialities were coon songs and the "Cake Walk") had prolonged seasons wherever they went. There were also touring acrobats such as the Flying Jordans from Australia and Blondin himself "did the rounds" of the big towns, where "Professor" Price also made parachute jumps from a balloon.

Early in the nineties, the popular craze for roller skating broke out throughout the world and rinks appeared almost overnight in every South African town. In Cape Town, the whilom Vaudeville Theatre was converted but soon lost its patronage through the opening of Sassin's Skating Rink at the foot of Adderley Street. Durban and Johannesburg soon opened equally pretentious establishments, the managements always being careful to advertise that their rinks were kept "select". Sassin's Skating Rink in Cape Town became so "select" that private boxes cost two guineas and the hoi polloi was not admitte Competition between the rinks soon compelled extra attractions and every night, some form of entertainment other than skating was provide Military bands often played and much boxing and wrestling (Graeco-Roma style) was staged. In Durban, a great attraction for some time was an electric piano. Firework displays, assaults-at-arms, fencing tournaments and other forms of entertainment filled the bills of these enterprising establishments.

There were also many miscellaneous entertainments such as D'Arcs Marionettes (run by the Misses D'Arc) and Lingard's Exhibition of Wax-Works and mechanicals novelties which were taken from town to town, staying for months in each. Conjurors made periodical appearances and, travel being expensive and difficult, there was scope for any raconteu

particularly if he had magic lantern slides. Even the notorious Louis de Rougemont, "the celebrated author and traveller", gave one address in Cape Town and Mark Twain (or Mr Samuel Clemens, as the newspapers insisted on calling him) gave successful "At Homes" throughout the country.(1) Tableaux Vivants were a fairly popular form of entertainment and in Durban, the attraction of a Spelling Bee was considered large enough to merit conspicuous advertising in the papers. At any given time, the general public of the big towns had a considerable variety of entertainment from which to choose and, such was the spirit of the times and the lack of distraction in everyday social life, almost every form was consistently and well patronised.

Throughout this period, one influence was plainly at work. Electricity was a comparatively new invention and the public continue fascinated by it. Anyone who could advertise a "Limelight Entertainment" for which the light was electrically supplied, was sure of a large attendance. Illustrated lectures were popular and an enterprising showman, Harry Miller, toured the country with a glorified magic lantern called the "Electorama", accompanying the projection of still views with suitable pieces of elocution. These views were almost all of a topical character and though such entertainment now seems

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(1) That he astonished the ingenuous public of the time is manifest from the following report of his debut in Cape Town (8) :"The Opera House presented quite a strange spectacle last night. It was packed from floor to ceiling with an expectant crowd anxious to make the acquaintance of an extraordinary and renowned personality. But the curtain was up when the people entered, the orchestra was empty and looked desolate while the stage was laid out like a sort of understocked furniture shop, being embellished with a dozen or so of chairs of various patterns in which nobody sat. However if the stage was untenanted, the rest of the house was not. His Excellency the Administrator and staff, the Speaker and a large number of members of the Legislature were "in front" as was also everybody else who had been able to get tickets of admission. Everybody waited more or less impatiently till a quarter past eight when a door at the side of the stage opened and Mr Samuel L. Clemens, popularly known as Marek Twain, strolled on to the stage. Walking up to a table in the centre, he deposited a watch thereon and began his lecture forthwith by plunging at once into reminiscence of his boyhood....Mark Twain's series of yarns are ofcourse funny (though a good many people last night were probably disappointed) but it is his manner of telling them, coupled with a peculiarly comic drawl and remarkabl quaint phraseology, which gets the laugh. The causerie came to an end just before IO o'clock and different subjects will be dealt with tonight and tomorrow night when equally crowded houses are assured."

singularly infantile, it aroused considerable interest in the nineties when there were no "movies", the Press carried no photographic illustrations and the best available were pen-and-ink drawings.(i)The famous Cosmoramas and Panoramas of Victorian days still amused the public and occasionally re-appeared as travelling showmen toured the towns; but electricity began increasingly to invade the entertainment world and weird machines began to make their appearance with which it had no real connection except to attract the public.(ii)

The name of Edison - inseparable from electricity - was treated with awe and respect at the time. The phonograph, or talking machine which operated by means of wax cylinders (like the modern dictaphone) continued to make successful appearances in public in its improved forms, consisting usually of the addition of an enormous trumpet. Admiration of Edison received a new impetus with the opening of "Graphophone Parlours" and the giving of "Phonograph Concerts". (The graphophone was an improvement on the phonograph and dispensed with ear-tubes but the problem of sound-amplification was by no means

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(i) The value of such entertainments may be gauged from the following contemporary report :"Mr Harry Miller of electorama fame opened on Saturday evening at the Durban Theatre Royal with a completely new set of pictures. There was a good house and the entertainment was much enjoyed. The views were projected from a magic lantern on to a large screen covering the whole of the proscenium and throughout were put on very well.(Harry Miller himself stated that the screen was "400 Square Feet of Canvas" and that the pictures were "size of life".) A feature of the show is the views of the terrible dynamite disaster at Braamfontein. These are graphically described by Mr Miller and gave a vivid idea of the awful and far-reaching effects of the explosion. Scenes from the Transvaal Crisis(Jameson Raid) are also shown and explained - with more or less exactness - by the very entertaining cicerone, and comprise incidents and facts which have been brought into world-wide prominence since the beginning of the present year(1896). But the exhibition embraces views of places in other parts of the world, America and Europe contributing their quota. These general views, artistically considered, are far superior to any having a direct local interest and are aptly enhanced by history and anecdote, interspersed occasionally with appropriate recitation in which Mr Miller evinces his aptitude as an elocutionist. The pictures of statuary which is a subject lending itself admirably to reproduction in lantern slides, are distinctly good; the portraits are brought out nicely and the electorama is a success in everything but novelty." (9)

(ii) One of these was the "Electro-Binopticon" which accompanied a conjuror, Captain Otto, on his tours. It was in charge of a Mr. Vivian Cardinal who undertook to "show on a 100 foot screen a number of pictures by Great European Artists which have been a delight to everyone who has witnessed them. If you miss this, you won't feel happy. A good thing is a joy forever." This particular exhibition was by no means a success but it was typical of the scores that toured the country attempting to profit by the awe and wonder that continued to surround anything electrical.

solved thereby.)This type of entertainment was more in the nature of a social than a commercial enterprise but at one time it attained considerable ppopularity.

Appreciation of the zeitgeist of the period is only possible through realisation that the public was essentially "sensation-minded" and acutely responsive to any type of novelty.Contemporary newspapers are noteworthy for a solemn glorifying of trivial incident and exaggeration of peccadillo in deference to public craving for sensation which journalists were only too ready to construe out of trifles. The slowness of communication and of the general tempo of life gave people time to talk and think. News of events of interest had sometimes to be eked out over days of discussion before more exciting items took their place. Under those circumstances, the public maintained its capacity for wonderment and in the dorps and isolated towns in particular with their lack of contact with outside affairs, enthusiasm for novelty was especially strong.

The desire for sensation was, at the time, a world-wide tendency. Science had suddenly made enormous strides and the general public had, just as suddenly, discovered itself to be tired of doing things the old way and looking at entertainment of the old type. An eagerness to welcome anything new was in the air and while this explains the exceptional popularity of theatrical entertainment in general and vaudeville in particular,during the nineties, it explains too the acclaim which greeted every type of entertainment novelty from grandiose Panoramas to Magic Lantern Displays run with electricity. It was at this time that the amusement arcade, the fair and the exhibition attained their highest popularity. It was then too that midgets, monstrosities, soothsayers, conjurors and other purveyors of the miraculous attained their greatest success and were able to tour, as independent entertainments, even in the smallest dorps. The public was ready to acclaim anything novel and if it were mechanical, so much the better. Into this atmosphere, the first moving pictures readily fitted.

The invention of moving pictures is a highly controversial subject, priority for which is claimed by a dozen different inventors of several countries. (1) It is here irrelevant insofar as South Africa

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(1) A chapter of 7,000 words dealing with the subject and indicating how the various cinema enterprises in different countries came ultimately to be represented in South Africa is here excluded.

was originally presented with a fait accomplis in the shape of an Edison kinetoscope. The kinetoscope was a peep-show of moving pictures It was inspired by Edison's invention of the phonograph whose cylindrical records appeared to him to have a possible parallel for sight, that is, as much as it was possible to record sound in grooves round a cylinder which a moving needle would reproduce, so should it be possible to record sight in photographs round a similar cylinder which possibly a light would reproduce. Edison employed on the development of this idea a young Englishman, William Kennedy Laurie Dickson, who with the assistance of Eastman's invention of the roll film and the application of the principle of intermittent motion supplied by a Geneva cross, ultimately perfected a camera capable of taking moving pictures the same principles of which could be applied to their exhibition i.e. rapid and intermittent appearance before a light.(The same discovery was made by Latham, Armat and Jenkins in America, the Lumieres in Paris etc etc). By playing a synchronously adjusted phonograph at the same time, talking-moving-pictures could be shown in a peepshow or kinetophone.(IO)

Edison regarded this invention with comparative indifference and, for the purpose of stocking amusement arcades, exhibitions etc with the machines, ordered the production of a few score which were rapidly exploited by itinerant and other showmen. Moving pictures, like any amusement arcade mechanical novelty, were bound to capture the public's imagination. The few kinetoscopes made by Edison did indeed prove phenomenally successful. They consisted of a big box about four feet in height with a slit at the top through which it was possible to see fifty-foot lengths of film being twitched past a light the tiny pictures on which gave an illusion of motion. Astute showmen took these machines all over the world and early in 1895, salesmen appeared in Johannesburg.(1) Possibly owing to the high cost of the

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(1) The account of the first appearance of moving pictures in South Africa is so typical of the ingenuous joie-de-vivre of the times that it must be quoted in full (II) :
"In response to invitations, a little group of literary and scientific gentlemen met in one of the small rooms of the Grand National Hotel last night (4th April 1895) where Messrs Franks and Stephens were waiting for them with a specimen of Edison's perhaps most wonderful invention, the kinetoscope. Amongst those present were Miss Franks, Messrs R. Dives (editor of "Machinery"), Clem Webb (of the "Mining Journal"), L. Jacobs (Public Procesutor), C. Aburrow (Town Engineer), D. Blackburn (editor of "The Judge"), Draper (secretary of the Geological Society), C.F. Osborne, Dr. Froisiat, representatives of The Star and the Standard and other gentlemen.

The party was in a short time seated round a well-supplied table. Over the walnuts and the wine, the company became anecdotally inclined and many a laughable little story was related, Miss Franks proving to be the life and soul of the part As one of the gentlemen remarked to her, "it seemed as if she ha forgotten all the stupid stories she had heard and remembered only the good ones".

At a suitable opportunity, the Chairman, Dr Dives, informe those present that it was time to get to the kinetoscope. In a moment, the two proprietors of the machine had started off the marvellous mechanism of the interior and, amidst the usual whirring apparently inseparable from electrical machinery, the little crowd had an opportunity, each in turn, of witnessing this wonderful creation of Mr Edison's brain. The kinetoscope presents the appearance of a cabinet about 3 feet 6 inches in height. It has an aperture in the top for the eye to peer in at; and, after the interior has been fitted with one or the other of the cylindrical tin things representing the"film"or picture(the reporter had evidently "wined" unduly - films were not cylindrical tin things but already based on culluloid and flexible) the spectator can witness the whole scene going on before his eyes. One especially interesting picture last night was a cockfight which was witnessed by the whole company with unmistakeable interest. The two birds, game-cocks, flew and fluttered and spurred and pecked each other as if actually present in reduced dimensions inside the kinetoscope. The feathers could even be seen to fly after an unusually decisive attack. This exciting little scene was presented by means of some I,380 actual photos of the fight, taken very rapidly one after the other as it progressed by some secret process of Edison's; and the kinetoscope, by another wonderful process, is able to pass the whole I,380 before the spectator's eye in about 33 seconds so that there is absolutely no break in the continuity. In fact, the kinetoscope does for the eye what the phonograph does for the ear.

After carefully inspecting and admiring the machine, Mr Dives proposed luck to the enterprising proprietors and the toast having been duly drunk in champagne, the gathering broke up."

Fortunately The Standard's reporter gave a more accurate report of the proceedings (I2) :

PHOTOGRAPHS THAT LIVE
Edison's Latest Wonder
THE KINETOSCOPE
A Marvellous Machine

"That versatile genius, Thomas A. Edison, has given to the world many marvellous inventions; but it is safe to say that not one of them is more remarkable than his latest materialised conception - the kinetoscope, to wit.....all that had been claimed of the machine was perfectly justified. The first scene viewed was a round of a cockfight lasting 33 seconds. Every motion of the birds was reproduced with startling fidelity and, but for the surroundings, it was difficult not to believe that two real cocks were having a mill, so life-like was the motion portrayed. The movements were not in the least jerky but smooth and continuous and just as they would have been in real life. Next was shown Buffalo Bill in one of his quick-firing exhibitions. Here it was the same : every motion was perfect life-like and the illusion was almost perfect. The last scene was that of a skirt-dancer dancing. This was, if possible, a greater wonder than the others. Not only did all the movements of the limbs of the dancer and the foldings and unfoldings of the manifold drapery appear before the eye but the changing expressions of the dancer's face were clearly discernible, the whole becoming all but a thing of life. Such are the marvellous things the kinetoscope presents to the eye.....

It is not a cheap toy. One instrument costs £150 and ea 50 foot band £5. But ever since its birth, it has commanded a ready sale in America....By this time, the machine examined on Thursday night should be on its way to Pretoria for Messrs Franks and Stevenson have decided to show President Kruger Edison's very latest. But it will soon be back in Johannesbur and will then be back on exhibition to the general public who we doubt not, will be quick to avail themselves of the opport

machines, only one appears to have sold. The promoters appear to have succeeded in their intention of showing it to Paul Kruger since its owner subsequently advertised "patronised by His Honour the State President".

The kinetoscope was opened to the public on the 19th April 1895 in a specially-rented shop in Henwood's Arcade traversing Pritchard and President Streets, Johannesburg. Described as "The Greatest Scientific Marvel of the Age" and "The Marvel of the New World", the machine with its few 50-foot loops of film which had to be threaded on to roller in its interior (there were then no reels or re-winding devices) attracted thousands of people to press a coin into its slot and to gaze in astonishment at the ludicrous scenes within - Buffalo Bill (Colonel Cody - the first real movie star) galloping jerkily about firing at a glass ball with a Colt repeating rifle, a cock-fight, Carmencita performing a skirt dance, and one or two others (all the product of Dickson's efforts to supply the Kinetoscope Parlours which sprang up with lightning rapidity in America). In a week or two, the proprietor Mr Witherell, changed the films, advertising that "the two pictures to be on view for the next few days represent an extremely ludicrous and laughable incident in a barber's shop and the High Kicker - a regular beauty and no mistake".(1)

Possibly because of their high cost, no further kinetoscopes appeared in South Africa until later when projected films had appeared and the cinema proper had embarked on its commercial career. On the other hand, South Africa was certainly one of the first countries in the world to see and hear sound-motion-pictures. They were first shown in August 1895 by Lingard's Waxworks then in Durban which, in addition to the usual waxworks display (to which the figure of Dr. Jameson had just been added) exhibited a number of mechanical novelties at the entrance of the penny-in-the-slot variety. One of

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(1) The scene in a barber's shop - Dickson's first attempt at making a comic film - was the film that inspired Oscar Meester to found the German film production industry (13). The exhibition of "The High Kicker" foreshadowed the evil reputation which the kinetoscope inevitably developed after the appearance of projected moving pictures. The competition of huge moving pictures on a screen was obviously too great for a penny-in-the-slot machine and in a few years the kinetoscope had sunk to being a purveyor of moreorless pornographic amusement. French firms, trespassing on Edison's preserves through his having failed to take out world-patent rights, helped to supply it with dubious films. In 1898, a a touring fair called "Wonderland" encamped on Pritchard Street and displayed kinetoscopes showing "The Bride's First Honeymoon", "The Maiden's Naughty Flea", "The Maiden's Bathroom" etc etc.

these was a kinetophone (i). In conformity with current practice, Mr Lingard gave a preview of the machine's performance to the Press (ii) on the Ist August I895 and thereafter its exhibitions were free to patrons of the waxworks. Its entire programme seems to have consisted of phonograph records and kinetoscope films played synchronously of the Carmencita skirt dance, "Living Band Scene", "Milk White Flag"(a scene from a current stage melodrama) and "The Carnival Dance by Three Gaiety Girls" in which, to the astonishment of spectators, the girls in very frilly dresses and mob caps smiled straight at them. The

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(i)This fact is of curious significance. When in I894, Edison instructed Dickson to manufacture kinetoscopes and films for the Kinetoscope Company and its subsidiary "Parlours", his instructions included the exploitation of what he considered their major achievement - the kinetophone which was thought to be far more commercially attractive than the kinetoscope with its whirring machinery and jerky silent pictures. Accordingly Dickson had the first batch of kinetophones ready towards the middle of I895 but for some unknown reason, they were not a commercial success. Possibly showmen thought the public adequately satisfied by the kinetophope and the£350 cost of the kinetophone probably represented too great an outlay for the smaller amusement purveyors for whom it was intended. According to Terry Ramsaye (I4) "not more than fifty of them were made and probably not that many sold". Of that remarkably small number, one found its way to South Africa but a few weeks after manufacture and showed passable "talkie" films.

(ii) The Natal Mercury reported the event as follows (I5) :

"A MARVELLOUS INSTRUMENT

The Kinetophone

It was recently announced in these columns that there was to be added to Lingard's Waxworks Exhibition in West Street (Durban) one of the most remarkable instruments of our time. There seems no limit to what Edison can accomplish and in the kinetophone, an invention has been brought to the notice of the world which to see is but to marvel at. It is the kinetophone which has just been imported by Lingard's and of which a private view was given yesterday afternoon in the presence of a committee of gentlemen including the Mayor (Mr Geo. Payne), Captain Lucas R.M., Mr T.W. Edmonds, Mr J.W. Coleman (Postmaster and Telegraph Superintendent), Mr F.H. Hadfield (Electrical Engineer), Mr Sloan, representatives of the Press and others. As each one viewed the interesting representation of the celebrated Spanish dancer, Carmencita, and actually saw her going through her clever performance and at the same time, heard the accompanying music, only looks of astonishment and brief exclamations of wonder sufficed to convey the pleasure enjoyed. There, before the eye, was the great dancer and every detail of her airy terpsichorean movements was observable and one wanted to applaud. It is impossible to convey in words a correct idea; the performance has to be seen. To say it is life-like is not sufficient for Edison by his genius has compassed both personality and action.....

effect of "talkie" films was achieved by looking through the slot at the pictures while applying the tube of the phonograph contained in the same box to the ear. When Lingard's Waxworks came to Johannesbur in September 1895, the kinetophone aroused little comment, having been preceded in Henwood's Arcade by the silent kinetoscope; but arriving in Cape Town in January 1896, it was alleged to have been seen by ~~Emik~~ over 2,000 people on the opening night of the Waxworks in the now obsolete Oddfellows Hall in Plein Street and was again rapturously acclaimed by the Press.

Both kinetoscope and kinetophone were undoubtedly the mechanical wonders of the day and became known to a sizeable proportion of the public of the big towns where they were exhibited; but like all mechanical novelties, their attraction steadily faded and they were soon regarded as nothing more than transiently fascinating toys. No more than passing importance was attached to them and despit the excellent propaganda made by their salesmen and exhibitors and the rhapsodical forecasts of inspired newspaper reporters, both machines, as far as the general public was concerned, were soon forgotten. Of far greater social importance were the variety turns and dramatic companies imported from overseas which continuously brought an air of novelty into South Africa.

The middle nineties were a peculiarly hectic period in South African history, culminating with the Jameson Raid whose repercussions were felt throughout the country and indeed the world. Tension mounted until ultimately the Boer War broke out. During this period, the more hectic types of entertainment were naturally the most popular and none more so than the vaudeville programmes purveyed by the Empire Palace of Varieties in Johannesburg. This enterprise belonged to the Hyman Brothers, Edgar operating the theatre and Sydney in London arranging for the supply of turns which at this time included many world-renowned artists such as Marie Lloyd, Sandow la Tortajaga and others. Early in 1896, shortly after the Raid, Sydney Hyman concluded an arrangement with the famous conjuror Carl Hertz to appear at the Empire in Johannesburg. "Prestidigâtateurs" as they were then called, were very popular at the time. Despite his distinguished talents (1), Carl Hertz wished to add to his "bag of

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(1) Born of Russian and Polish parents in San Francisco in 1849, Carl

.. Hertz as a boy decided to become a conjuror. Within a few years, he attained conspicuous success and became one of the most famous magicians of the day. His tours took him all over the world (to remote places in the Orient as well as the big towns of Europe and America) and he gave performances before many of the crowned heads of Europe. His feats of legerdemain were extraordinary. One of his best known tricks was the disappearance of a canary, cage and all, before the very eyes of the audience and sometimes even in the hands of one of its members (the cage was collapsible). Another popular item dealt with a tin bath filled with water which members of the audience were allowed to inspect. Hertz then threw in half a dozen eggs, fired a pistol and six geese appeared, swimming on the surface.

Even more spectacular were his staged illusions (all of which were presented by him in South Africa) such as the famous "Phoenix" in which his wife, who performed under her maiden name of "M'lle Emilie D'Alton", entered some very convincing flames and appeared to go up in smoke (actually she disappeared through a trap-door in the stage) reappearing triumphantly a moment or twonlater.

Another illusion with M'lle D'Alton who also sang, was the well-advertised "Aerolithe" in which the "charming enchantress" floated without any visible means of support about the stage and "captivated the audience with her graceful poses".

"Prestidigitateurs" of the standing of Carl Hertz enjoyed great popularity in an age conspicuously susceptible to wonder and could, by themselves, successfully occupy theatres for weeks at a time. The staging of "illusions" was their forte and since it was firmly imprinted on the public mind that moving pictures were an "illusion", it is not surprising that among their first purveyors were conjurors. Audiences believed that the first projected moving pictures were a fake - the illusion of motion created on a sheet in an ordinary theatre being produced by some exceptionally clever prestidigitateur. Cinquevalli himself had arranged to exploit Edison's projecting kinetoscope (now called the Vitascope) in England but he was preceded by "Professor" Trewey, prestidigitateur and personal friend of the Lumiere Brothers who used their "Cinematographe" at his conjuring exhibitions at the Polytechnic in London. Furthermore an outsider with no standing in the entertainment world, Robert Paul, had entered the magicians' field and was showing moving pictures at the Alhambra in London.

By the time Carl Hertz was ready to leave for South Africa therefore, "animated photographs" had become almost a sine qua non of the conjuror's equipment.

tricks" by including the current novelty - "animated photographs". By this time, through ~~the~~ Edison's invention of the "Projecting Kinetoscope" or "Vitascope" and the development of very similar machines in England and the Continent, moving pictures were being shown in many large theatres, notably the Alhambra in London to whose operator, Robert Paul (1), Carl Hertz decided to apply to obtain a

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(1) One of the first kinetoscopes to appear in London was the historic machine bought by two Greeks who had seen it in a Kinetoscope Parlour in Broadway in 1894. Finding it most profitable, the two men wished to obtain more machines but were unwilling to import further models from America at a cost of between two and three hundred dollars each. They accordingly resorted to what they appear to have known was a nefarious course. They went to a maker of scientific instruments, Robert Paul of Hatton Gardens, and, explaining their difficulty, asked that he duplicate the kinetoscope already in their possession. Paul very properly refused on the grounds that the machine was probably covered by patent rights and he would not be party to their infringement.

Paul however was so interested in the ingenious mechanism of the kinetoscope that he enquired into its patents, being astonished to discover that the machine was protected only in the United States. During 1894 therefore, he started building his own kinetoscopes and, obtaining films from the Edison agents in London, first began showing them at Earl's Court where, as elsewhere, they were an immediate and highly remunerative success.

Like the Lumieres in France, Messter in Germany and others in Europe and America, Paul had hardly seen the kinetoscope when he wished "to take the pictures out of the box" and show them to a full-sized audience in a theatre. Difficulties in operating his kinetoscopes (the Edison agents had become alarmed by this legal piracy and had refused to continue supplying films) forced Paul to rely on his own inventiveness. During 1895 he worked on mechanism in part based on the principle embodied in the kinetoscope but sufficiently removed to render it an original invention. By the end of the year he had devised a projector which could throw 50-foot kinetoscope films on to a screen. Owing to the Edison agents' refusing to supply these films, Paul had then to build his own camera.

By the time Robert Paul was ready to project his own moving pictures on his own projector to a public audience, such exhibitions were already being given in London by "Professor" Trewey or Treuwé to whom the brothers Auguste and Louis Lumiere had entrusted one of their "Cinematographes" modelled on Edison's kinetoscope. Paul however went to Sir Augustus Harris, the famous entrepreneur, and laggely at the instigation of Lady Harris, obtained an engagement at the Alhambra Palace of Varieties. In March 1896, he gave the first performance of the "Theatrograph" as he called his machine, and his "animated photographs" were immediately successful. Paul rechristened his machine the "Animatograph" and secured another engagement at Olympia.

These achievements necessitated intense activity. During the day, Paul produced lengths of 50-foot film of ridiculous subjects such as traffic, trees, pedestrians, anything that moved and also attempt to manufacture further projectors. At night, he dashed by hansom cab between the theatres where his machines gave their turns.(16)

projector. "It occurred to me", he wrote many years later (17),"that it would be good speculation if I could get one of these machines to take to South Africa with me and introduce into my entertainment. I accordingly went to see Trewey whom I knew very well, to try either to purchase or hire a machine; but he would not let me have one. So I went to see Paul in the hope that he would prove more accommodating." What transpired was substantiated by Robert Paul himself in a personal letter before his death (18) but is best given in Hertz' own words.

Hertz first saw Paul on a Wednesday and Paul promised to supply a machine for £50 in two or three months time. Hertz' boat for South Africa left on Saturday. Paul actually possessed only two machines, both at the Alhambra on the stage (there was no such thing as a projection box at that early stage and in any case, the "throw" from the back of the theatre would have been far too long for the primitive machine). He was getting £100 a week for his exhibitions and dared not risk his machines failing him. Kept as a spare for emergency, the second machine was as valuable as the first and despite Hertz offering him £80, Paul continued adamant. "He would not listen to me", wrote Hertz (19), "and I went away much disappointed".....The next night (Thursday),I called to see him again, took him out to my club for supper and did all I could to induce him to sell me one of his machines. But it was no use; he would not do so. However on the Friday night, the night before I was to sail for South Africa, I determined to make a last attempt and accordingly took him out to supper again and offered him £100 for one of his machines. He repeated however that he could not risk parting with one; he must have a machine in reserve in case of accidents. "Well", I said,"you had better take me over to the Alhambra and explain to me the working of the machine and all about it so that I shall understand how to use it when one is sent out to me." So we went back to the Alhambra where he took me on to the stage and showed me the whole working of the machine - how to fix the films in and everything concerning it. We were there for over an hour during which I kept pressing him to let me have one of the machines. Finally I said : "Look here ! I am going to take one of these machines with me now !" With that, I took out £100 in notes, put them into his hand, got a screw-driver and almost before he knew it, I had one of the machines unscrewed from the floor of the stage and on to a four-wheeler. The

next day I sailed for South Africa on the "Norman" with the first cinematograph which had ever left England....."

Hertz arrived in the midst of very troubled conditions. Johannesburg, always a focus of unrest, had witnessed the tragic error of the Jameson Raid, Rhodes had resigned the premiership of the Cape Colony and the whole country was in a ferment over the trial of the Raiders. In the Transvaal itself, excitement was at fever-pitch and the atmosphere was charged with distrust, suspicion and expectancy. Probably for the first time, in Johannesburg at least the theatres were only half-filled. Travelling from Cape Town in April 1896 to fulfill his engagement at the Empire Theatre of Varieties, Carl Hertz was stopped at the border and his forty trunks and packing cases eyed with the deepest suspicion by the Boer customs officials stationed at Vereeniging. With the greatest difficulty (which he did not lessen by playing tricks on the examiners), Hertz had them passed and went on to Johannesburg. Here he, his wife and assistants suffered the usual discomforts of travellers of the time - excessive rates for hotel accommodation, little water for washing (in common with many others, they had to make do with expensive bottles of soda water) and the general discomforts of a mining town whose conveniences could not keep pace with its rapid growth.

For two weeks, Hertz' act consisting of conjuring and "illusions" only formed part of the programme at the Empire. "Those were stirring days in Johannesburg", he wrote (20), "Martial law was in force and it affected our business a good deal and sometimes the Empire Theatre where we were performing was only half-filled. One night some shots were fired just outside and everyone in the theatre jumped up and rushed out, leaving me standing there alone. I shall never forget the scene in the theatre on the night of the release of the Reformers who had been sentenced to death. When they came in, the whole audience rose to their feet and there was a scene of tremendous enthusiasm. Needless to day, there were no more conjuring feats that night. The released prisoners got on to the stage and made speeches and then invited everyone in the theatre to have drinks at their expense. Waiters were kept busy running into the auditorium with drinks from the adjoining bars and now and again some reckless enthusiast would knock tray and glasses out of the hands of a waiter and send them spinning into the air whereupon he would merely enquire

the damage and pay at once. When things had quietened down, we did big business and played to crowded houses....."

During these two weeks, Hertz was much concerned over the moving picture machine he had "stolen" from Robert Paul and which he intended should form one of the magical sensations of his repertoire. He had tried it out on the "Norman" with very variable success attained only through endless experimenting. By the time he reached Johannesburg, Hertz felt he had the machine under control; but in the haste of leaving London, he had obtained only five films which did not permit the change of programme he desired. Cables to England produced no reply. Fortunately, wandering one day into Benwood's Arcade, Hertz saw the kinetoscope ("in the window of a rubber shop", he wrote) and apparently never having seen one before, inspected it closely.and was at once struck by the fact that the peep-show used exactly the same films as Paul's projecting machine. The arcade kinetoscope had been on view for exactly a year and during that time, the owner had imported a number of films from the Edison company to change its programmes from time to time. Hertz eventually succeeded in obtaining twenty old films from him for £10.

These films however did not fit his machine. To make his invention different from Edison's, Paul had arranged the sprocket-holes of his films in a different manner with the result that the cogged wheels of his projector failed to engage in the sprocket-holes of the kinetoscope films. Hertz at length devised a method of overcoming this difficulty. Cutting long strips of fresh film, he cemented them over the sprocket-holes of the kinetoscope films and then laboriously punched other perforations to fit the Paul machine. This "terribly tedious job" successfully accomplished, Hertz felt ready to give his first public performance of "animated photographs".

Doubtless in deference to his friend Trewey and the Lumieres he rechristened the machine the "Cinematographe" and advertised that on Monday the IIth May 1896, the Empire would stage

The First production out of England of the London Sensation
the
CINEMATOGRAPHE
The Latest Astounding Invention in Photography !
The Photo-Electric Sensation of the Day !
The Most Startling and Scientific Marvel of the Age !
Wonderful Reproduction of Animated Nature !
Every Scene in Motion, Reproduced as in Real Life !

A preview was given on the night of Saturday the 9th May and

and on the IIth, there were ecstatic comments in the Press (1). The five films taken by Paul in London were ludicrous in the extreme. The consisted of"A Highland Fling" danced by a Scotch couple, "Street Scenes in London" (always a topical favourite to many exiled Londoners), "Tommy Atkins with his Girl in the Park"(which was merely a scene of a soldier flirting in Hyde Park),"A Military Review" and "A Scene from Trilby" (later alleged to have been acted on the roof of the Alhambra). The twenty kinetoscope films which had been much used and were scratched and blurred, suffered also from the effect of the new sprocket-holes Hertz had grafted on them. They were mostly of Dickson's manufacture and included the famous slapstick "Scene in a Barber's Shop", "Carmencita's Skirt Dance", "The Tide coming In", "A Fireman saving a Child" (which always caused great excitement among audiences), "A Prize Fight", etc etc. The rickety projector was fixed on the rail of the Circle and the films were projected on to a gold-bordered sheet let down above the stage.

They lasted half a minute each, the flicker was almost unbearable and scratches, blurs and other blemishes due to their excessive previous use rendered them the more difficult to watch; but they justified their claim to be the current novelty and became extremely popular (ii). Though the films were literally no more than "views" with no actors, plot or scenery, they represented half-minute peeps at scenes which miraculously moved "according to nature" and audiences were fascinated. The management of the Empire was particularly pleased and when Hertz commenced his tour of the Union, Edgar Hyman himself,a famous character in the South African entertainment world, accompanied him for six weeks to study the working of the cinematographe machine. Hyman was so fascinated that he immediately wrote to London to order a camera and projector to take and show his own moving pictures.

Carl Hertz showed projected moving pictures in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Bloemfontein, Kimberley, Cape Town, Kingwilliamstown, Port

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(1) "The pictures are so life-like in size and other respects that the spectator has some difficulty in realising that the figures are mere representations."(21)
"The whirr of the machine reminds one of the kinetoscope while the pictures on the screen become animated and move in such a life-like manner that it is difficult to realise that they are only photographs."(22)
"It is certainly one of the most marvellous inventions of this most inventive century and none should miss seeing it."(23)

(ii) Hertz himself wrote - "The movements of the persons and animals on the screen were so slow as to be really comical for the films

Elizabeth, Durban, Pietermaritzburg and other towns. Almost always, he had full houses. From Johannesburg, the fame of the cinematographe preceded him (it had been reported throughout the country) and people flocked to see the novelty. Special matinees for schoolchildren and for people living in the country were organised and eminent personages and government officials patronised the evening performances for the purpose of seeing "animated photographs". Wherever they were shown, comment centred on two items - on the London street scenes where the movements of the traffic, pedestrian and vehicular, seemed almost incredible to the onlookers (it had the effect of everything being on the point of tottering over or lurching into each other); and on the scene of waves called "The Tide Coming In". To have captured the movement of so fluid a medium as water for the purposes of reproduction seems to have struck the public as peculiarly wonderful.(i)

Carl Hertz, suave and moustachioed showman of the nineties, had introduced into South Africa the era of the "bioscope". The silent film, crude and unreliable though its first form, had come to stay and with it, fundamental cultural, moral and social changes.

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were worked on the kinetoscope by electricity whereas the first cinematograph machines were worked by hand. But the audiences who knew no better, thought the pictures great and we did wonderful business."(24)

(i) In Kimberley, "the views were received with repeated and prolonged applause and this was undoubtedly the crowning attraction of the entertainment."(25)
In Johannesburg, "the London street scene evoked loud and continuous applause from the cockneys...."(26)
In Cape Town, "the various scenes depicted by the cinematographe were loudly cheered"(27) and comment on the machine stated that "to all who have the most elementary knowledge of things in general, it is the most wonderful of the electrical inventions of the age.....an invention combining photography with electricity in a manner that is truly marvellous."(28) (It did not ofcourse do so - see above - but such comment was typical of the electricity-intoxicated mentality of the South African public of the nineties.)

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CHAPTER II

"Animated Photographs" - An Entertainment Novelty

1895-1899

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1896-1899

The distinguishing feature of the later nineties was the beginning of development in transport and communication which was to culminate in the institution of air services and radio. Acceleration in transport undoubtedly resulted in the public's gradually losing the capacity for wonderment which naturally belonged to a slower tempo of life and which made an adventure out of every sortie on foot or by cart or carriage to a "show". When enjoyment entailed considerable individual effort, it was inevitable that entertainment should tend to be glamourised. Nearly every theatre advertisement ended : "Doors open 7.30. Commence 8 sharp. Carriages 10.15." and though by that time, electric trams were in general use in the large towns, they served only a comparatively small proportion of the public. Bicycles were widely used but not by the bon ton and considerable excitement was created during 1896 when ladies first rode them.(i) At this time, ladies wore enormous hats and leg'o mutton sleeves while gentlemen still favoured Dundreary whiskers (or "Piccadilly weepers") and coats were buttoned almost under the chin. It was still the era of aspidistras, wax flowers under glass on the mantlepiece, ornate oriental furniture, elaborate upholstery , stained glass windows and wrought-iron balustrades even in private houses. Though the tempo of life was leisurely, the events which occurred within it became increasingly exciting and very shortly, infectious. During 1897, the first motor car appeared in South Africa and, encouraged by the Prince of Wales'(later King Edward) example(ii)

(i) During 1896, the Cape Times commented on the strides bicycling had taken among "the fairer sex" - "there were actually between twenty and thirty lady cyclists in Cape Town and its suburbs and the demand for machines was so urgent that local dealers had only two ladies models in stock both of which were snapped up.....It is reported that a dozen fair ones have machines on order, the advent of which they are anxiously awaiting, the delay in business being caused by the extraordinary business of cycle manufacturers." This "extraordinary business" was the means of starting William Morris, now Lord Nuffield, on the career which was to put cheap motor-cars into the possession of thousands of people and thus indirectly to entrench the cinema in South Africa in an unassailable position.

(ii) By the end of 1897, a concern in Cape Town owning one motor-car advertised trips along the Victoria Drive to Camps Bay.

very shortly became popular.

The leisurely tempo of the times was further destroyed by the newspapers which had the appearance of purveying even more news than previously. Actually this effect was gained by exaggerating the smallest items of overseas interest; but in South Africa itself, the news was continuously serious and a state of increasing tension prevailed. The Cape and Natal (despite its fiercely parochial interests) regarded the growing tension in the Dutch republics with undisguised anxiety. The memory of Jameson's ill-conceived raid still rankled in thehpublic mind and every action of the Transvaal Republic seemed designed merely to aggravate a situation rendered almost unbearably sensitive. The focal point was Johannesburg, a town of vice and crime and perpetual excitement where the "Zarps"(1) connived at the Morality Act and almost weekly the French Consul had to send girls back to France. Feeling ran perpetually high. Together with the strain and uncertainty produced by the wavering Gold Market went the unexpressed conviction that sooner or later, the political situation would resolve itself by force. No power, legal or temporal, could suppress the right the Uitlanders considered to be their's and many visitors to Johannesburg of the time made overt reference to the coming struggle. (I) In addition, periodic sensations and scandals, notably the Van Weltheim case (ii) shook the public peace of mind.

In this atmosphere (which existed to a lesser degree in the big coastal towns), vice and illegal methods of blotting out persistently disturbing tension developed greatly and crime and violence increased to an unprecedented extent. Gambling on a gigantic scale ha always been an integral part of Rand life but now the sporting wager attained large proportions. Prize fights were eagerly promoted; battir contests between terriers owned by well-known personalities; races, competitions, sweepstakes, contests of all kinds found enthusiastic backers. Acrobats, firework displays, circuses, lantern-slide lectures anything novel claimed audiences far beyond their deserts. Weekly concerts filled the Wanderers Hall, periodically renowned instrumental

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(1) "Zarps" - South African Republic Police, a popular abbreviation

(ii) Von Weltheim was tried in Johannesburg for the sensational murde of Woolf Joel in his office by revolver shot, and, amidst great public excitement, was acquitted.

ists gave recitals. Always there was the theatre. In Johannesburg, the Standard and the Gaiety, even the old corrugated-iron Theatre Royal, held capacity houses every night. Companies from England came and went, sometimes staying for months at a time. The centre and symptom of those distracting days was the Empire Palace of Varieties in Johannesburg(i) and, in other less troublous parts (notably the coast towns), any purveyor of variety such as the circus, the skating rink or the touring vaudeville party.

Sui generis, moving pictures belonged to this period but for many reasons, "animated photographs" progressed through a variety of stages before they became integrated into the South African social scene of the nineties. In the first place, although the nascent cinema industry was well under the control of two or three large organisations (i) between which there was already fierce competition, there remained unlimited scope for unscrupulous speculators to exploit the current sensation without regard for its success or development.(ii) The satisfaction given by owner-operated "animated photographs" at variety theatres in England and on the Continent was forgotten in the vast number of deplorable failures promoted by uninstructed speculators. Before the cinema could develop, it had to overcome the disreputable

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(i) The Lumieres in France who had started with the initial advantage of a factory for photographic supplies, soon developed a "film studio" to supply "living pictures" to "Professor Treweys" in London (whose success at the Polytechnic hadled to an engagement at the Empire) and other exhibitors of their "Cinematographe" and films. Robert Paul had extended the exhibition of his "Animatograph" from the Alhambra and Olympia to the Crystal Palace and other places. When not operating his machines, Paul produced films topical and otherwise (as early as 1895, his cameraman Bert Acres had filmed the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race). Elsewhere independent adventurers made and exhibited films. Edison, alarmed at the sudden popularity of foreign concerns, sent his agents and cameramen all over the world while his already extensive studios in America produced films as fast as they could. In England, one of the first purely distributing companies, called the Warwick Trading Company, was founded by Charles Urban who early organised an efficient method of trading in films of every make.

(ii) Writing in 1899, Hopwood (2) provides an index of names of extraordinary instruments "invented" by speculators to capitalise on the current craze for "living pictures". This index consists of several pages, the author tracing and describing each. He includes as well a list of names which "will serve as a warning against the production of further etymological monstrosities". It is half a page in length and includes the "Anarithomoscope", "Kinebleposcope" "Mouvementoscope", "Radizograph", "Photokinematograph", "Chronophoto-grapho-scope", "Diarimiscope", "Pantobiograph", "Phenomendoscope", "Stinetiscope", "Vitaletiscope", "Vitopticon", "Waterscope", "Zinematograph" and the "Zeoptotrope".

name achieved for it by commercial exploiters. In fairness to them, it must be admitted that the entertainment world had never before been presented with an item of such mechanical complexity or such inherent difficulty.

In the first place, there was originally no uniformity in the size of films. Different firms made them in different sizes and those that could be projected on one apparatus could not on another. Again, each inventor favoured his own fancy in regard to perforations or sprocket holes. Edison had four down the side of each "frame" or picture, Lumiere one. Some were round, some square and some even oblong in shape. In time, Edison's standard gauge and number of sprocket holes were adopted by all manufacturers (and have remained standard) but until then, considerable chaos prevailed.

The films themselves were extremely delicate and in the early days, were literally clawed past the lens of the projector, the perforations becoming torn and ragged. Under such strain, the thin celluloid frequently tore and it was seriously proposed to cement plain celluloid over the 40 to 100 foot lengths that represented the first "subjects". Further the early mechanisms were both intricate and clumsy.(i) If an operator were able to get a film engaged on the cogged wheels of his projector and kept straight during its mad rush without breaking, he might count on a respite of 30 seconds. There was no re-winding contrivance and the film poured out of the machine into a bag or box on the floor.(ii) Fitting the next film was a tedious business where

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(i) A collection of the various intricate machines current about 1897 survives in the Science Museum, South Kensington, London. Human ingenuity was stretched to the uttermost to solve the problem of projection and when it succeeded, in scores of different forms, it made martyrs of the operators.

(ii) In Europe in 1897, moving pictures had to face a crisis in what had never appeared to be a very promising career. At a charity bazaar in Paris, a cinematograph exhibition was given as a money-making sideshow in an old wooden Hall. Without warning, the films burst into flames and within a few seconds, the whole building was enveloped. A hundred and thirty people were burnt to death, including the Duchesse d'Alencon whose husband died of grief a few days later. The creme de la creme of Paris society was alleged to have perished in the flames and all France went into mourning. This was the signal for the Press to pour torrents of abuse and condemnation on the newly-born cinema. Where previously newspapers had almost ignored its existence, columns of obloquy now appeared. The event was fully reported in South Africa in May 1897 and served to discredit the few enterprises then attempting to exploit moving pictures. On the other hand, it did much to ensure the institution of safety precautions.

the slightest maladroitness might jam the machine. It was ofcourse possible to join a number of films but this resulted in a tangled mass of unwound film as each subject poured out of the projector and, in view of the extreme inflammability of the first celluloid, a serious fire risk which sputtering paraffin and other lamps did much to aggravate. The inevitable intervals between the end of one film and fitting the next were usually filled by the first exhibitors with recorded music conveyed by instruments with as cumbersome a nomenclature as the first projectors.(i)

Inx addition, the projector often trembled violently through being insecurely clamped to a gallery rail or perched precariously on a pile of boxes or anything that came to hand in the central aisle of halls. The early machines clanked, rattled and whirred and audiences were in constant danger of the whole contraption exploding. Few of the towns in South Africa could supply the electricity necessary for their operation and most were constructed to operate by gas manufactured by a portable apparatus which emitted flashes of light and small explosion

The screen itself usually consisted of ordinary sheeting which, being too thin and transparent, was sometimes heavily white-washed, water dripping ominously on to the stage and heightening the atmosphere of awe and wonder with which the early exhibitions were surrounded.(ii

Finally audiences were subjected to intense discomfort by the flickering of the films and the blurs, blotches and scratch-marks by which they were disfigured. Films were often "hand-cranked" through

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(i) In South Africa for instance, exhibitions of films by the Zenomettascope were interspersed by records played on an out-size "Graphophone" and the American Bioscope which attained considerabl popularity was always accompanied by an Edison "Microphonograph". Some showmen arranged for "turns" or recitations while films were being changed.

(ii) The rush to exploit "animated photographs" in Europe and America resulted in opportunist showmen renting shops or any other type of premise available, pasting brown paper over the windows and holding exhibitions of films before ever-waning audiences seated on anything from tumbledown benches to packing cases. Cinema screens of this time were very much smaller than their modern counterparts and consequently it was possible to project from comparatively close quarters. By keeping a sheet dripping wet or moreorless transparent, and projecting from behind it, an audience in front could see just as well as with frontal projection. Some economical "shop-show" proprietors placed their screens in the middle of the room and had an audience on either side, one of which paid slightly lower charges for admission owing to the lettering of titles and captions being in reverse !

projectors at varying speeds. Apart from their inherent flicker (they were projected at 16 frames per second against the modern 24 frames), they frequently jerked and sometimes stopped completely. The amount of light used to project them was very variable and it was not unusual for bright flashes suddenly to illumine the screen. Early audiences almost invariably suffered severe headaches.(i)

These early difficulties dissuaded speculators from risking capital in the "colonies" and South Africa was consequently spared some of their worst manifestations such as the "shop-shows"(ii). On the other hand, "animated photographs" were too popular a novelty completely to be ignored, especially as Carl Hertz (equipped only with twenty five old and scratched films) had shown how successfully they might be exploited. Accordingly in September 1896, Sassin's Skating Rink at the foot of Adderley Street, Cape Town (in conformity with the policy of supporting the waning attraction of "rinking" by providing variety turns) presented the "Vitagraph" preceded for a week by lavish advertising of "The Latest Improvement of the Cinematograph" "This Interesting Piece of Mechanism", "The Very Latest Invention of Its Particular Class", "This Extraordinary Invention" and "The Sweetest Sensation of the 19th Century". The first performance was a complete failure but on subsequent nights, the "Vitagraph" was got to work and once again "animated photographs" were shown in Cape Town to the considerable distraction of their audiences. The Military Governor at the Cape, General Goodenough and his A.D.C. Captain Vernon made a

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(i) The illusion of motion is produced by one picture rapidly succeeding another on a screen, each one separately illumined and cut off from the next by a revolving shutter in the projector. The design of this shutter later earned increased attention from inventors; but for the cinema's first appearances, its proper shape was less a matter of thought than guessing. The faulty design of shutters resulted in a pronounced flicker for which various unsuccessful devices were invented. Some audiences were provided with weirdly-cut fans (like paper d'oyleys) which they were expected to twirl before their eyes while watching "animated photographs". Society invented its own "Kinedodgescope" which consisted simply of twiddling black-gloved fingers in front of the face.

(ii) One of the features of most big cities in Europe and America at this time was a series of shops labelled "Hales Tours" in which scenic moving pictures taken all over the world were shown. An attempt was made to convey to audiences the impression of being seated in a train - whistles were blown, etc - and at one time, these shows became very popular. They were never instituted in South Africa though they are remembered by a great many people as their first experience of the cinema.

special visit behind the scenes to have the intricacies of the machine explained to him by the Mr Boam who operated it; and the public patronised it enthusiastically. The "Vitagraph" then went to Johannesburg where it appeared at the Empire Palace of Varieties as a turn and, after completing a season of some weeks, it passed into the possession of Frank Villis who used it as an act in his circus in many places throughout the Union, thus greatly contributing to the widespread popularising of moving pictures.

The importance of the "Vitagraph's" typically variable and imperfect exhibitions lay in the type of films it showed. They derived from many quarters (1) and they established in the minds of the people who saw them that the wonder of moving pictures was not only that they moved but also that they could be a living mirror of the times, a historical record. Further they began to assume a dramatic content and could be made actively to amuse audiences as well as interest and instruct. This was a distinct advance on the impression gained from Hertz' twenty five old films.and the Press hailed it as such.(3) Audiences too applauded heartily.

The"Vitagraph" sustained public interest in "animated photographs" to such an extent that when the appearance of a similar machine (though alleging great improvements) called "The Theatregraph" at the Metropolitan Hall in Cape Town on the 4th December 1896 was grandly advertised, the hall was packed. In common with many such enterprises, the performance was a debacle and the audience reclaimed its money.(It was alleged that one of the parts of the machine was not available through the mailship "Arab" being overdue.) The "Theatregraph" claimed to show "Coloured Animated Photography" and when finally it gave a

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(1) The Vitagraph's films derived from Edison's studios, the Lumieres' and Robert Paul's, the standard gauge having already been instituted. They included a "Railway Scene" taken at the Gare de Ciotat by the Lumieres showing the arrival and departure of a train with passengers alighting (the approaching engine terrified the first spectators), the Paris Market Hall showing carts arriving with goods, and "The Dispute", a comic film dealing with someone treading on a hoe in a garden. There were also children riding in a goat chaise, an electric tram, a scene at a fire-station at a call of fire, the famous "Waves on a Beach" (sometimes called "The Tide Coming In" which never palled on audiences), Lady Cyclists who were considered most entertaining by early audiences, the famous Cermencita Dance, and a comic film made by Paul dealing with a cook flirting with a policeman on area steps.

reasonably successful performance, it did indeed show hand-coloured moving pictures including the famous "Annabelle Butterfly".(i) All these films derived from the United States but the performance of the Theatregraph was so unreliable that after a short season at the Metropolitan Hall at which special matinees for school-children and students were organised and evening performances were well attended, the itinerant showman to whom it belonged took it elsewhere and its many coloured films were shown nowhere else in South Africa(ii). It represented the first attempt to give unsupported performances of moving pictures and simultaneously it showed their highest development and the current difficulties of their exhibition.

By this time, moving pictures had survived the usual period of popular crazes; but, to the astonishment of the entertainment world, they continued to command public interest. Overseas, their sphere was fairly clearly defined - they had held their place in variety programmes but had sunk to the bottom of the bill, and they continued

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(i) Very early in the nineties, a young short-hand typist in the U.S.A. Treasury Department named C. Francis Jenkins constructed a tiny projector-camera in his spare time. Edison's kinetoscope had just appeared but Jenkins' design greatly improved on it. Buying a short length of the newly-invented Eastman roll-film, he paid a dancer from the vaudeville stage to perform a butterfly dance before his weird apparatus. Her name was Annabelle. Jenkins, determined to do all that could be done, laboriously coloured each frame of this film by hand. It was the first in the history of cinema entertainment. Later Jenkins went into partnership with Thomas Armat who in 1895 perfected the "Vitascope" on whose principles the modern projector is based. The rights of the partnership were bought by Edison for commercial exploitation and today the two inventors are honoured as among the true pioneers of the cinema.

(ii) The most popular items in the "Theatregraph's" programme were "The Dancing Girl"(Annabelle), "The Blacksmith's Shop", "The Haymakers" and "The Tub Race", all of which were coloured and emanated from Edison's studios. "The Blacksmith's Shop" was probably made as early as 1893 for kinetoscopes and prints subsequently hand-coloured. In Dickson's biography of Edison published in 1894, the original film of Carmencita dancing is magnificently reproduced together with that of the famous "Serpentine Dance", the acrobat Caicedo, and the first slapstick film ever produced - Dickson's assistant, Fred Ott, sneezing. "The Carnival Dance" shown by the "Theatregraph", was done by a Gaiety girl and became quite a famous film. "The Watermelon Party" depicted piccanninies in the Southern States and presented particularly striking colour contrasts. "The Sprinkling Scene" was the famous "L'Arroseur Arrosé", one of the Lumieres' first films, which never failed "to take the house by storm". Its scenario was as follows : "Man watering garden with hose. Boy steps on hose. Man looks into nozzle to see why water has stopped Boy steps off hose. Man receives full force of released water in his face."

in moreorless disreputable guise as peep-shows in amusement arcades and seaside piers and as "shop-shows". Their position was saved by the earnest attempts of the first producing companies to exploit the range of interest of their films, both in the topical and dramatic aspects. Topical films of the period depicted current events such as the Derby and the Grand National, the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race, the launching of battleships, military reviews, processions, carnivals etc but though early audiences were entertained by the sight of waves breaking on a beach or trees blowing in a wind, ships moving or a train "in motion", such enthusiasm could not last and the possibilities of dramatic, and particularly comic, films had to be exploited. Successful efforts at original production maintained interest in moving pictures overseas; but in South Africa, they had still to find their level.

Early in 1897, a novel departure was made by Mr W.A. Zoccola, proprietor of the famous Grand National Hotel in Johannesburg who announced that in collaboration with Messrs Martin and Carponsin, he had made arrangements at considerable expense for a showing of "the greatest invention of the century", the Lumiere cinematographe, in the billiard room of the hotel. (1) This enterprise did not last very long but it at least served to familiarise the Johannesburg public with moving pictures. It was the first of a growing number of such incidental enterprises (some of rather low-repute which were staged in basements and "dives") which served to confuse the proper status of the cinema in the South African public's mind.

During May of 1897 however, the reputation of "animated photographs" was sustained and enhanced by a further independent exhibition

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(1) "This Marvellous Invention", "This Wonder of the Present Age", was to exhibit "Ten Animated Views of Stirring Events which have greatly interested the Whole of the Civilised World". The "views" were shown every half hour, admission being 2/- for adults and 1/- for children under ten years. The opening ceremony was described by the contemporary press as follows : "Walk up ! Walk up ! Walk up ! The French system of "sideshows" at hotels has been initiated at the Grand National. On Saturday evening, the Rissik Street caravanserai vied with the established amusement centres in its attractions for the multitude. Miss Fanny Moody sang from the balcony to the populace beneath and Messrs Bonamici, Martin and Carponain were busy with the cinematographe within. Many of the pictures, notably running "vitagraph" snapshots (sic) of parades of Uhlans off-saddling, other military reviews and a lifeboat out on business on the briny. The representations were, if anything, too curtailed but were interesting from their novelty. The admission is only 2/-."(4) Miss Fanny Moody was ofcourse the prima donna of the Moody-Manners Opera Company then performing in Johannesburg The scene of her singing on the balcony is remembered by Rand pioneers.

the 'Zenomettascope and Graphophone"(i) at the Metropolitan Hall in Cape Town. The dismal failure of former such shows inspired its promoters lavishly to advertise that the exhibition of this machine was attended by a Lessee and Proprietor, an Electrician and Assistant Manager, an Advance Agent, an Assistant Electrician, a Mechanist and a Musical Director. The opening night was indeed very successful and though there was nothing unusual about the films (except "The Serpentine Dance"(ii)), the method of their projection was so efficient that the season had to be prolonged from one week to two and the Press became lyrical in its praises. Every day, something was printed about "the Zen. and Graph." as they came to be called and reporters made a special point of noting how "select" the audiences were (iii) and how applause was spontaneously given to favourite scenes such as the fire brigade dashing out to answer a call. The Zenomettascope appears to have toured the country towns and reappeared

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(i) The Graphophone was simply a phonograph with some amplifying device which dispensed with the need for tubes for the ears but it remained almost inaudible. "Though its sounds were distinctly tinny and indistinct and the machine seemed to stand in need of lubricating, they were received with considerable favour."(5)

(ii) Audiences saw waterfalls dashing over rocks, the sea with waves breaking on a beach, a fire brigade rescuing horses from a burning stable, a "laughable scene showing the adventures of a fisherman", an express train going at sixty miles an hour (sensation) and "The Serpentine Dance" in colour. The outstanding exponent of this dance at the time was Louie Fuller, an extraordinarily handsome woman and later the friend of Queen Marie of Roumania whom she accompanied during her tour of the United States. Wearing extremely voluminous skirts of some light material and concealing at each side a stick, Louie Fuller who actually made the film, simply contorted her body and with the aid of the sticks and these sinuous movements, manipulated her skirts in a manner which was considered most artistic and alluring. The whole charm of the dance lay in the various coloured lights which were played on the agitated draperies. The film shown by the Zenomettascope in 1897 in South Africa reflected all these colours.

(iii) One especially distinguished member of the "select" audiences was the Superintendent-General of Education at the Cape, Sir Thomas Muir, whose visit had a curious significance. A broad-minded man of great culture and scholarship (his mathematical library is known throughout the world), Sir Thomas went to see the Zenomettascope as a mechanical curiosity. To his far-sighted intelligence, moving pictures represented more than a mere amusement novelty and even in those early days when films were almost unbearably crude, he prophesied that they would come to play a great role in education. On his recommendation, school matinees were given and children encouraged to patronise moving pictures. Later the sensational cinema which developed with the fiction film betrayed Sir Thomas' trust in the value of moving pictures and he withdrew the support which he so early accorded. His daughter, Mrs A. Cornish Bowden, still vividly remembers the abominable flickering of the Zenomettascope's films and the excitement which they caused, especially the fire brigade scene in which the galloping horses and shiny, brass-covered wagon, the smoke and the crowds were all illumined by an unearthly red glow "hand-tinted".

in Cape Town some time later for an "Old Time Fayre" held in the Gardens. In July, it appeared in Johannesburg, still playing independently, at the old Gaiety Theatre where it had equal success though the prices of admission were greatly increased.

The Zenomettascope provided an outstanding exception in moving picture exhibitions of the day; but the pains that were evidently taken to ensure efficient exhibition of its films were not repeated in other such exhibitions. A typical example occurred in Cape Town in September 1897 when "The Rinkeries" (the whilom Sassin's Skating Rink) purported to exhibit "Edison's Projectoscope and Stereopticon" in the charge of Messrs Leach and York. The grand opening night was a debacle and on the subsequent occasion when the "Projectoscope" was induced to work, the most that could be said of its films was that they were "productive of much merriment". Similarly another typical calamity occurred in Durban in November when an English machine,"Hughes (i) Photoscope" supported by the Latest Concert Phonograph wasx advertised to give performances.of impressive films such as the Armenian massacres, Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee which had recently taken place, wrestling matches, etc. In this case, the audience retrieved(ii) their money but in the case of Mr Fammore's presentation of a "Cinemstographe" at the Theatre Royal in Durban (in which the famous film "Scenes in London" figured as "Modern Babylon"), no refund was

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(i) Hughes began his career as a lantern-slide maker and early in the cinema's history, brought a superior technical knowledge and ingenuity to its development to which he contributed much.

(ii) With heavy sarcasm, a reporter from the Natal Mercury described the proceedings - "The instrument (the Concert Phonograph) had a wide range of possibilities in the region of sound, producing the exhilarating music of the thrashing machine when it was supposed to give forth the "Washington Post" and transforming the coster tunefulness of the "Old Kent Road" into a representation of the pitiful sighing of the east wind....(eventually the perspiring proprietor gave up trying, excusing himself with the already well-worn "something's wrong with the needle". There followed half an hour's struggle with the Photoscope)....during which there were sundry small but portentous explosions in the lantern which seemed to forbode evil, if not fatal, results to the company..... (at length, something appeared on the screen, flickered and disappeared. Just as the audience began to get interested)...something would collapse and the enjoyment of what had been a piece of artistic realism would be suddenly marred by the appearance of a blurred indistinguishable image lacking both form and indication thereof....."(6)

made and ugly scenes ensued (i). A final debacle occurred during 1897 at the Good Hope Hall in Cape Town when Mrs James (the first woman to exploit moving pictures in South Africa) presented "Edison's American Bioscope". The performances were a failure owing, it was said, to the machine being "stiff" because it was brand-new.(ii)

The failure of itinerant opportunists did not cure the South African public of its affection for "animated photographs" which, for lack of anything better, remained the current novelty.and which,it had been seend, could in other hands be shown successfully. Frank Fillis continued successfully to show the "Vitagraph" and the Zenomettascope ~~fxiks~~seldom failed its patrons. Exhibitions came to be given with increasing frequency and in December 1897 alone, three were staged in Cape Town. One of these was the "Helioschromoscope" presented at the Metropolitan Hall by Mr Charles Robson. Once again, the opening night was a fiasco (iii) but on subsequent nights, difficulties were overcome and mounting audiences saw the coloured film of Louie Fuller performing the Serpentine Dance (iv), a prize fight, washerwomen throwing suds at each other, a children's picnic, a crowd of boys

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(i) A variety performance opened the programme but the show went wrong from start to finish. Mr Fanmore forgot the words of his recitations and by the interval, the audience was in an ugly temper. The cinematographe was to have concluded the performance but failed to function. The gallery became obstreperous and shouted ;"That's stale !" "Give us Ancient Babylon !" "Let's have our bob's worth ! "Put on the Queen and finish !" "Ain't it awful !". The show ended in complete disaster.

(ii) Mrs James later established very successful moving pictures in Durban.

(iii) A South Easter blew and there were only about 150 in the audienc Newspaper reports were resentful, alleging that the people who ran such shows should at least know how they worked. The audience who had paid good money to see an exhibition of animated photography had seen nothing but indefinable blurs with occasional spasms of illumination. "At all events", according to the Cape Times, "in some cases it was a very good idea on the part of the management to announce the names of the supposed views as otherwise it would have been very hard indeed for anyone present to make even a good guess as to what was on the screen. The focussing was bad while, even admitting that darkness is necessary for a proper exhibition of an entertainment pertaining to this nature, still it is questionable if absolute gross darkness is desirable."(7)

(iv) "...so true to life and with so marvellous and beautiful movements that the spectators forgetfully applaud, not the exhibition but the graceful artiste herself as if it were her sylphlike figure that moved before them...."(8)

leaving school with appropriate antics, a scene of Trafalgar Square filled with traffic and pedestrians and finally, the film of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.(i) This film represented the first real cinema reportage shown in South Africa and aroused widespread interest Its exhibition by the "Heliochromoscope" substantially raised the status of the cinema which was further heightened during December 1897 by an ambitious enterprise promoted and run by an individual named J.B. Fitts who figured considerably in the history of the cinema in South Africa (ii).

Fitts rented the Good Hope Hall in Cape Town (recently arisen from the ashes of the old Exhibition Hall) and installed a projector, a Wrench cinematograph of a type which had shown moving pictures to Queen Victoria (iii) at Balmoral on the 25th October 1897. This

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(i) It was taken by Robert Paul with several cameras along the route of the procession and parts were shown forty years later in South Africa, firstly at the death of King George V and secondly as part of the Coronation film of King George VI. The scenes shown to audiences in 1897 were then quite exceptional - "there was little wonder that they called forth enthusiastic cheers. The wonderful crowd was seen, women waving handkerchiefs, men squeezing and crushing the soldier-lined streets. Past marched the Naval Brigade the men as distinct and as real-looking as though the great pageant was taking place on the platform of the Metropolitan hall. Then came the guards in all their panoply with tossing plumes and glittering arms. Finally the Queen's procession came in sight, the cream-coloured ponies, the quaint-liveried attendants, the Royalties and then the Venerable Queen herself, gravely smiling and bowing from side to side.It was a wonderful exhibition."(9)

(ii) J.B. Fitts, known as "Johannesburg's popular society entertainer" offered his services to sing and play the banjo or harmonica. In this capacity he was employed by the management of the Zenomettascope when the machine operated in Johannesburg. He conceived the notion of singing appropriate tunes while the red-tinted Fire Scene was being shown, resulting in the following advertisement :

Hear Mr J.B. Fitts in his Great Descriptive Fire Song
The SONG that FITTS the PICTURE and the PICTURE that FITTS the SONG
The only artist that has successfully sung to the pictures of the Zenomettascope

What subsequently transpired is not recorded but Fitts succeeded in obtaining a projector, films and some discarded furbishings of the Alhambra and Drury Lane Theatres in London. (It seems that he visited England to obtain them.)

(iii) It is not generally known that Queen Victoria saw a film of her Diamond Jubilee shortly after its occurrence. King Edward toogthen Prince of Wales, was an early patron of "animated photographs". In July 1897, he ordered a command performance of Bert Acres' invention, the Kinetic Lantern or, as it was then called, the Kineopticon. For some unknown reason, the royal programme referred to this instrument as the "Cinematoscope" and, out of loyalty to his royal patron, Acres allowed the name to remain. Cinema entertainments became a frequent entertainment even during Victoria's reign. A very large number of the early films dealt with the movements of the Royal family - reviews, processions, unveilings, etc etc - and it is therefore not surprising that they were of such soon interest or that interest has continued to be maintained.

machine was mounted at the back of the stage and projected, apparently satisfactorily, through a semi-transparent screen, the audience being appropriately grateful for neither seeing nor hearing the whirring projector in their midst. The programme consisted of variety turns supplied by Fitts himself; a "songstress", instrumentelist and"society danseuse"; a contortionist dancer called Diana; and a little boy named Master Isidore Fisher (I). The show was a surprising success and on the last night, was seen by the Mayor and members of the City Council.(ii) The films, which included a further film of the Queen's Jubilee alleged to be in colour which it had taken an artist three months to paint, were well received by audiences who "were extremely demonstrative in their signs of approval" and expressed "lavish and well-de served approbation". This rather grotesque type of entertainment, so typical of the nineties, was to prove the only means of enhancing the waning reputation of "living pictures". "Her Majesty's Cinematographic Party" as it was called, appears subsequently to have toured the country but after some weeks, it was disbanded.(iii)

(i) Isidore Fisher, then a small child who appeared solemnly on the stage in a Little Lord Fauntleroy suit of black velvet with white lace collar, was a member of the famous Fisher family which contributed greatly to the history of the cinema in South Africa in later years. From 1897 onwards, the Fisher family was associated with the cinema and though now scattered throughout the world (Joe Fisher ran a cinema palace in Singapore before the war drove him to the United States, Isidore conducts his own orchestra in Southern Rhodesia, Harry remains in Cape Town and the girls have married), thousands of the South African public remember them for their contribution to amusement during a long sequence of years before organisation on a large scale precluded independent ventures.

(ii) They saw the following programme :
OVERTURE
"Melbourne Cup - The Crowd"
"Niggers Bathing"
"Piccadilly Circus"
"Henley Regatta"
"Piccaninny Bath"
"Niagara Rapids"
J.B.Fitts in his Great Song"Down on the Farm" sung to Farm Pictures
"Love Scene"
"Boat Leaving Harbour"
"President (Faure of France) taking leave of his Ministers
Song - "In the Chimney Corner" - Miss May
"Children Quarrelling"
"Royal Horse Artillery"
"Aquarium"
Pianoforte Selection - Master Fisher
Banjo Spinning - Miss May
DIANA !
Intermission - Ten Minutes
OVERTURE - Master Fisher
"Children and Toys"
"Joke on the Gardener" (the famous "L'Arroseur Arrosé")
"High Diving"
Duet : Miss May and Mr J.B. Fitts
"Arrival of a Train at London"

"Boys Snowballing"
"Feeding Doves"
J.B.FITTS IN HIS GREAT FIRE SONG
"The Falling of a Wall"
"The Bull Fight"
Skirt Dance - Miss May
"Bicycle Parade"
Extra Pictures
"THE JUBILEE PROCESSION"

This programme, shown at the end of 1897, did not reflect the great advances that had been made in film production, particularly in France. Owing to the rarity of such exhibitions in South Africa however, it was still possible to sustain public interest with such crude sensations as "The Falling Wall" and "High Living" (which provided a real sensation when some enterprising showman thought to reverse the film); but further entertainment was supplied by comic films of a rather vulgar type expressed in "Love Scenes", bickering washerwomen throwing suds at each other, flirting nursemaids, and a painter quarrelling with a sweep which ended in the sweep throwing his soot over the painter and the painter his whitewash over the sweep. It must be remembered that these films lasted little over half a minute each.

The programme did however reflect the rapid organisation of the cinema overseas and more especially, the foundation of the Warwick Trading Company by Charles Urban which produced and distributed films of all makes. Urban's cameramen travelled all over England and Europe taking films and in addition, he acted as agent for prominent French and American firms. The films shown by Fitts emanated from England, France and America with a few scenes shot by itinerant cameramen or local correspondents of the Warwick Trading Company such as the Melbourne Cup Race (which became, with the Derby and the Grand National), a stock item on cinema programmes.)

(iii) By September 1898, Fitts' Cinematograph had descended to giving free performances at the President Tea Rooms in Johannesburg. By that time, "animated photographs" were being far more extensively exhibited than when he had made his pioneering tour. By March of 1899, Fitts was once more giving song, banjo and harmonica selections in third-rate shows. Soon after the Empire adopted "moving pictures" as a permanent item on its programme in 1898, Fitts became the operator of the various machines that were installed. He became too a well-known and popular figure and when in 1907, he fell ill, it was announced in the Press that he was recovering rapidly and that in his absence, Mrs Fitts "was manipulating the instrument" with equal skill. He died in Sydney i Australia in March 1911.

While there is no gainsaying that at this period, moving pictures represented a highly diverting but very precarious "stunt", it must also be remembered that no one thought they could possibly last and they had failed even to enter the consideration of the theatre-going public proper. On the other hand, they continued to appear and with greater proficiency and variety of programme. During the first part of 1898 (while Fitts was showing his Cinematograph in the inland towns), Mrs James was touring the coast towns with an American Bioscope (1) with an almost identical programme (they had both possibly patronised the same agency). The exhibition was efficiently managed and represented the first real "animated photographs" shown in Durban at least since the visit of Carl Hertz nearly two years previously. Despite the flickering and other manifest imperfections of the performance, it inspired a reporter of the Natal Mercury to several significant reflections - why, he asked, could not the films be longer ? The Jubilee Procession, for instance, was in nine "scenes" with an interruption between each film. Secondly,

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(1) Historically, Mrs James may be held responsible for perpetuating the name "Bioscope" in South Africa. Shorter and more easily pronounced than current names, it became the standard term for anything to do with moving pictures. In England and America, the "bioscope" also enjoyed brief popularity; but the European public remained faithful to the original "cinematograph" shortened to "cinema" and, on the Continent, to 'kinematograph' shortened to "kino". In America, "moving" or "motion pictures" evidenced the desire of the early pioneers to dignify their very vulgar entertainment (which among its rather low-class audiences, was called by a variety of uncomplimentary names) and the modern "movies" survives. The self-descriptive "flicks" has an almost universal significance and is an historical survival. On the other hand, the South African term "bioscope" is almost completely unintelligible elsewhere. Its standardisation in South Africa was due more to coincidence than anything else.

Edison's Bioscope used by Mrs James in 1898 was one of many apparatuses of that name. As early as 1892, Demeny had exhibited an instrument purporting to project and called the "Bioscope" at the Paris Exhibition of Photography; but when projection was really and finally attained, inventors resorted to far more imposing nomenclature. By 1898, when the public had ceased to be awed by these names and moving pictures were no longer a novelty, it became more important that machines should be efficient than that they should provide "the most marvellous sensation of the century". For the first time in their history, advertisements began to be head-lined : "ABSOLUTELY STEADY ! NO FLICKERING ! STEADY AS A ROCK !" One of the few machines which in any way realised these boasts was the Warwick Trading Company's famous "Bioscope". Its reputation in South Africa was enhanced by Wolfram's steadfast devotion to the machines made by the company (he was a personal friend of its founder and managing director, Charles Urban) and when Wolfram's Bioscope attained its well-found popularity throughout the Union and particularly at the Cape, the name of "Bioscope" was inevitably perpetuated.

Mrs James however remains the first exhibitor worthily to carry it.

audiences were beginning to be conscious of something wanting -"Every thing is reproduced marvellously true to nature. True, the pictures do not represent the myriad blended hues which unite to form the phantasmagoria of beauty reflected by the eye; but in form and feeling and motion, there is nothing lacking. Yet every movement is devoid of sound. We can see the mighty waters of Niagara leap into wild confusion; we can see the densely-packed Jubilee crowd surge and sway in their enthusiastic acclamation as the Queen and escort pass by in procession; but not a sound is heard; each picture, palpitating with life as bright as a vision but as silent as a thought."(10) Thirdly,it began to be evident, as Sir Thomas Muir had foreseen a year before, that films had educational possibilities.

The cinema's potentialities for good were, however, completely overshadowed by its potentialities firstly for vulgarity and then for what was considered downright evil. Even Mrs James' programme ended with "a goodnight kiss of such an anticipatory character that it will not soon be forgotten".(11)(i) At the same time as this exhibition was touring the coastal and inland towns, Frank Fillis, returning from overseas with two new projectors, a Lumiere and a Joly-Normandin, was giving further exhibitions of "Living Pictures' in Cape Town. The exhibitions were popular (ii) and when he changed his programme on the night of the 12th February 1898, a large audience attended. The films were new and as yet unseen in South Africa. They included "The Most Beautiful and Famous Picture as in Life - The Temptation of St Anthony" (iii)

(i) It consisted of a middle-aged couple, the man embellished with a walrus moustache, indulging in a prolonged osculation lasting half a minute. Though it never failed to raise cheers from the rather low-minded early audiences, it bordered on the immoral.

(ii) The opening night of the Lumiere Cinematographe was a great success the audience, cheering and clapping. Enthusiasm continued on the following nights and on the 9th February 1898, the "Special Fashionable Performance" was attended by the G.O.C. Cape, General Goodenough and party, and H.I.H. Prince Seyyid Ali and suite.The latter was the son of the Sultan of Zanzibar , "an intelligent-looking lad of fourteen" according to the Cape Register who later antagonised the British Government by staying in Paris instead of going to the Coronation and was forced to abdicate in 1911.

(iii) Extract from the Warwick Trading Company Catalogue of 1899 : No.4169 - The Temptation of St Anthony - Poor old Anthony is seen meditating in a hermit's cave but there suddenly appears before him a vision of a beautiful young lady. He endeavours to ward off her charms but does not succeed until most extraordinary incidents occur in which four or five young ladies combine in torturing the poor monk."

This film which was unqualifiedly blasphemous both in concept and (1) execution, made a shocking impression. Cursory comment appeared in the usual columns of the Press and for the first time in his history in South Africa, the cinema was the subject of a leading article (11). Both Cape Town papers were unqualified in their condemnation and the terms of their obloquy were distributed throughout the country by Reuter. (Whatever the defects of the early cinema, the Press had always been sympathetic, even at the time of the tragic fire in Paris when the Zenomettascope was playing in Cape Town.) Controversy broke out in the correspondence columns, some quibbling over the picture by J.C. Dollman which was hung by the Royal Academy in 1897, others defending Fillis on the grounds that he himself had never seen the film and was as much annoyed as anybody ! On the 15th February, the following simple advertisement appeared :

Fillis's Amphitheatre
The Cinematograph
with a new series of REFINED Pictures

The event served to emphasise several aspects of the nascent cinema - its pernicious possibilities, the absence of censorship, the responsibility of the Press, and the peculiar development of production overseas. It furnished remarkable publicity to all subsequent cinema shows whither much of the first audiences repaired hoping for something risqué which almost invariably, they got.

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(1) In 1896, Georges Melies, a conjuror with an extraordinarily vivid imagination, constructed his own film studio at Montreuil-sous-Bois in France. He was the first producer to realise that anyone could point a movie camera at something moving but that few had really used it. He saw in the movie-camera a magical medium whose manifold resources could result in original and highly entertaining films and he used it accordingly, the "fade-out" and the "fade-in" and many other camera tricks being first employed by him. He had a fantastic cast of mind and his first real essay into the realms of trick photography was a film known as "A Trip to the Moon". It was made in 1897, was several hundred feet in length (in several "scenes") and to quote Paul Rotha, "it used projected negative, double exposure, and "magical effects" equal, if not superior, to those embodied in Fairbanks' "Thief of Baghdad" in 1923." The story involved a group of scientists making a rocket trip to the moon and their adventures there amid weird vegetation and inhabitants in the style of Jules Verne. The film was revived in Paris in 1930 as marking the first use of trick photography.

Melies continued to exploit his genius for fantasy. He made films of motor accidents in which the horrified audience saw a man run over by a rickety taxi and his legs, neatly and bloodlessly severed, lying in front of him. His ingenuity knew no bounds and moving picture audiences from 1897 onwards were thrilled by truly Grand Guignol films emanating from his studios. Hundreds of his trick films were shown in South Africa and are remembered to this day. Charles Urban was his London agent and sold his films to the many travelling showmen who toured South Africa. One of the first to appear was the infamous "Temptation of St Anthony" which was soon followed by more presentable pieces. French films, with their

astounding daring and novelty, soon became the main attraction of cinema programmes and it became customary to advertise FRENCH FILMS or ALL STAR PROGRAMME, Melies having adopted a star as his trade mark.

(11) "We regret that, through a misconception, attention was drawn in a preliminary notice of Fillis's Circus on Saturday to a cinematographic picture or series of pictures entitled "The Temptation of St Anthony". Of the character of the picture, it is difficult to speak; but it is safe to say that no more hideous blasphemy has ever disgraced a public building in Cape Town than the "living picture" which was exhibited at the Circus on Saturday evening. In the academic walls of an art exhibition or a studio, the original painting might find a place though no such work has ever been submitted to the Royal Academy or the National Gallery. But the suggestiveness of the original painting is infinitely heightened - at the expense of art - by the transference of the idea to the cinematograph and within the walls of a circus where the laugh evoked by a clown's jest has scarcely died away, it is disgraceful to introduce such a picture. The original work might perhaps be regarded from two standpoints according to the view of the spectator. It may be held an utter obscenity and blasphemy which it certainly became on Saturday night or it may be regarded as vividly expressing an allegorical meaning. And we may point out that Fillis's Circus is scarcely the place for the elaboration of religious allegories. Mr Fillis has a programme which is sufficiently good without the introduction of such "attractions" pandering to the lowest instincts."(12)

The Cape Argus stated that it was a matter for regret that "an otherwise excellent show should have been marred by the inclusion of a picture which can only be described as in the poorest taste. The picture referred to is known as "The Temptation of St Anthony" than which a more indecent or profane exhibition has rarely been seen in this city. It is to be hoped that the management will see that it is withdrawn in the future....."(13)

Later such films impressed the South African public with the development of film production in France particularly; but it was evident for some long time that in England and America, the general tendency was simply to let the cinecamera operate on any naturally moving thing or event that came to hand. The Queen's Jubilee was a classic instance and it was shortly followed in South Africa by a film which, in demonstrating the cinema's outstanding capacity for recording historic event, did much to rehabilitate it in the eyes of those who now regarded it as a direct menace to public morals. This was the film of the Corbett-Fitzsimmons Fight (1) which was brought to South

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(1) The story of this first feature-length film begins in 1895 in the United States when Edison had perfected his kinetoscopes and hundreds of these peep-show machines were being sold in the open market. Many of the best brains in the United States, ignorant of the successful experiments overseas of Friese-Greene and Robert Paul in England, the Lumieres in France and Skladanowski in Germany attacked the problem of projection. One of these was Major Woodvill Latham who in 1895 thought he had succeeded with the "Panopticon" which he triumphantly exhibited on tour but which was in fact highly imperfect. A second version called the "Eidoloscope"proved little more than a failure. In the meantime, Edison, assisted by the discoveries of C. Francis Jenkins and Thomas Armat, had himself solved the problem and projecting machines became available.

The experiments of the Lathams (the Major and his sons) involved the services of a certain Enoch J. Rector of whom little is recorded. On the 17th March 1897 however, Rector installed himself on the edge of the prize-fight ring in Carson City, Nevada, U.S.A. with a formidable camera called the "Veriscope" and several thousand feet of unexposed film. With this, he recorded the entire fight between Fitzsimmons and Corbett who had held the heavyweight world championship since 1892. The prize for the fight was the unprecedented amount of £3,000 and a side-bet of £1,000. The fight took place before a vast crowd.

(Corbett was no stranger to the movie camera. He was in fact one of the first, if not the first film star. As early as 1894, he had appeared in Edison's fifty-foot kinetoscope loop-films and later he made many films for the West Orange film studios. Amusing stories are told of his experiences there - of how he was expected to exhibit all his ringcraft in the extremely limited space (a few square feet) within the focus of the camera, how he failed to deliver the knock-out blow at the cameraman's signal and the whole valuable 50-foot film was spoilt, how a negro adversary specially obtained for colour-contrast and knock-out purposes was so terrified at the sight of "Gentleman Jim" that he fled in terror, and many more.)

Rector "shot" 11,000 feet of film which in those days, and even in modern times, was remarkable. Its exhibition lasted two hours and it was shown throughout the world, fabulous stories circulating as to the profits made by the Veriscope Company ~~through~~ (the film was so successful that fakes were made and marketed). The Cape Register (14) stated that in December 1897, Fitzsimmons had received a cheque of 10,000 dollars "as a Christmas box", the second of its kind. The details of the contract were unknown but Fitzsimmons was said to have received 15% of the profits which meant that the film had realised nearly 70,000 dollars or over £14,000 in five months.

Africa by two showmen, Cooke and Welty, and presented by the local impresario A. Bonamici at the ramshackle Amphitheatre in Simmonds Street, Johannesburg. Redolent of the historic fight between Couper and Sendoff in 1889, Johannesburg flocked to the exhibitions where high prices of admission were charged. Cooke, who had been an eye-witness of the fight, stood at the side of the screen and his "able explanations" considerably added to the excitement.(i) The "Veriscope" as the machine was called, showed the film in Pretoria, Cape Town and elsewhere in South Africa, its audiences (consisting almost entirely of men) sitting entranced through almost two hours of flicker and jerks.(ii) On the last night in Johannesburg, portions of a duplicate film were given away to patrons.

At this time, when events in the Transvaal particularly, were moving towards an open break and the state of tension approached its zenith, the Empire Palace of Varieties adopted films or "Edison's Life Size Pictures" as a permanent item on its programme.(iii) They were given a place of honour among a company of "London Stars and American

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(i) The film began by showing the crowds at the ringside, then the boxers themselves - Corbett surrounded by friends and seconds, chatting, laughing; Fitzsimmons prowling up and down. 'The gong goes !" shouted Mr Cooke, "Fitzsimmons refuses to shake hands & the fight begins...." It lasted over fourteen rounds, Fitzsimmons slowly pressing home his advantage - finally "they were at pretty close range and Fitz made a feint for the head with his left, drew back, shifted from his left to his right foot forward and ripped in a sort of cross between a hook and an upper-cut to a point nearer the stomach than under the heart. It was a terrific jolt. It could not be called anything else. For fully three seconds, Corbett was sinking to his knees and Fitzsimmons might have landed at will in the interim. But the Cornishman knew that the punch had accomplished its work and he turned on his heel and went to his corner, allowing his antagonist to sink slowly to defeat. Corbett sank lower and lower, battling inwardly against it. The referee stands over him, closely watching for the moment when his knee touches the floor. Then the count begins, guided by Muldoon's waving hand. Corbett's face writhed with the agony of the blow. "One, two, three" and so on till the fatal "ten" was called and the referee pathetically touched the beaten man on the shoulder and said "You're done, Jim, you're done"; and the "Battle of the Century" had been won and lost. It is a great fight and the Veriscope should be seen by all who take an interest in "the noble art" and also perhaps by those who do not." (15)

(ii) Many of the film's audiences in South Africa have never forgotten it. In his biography, Mr Leslie Blackwell erroneously remarks - "The first cinematograph film ever to come to Johannesburg arrived somewhere about 1898 when pictures of the fight between Corbett and Fitzsimmons were shown' (16) and reminiscences of this remarkable occasion are readily forthcoming from other Rand pioneers.

(iii) The standard of programme maintained by the Empire was very high including such artistes as Marie Lloyd (whose daughter aged five gave a "turn"), Paul Cinquevalli, Peggy Pryde and others. It provided precisely the type of entertainment needed in those restless times.

Specialities" and though their projection was inexpert at the beginning the films being blurred and indistinct and flickering badly, the half-minute novelties indulged Johannesburg's craving for variety and became very popular.(1)

The management arranged a constant supply of the latest films from the Warwick Trading Company, these including "STARTLING ATTRACTIONS - GRAND REPRODUCTION OF SCENES FROM THE FUNERAL OF THE LATE W.E. GLADSTONE "The Spanish-American War", "The Coronation of the Queen of Holland", "Grace Batting at the Oval" etc etc. They also included the films taken by Edgar Hyman himself with the camera purchased from the Warwick Trading Company soon after Carl Hertz' visit. These consisted mostly of "views" of Johannesburg taken from the front of a tram and people in the audience were astonished to recognise the buildings and sometimes themselves. Hyman also took a film of the President of the Transvaal Republic, Paul Kruger, leaving his house for the Raadzaal which, in common with the others, was sent to England to be processed and printed and was included in the Warwick Trading Company's catalogues, being shown throughout the world.(11) A further sensation was caused in the

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(1) The first programme, shown on the 17th May 1898, was as follows :
(1) "Scots Guards Route Marching"
(2) "Joke on Sleeping Coachman"
(3) "Westminster Bridge, London"
(4) "Flying Dutchman passing through Windsor Station at 70 m.p.h."
(5) "U.S.A. Cruiser "Maine" recently blown up in Havana Harbour"
(6) "Fun in the Snow"
(7) "High Old Time in a Swimming Bath"
(8) "Bloodless Encounter"
(9) "Grand Military Steeplechase"
(10) "Lime Street, Liverpool"
(11) "Panorama of the River Mersey (from Liverpool Electric Railway)
(12) "Pedlar Palmer - Scientific Boxing"
(13) "Cape Mounted Police"(taken during Queen's Jubilee)
(14) "Game of Cards"
(15) Three Great Fire Scenes : "Turnout of Fire Brigade - Brigade going to Fire - Rescue of Inmates from Burning Building."
(16) "King's Head Hotel, opposite Daly's Theatre, London"
(17) "The Art of Kissing (the talk of London)"

To this programme of old favourites was soon added the famous train ride. The moviecamera had simply been mounted on a locomotive but audiences found the scenery, as it flashed past, most entrancing. This film, at its first showing at the Empire, "was flashed on to the screen to a hurricane of applause".(17)

(11) Hyman's films of this period included "A Rickshaw Ride in Commissioner Street", "Kaffir Dance at the May Consolidated","Horse Auction Sale on the Market Square", "The Cyanide Plant on the Crown Deep" and others. Hyman took films wherever he went and further films were taken by other cameramen officially commissioned by the big overseas organisations. Numerous such South African films figure in the pre-Boer War catalogues of these firms.

Empire during the showing of a film covering "Savage South Africa", a large circus of South African items staged by Frank Fillis at Earl's Court in London, when Edgar Hyman himself was clearly seen among the crowd.

By this time, moving pictures appeared to have found their level in South Africa. They appeared before the public primarily as "turns" in vaudeville, touring variety parties, circuses or skating rinks (i). There were occasional exceptions in cases such as Mrs James who continued to tour the "Bioscope" as an independent show; but the impression that moving pictures inalienably belonged to variety programmes continued to be supported by further such shows. One of these was the vaudeville company brought out to South Africa by the well-known music-hall artiste Ada Delroy in June 1898 (ii)

Apart from the established exhibition at the Empire in Johannesburg however, the periodical presentations of "living pictures" in the big towns continued to be rare and sometimes weeks separated the touring shows that purveyed them. Although by 1898, moving pictures were known all over South Africa, they were known only to a certain class of people. The early exhibitions of 1896 and 1897 were considered a display of the "latest scientific wonder" and audiences were composed almost entirely of men. Later shows were patronised by the sensation-seeking section of the public and when the cinema commenced its music-hall career, women had even less opportunity of seeing "animated photographs". Even circuses and skating rinks were not feasible places of entertainment to many women. When Ada Delroy's vaudeville party with its No.1 Lumiere Cinematographe arrived in Johannesburg, the papers were very careful to point out that "the

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(i)"Fillis's Trump Card" at this time was a Lumiere Cinematographe which presented an effective turn called "Round the World in 20 Minutes" and consisted of films from all over the world projected on a large screen raised in the middle of the area.

(ii) Ada Delroy was a vaudeville artiste of much initiative and ability. She was perhaps best known for her performance of "La Dance Lumineuse" or the Fire Dance for the exclusive rights to which she was said to have paid £800. But for a central spotlight, the stage was completely darkened. The artiste flitted on clad in voluminous skirts of red georgette fading to yellow. The limelights changed from yellow to orange and finally to red. As the dance reached its climax, flames leapt up from the floor, consuming the dancer. The stage was empty. It was a very polished and spectacular performance denoting exceptional stagecraft and created a sensation wherever performed.

entertainment is entirely free from anything to which ladies might take exception". For the same reasonx, Special Ladies Matinees were organised at the Empire.

Other events being propitious, the status of moving pictures in South Africa might considerably have been enhanced by a singular step taken by Edgar Hyman whose interest in moving pictures in no way diminished with time.(i) Early in 1899, President Kruger commanded Hyman to give a show of moving pictures in the Residency in Pretoria. The full circumstances of this command performance are not now known - possibly Hyman himself engineered the exhibition as excellent publicity; possibly some of the President's friends or relatives had seen the films at the Empire and told him about them; more probably, knowing the considerable sensation they had caused and having himself been "shot"by Hyman late in 1898,Kruger wished to see for himself.

On the 19th January 1899, Edgar Hyman, Dave Foote (the musical director of the Empire) and an operator drove to Pretoria with their machine and some fifty films lasting about half a minute each. That the occasion was carefully premeditated is evidenced by the elaborate programme that was printed in Dutch by the Argus Printing Company and distributed to the guests.(ii) Owing to the smallness of the rooms in the Residency, Hyman was forced to project the films from the drawing-room across a passage on to the wall of the reception room. While the films were being shown, Dave Foote played on an organ (Kruger refused to admit a piano). The audience consisted of about fifty persons - the President, members of the Executive Council, relatives and friends.(iii) The programme was extraordinarily comprehensive and Hyman was careful to include a number of South African scenes, of which the principal was naturally the 50-foot strip showing the President leaving for the Raadzaal.(iv) Paul Kruger was, by all accounts, considerably impressed, particularly by the film of himself. This film was shown "to the undisguised delight and astonishment of the President who expressed his satisfaction and pleasure with the novelty."(18) News of the event was published throughout the country.

(i) Not only Hyman but other cinecameramen were active in Johannesburg in the nineties. Comment was made on "the clever cinematographist among us taking pictures of Johannesburg and not the least interesting figure at the Von Weltheim trial will be his."(19) Hyman himself took the film of Kruger in September 1898 and, he later stated, "I xxxx filmed a number of scenes in Johannesburg and on the Rand generally during the nineties which today would be of unique value. There were shots of the old-time traffic, of the

horse-trams (?) and the share market habitués. Mine and prospecting operations were not forgotten, nor were views of our first suburbs."(20)

(11) Only two copies of the programme are known to exist, one in the Africana Museum in Johannesburg (part of the Sanderson collection of playbills, etc taken from a scrapbook) and one in private possession. Surmounted by the coat-of-arms of the Transvaal Republic and flanked by elaborate decorations printed in colour and including a portrait of the President, the programme read as follows :

DE PRESIDENT, PRETORIA
Transvaal

.....Donderdag, Januari 19, 1899.....

voor zijn hoog edele de staats president
S.J.P. Kruger
tentoonstelling van levensgroot schilderijen door de
Edison-Thomas Proces
steeds Tentoongesteld in de
Empire Palace of Varieties, Johannesburg
onder het bestuur van den Heer Edgar . . Hyman
Chef d'Orchestre....de Heer David Foote
Operateur.....de Heer C.C. Steer

ONDERWERPEN

Overture : Rhapsody on the celebrated Russian song "Oschi Chornia" composed by Mr David Foote; dedicated to Miss May Belfort
Spoorweg Scena in Kent
Oxford en Cambridge Bootwedstrijd
Spaansche Bul Gevecht
Sneeuwspel
Vastbinden (lassoing) Wilde Paarden
Woodstock, Kaapstad
Zeepunt, Kaapstad
Kaapstad, van een trem-ker gezien
Scena in Cairo
Comissaris Straat, Johannesburg
Cyanied Werken, Crown Reef Gold Mijn Maatschappij
Scena op de Kaapsche Spoorweg
Water Shute
Switchback Spoorweg
Spoorweg Reizen
"Het kind zijn kost"
Marbelen Ark, London
Artillerie Oefening
Schuitvaren op de Seine
De Falls van Niagara
Uitzicht op Bovenhuizen Spoorweg te Liverpool
Kroonfest van Konigin Wilhemina
Zeevart Brigade Jubelfeest
Rijting van Konigin Jubelfeest
Brandweer aan het Werk
Swembad
Spookrijd
Kaffir Dans
Een Mooie Grap
Gewonnen den Handschoen
Z.H. Ed. President Kruger
Seaforth Highlanders verlatende Cairo voor den oorlog
Aflossing van de Wacht
Zeegolven Fingals Holte
Duitsch Kaiser
Kaapsche Spoorweg
Ten Snel Train
Koning en Konigin van Italie
Postboot Hawarden Castle
Cafe Chantant Spel
Paarden Wedren
Piet in Waterval
Ontmoeting van den Czar van Russland en President Faure
St Mark's Plein, Venetie
Begrafenis van Mijnheer Gladstone
Prince of Wales op zijn Yacht

Zware vracht
Verlatende Springfontein, O.V.S., Spoorweg
Posttrein op den Forth Brug, Schotland
Ontscheeping en Trugtrekking van Marinen

(THE PRESIDENT, PRETORIA
Transvaal

.....Thursday, January 19th, 1899.....

before His Honour the State President
S.J.P. Kruger
Exhibition of Life-Size Pictures by means of the
Edison-Thomas Process
as exhibited in the
Empire Palace of Varieties, Johannesburg
under the direction of Mr Edgar M. Lyman
Chef d'Orchestre...Mr David Foote
Operator.....Mr C.C. Steer
SUBJECTS

Overture : Rhapsody on the celebrated Russian song "Cschi Chornia"
composed by Mr David Foote; dedicated to Miss May Belfort
Railway Scene in Kent
Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race
Spanish Bull Fight
Fun in the Snow
Lassoing Wild horses
Woodstock, Cape Town
Sea Point, Cape Town
Cape Town, seen from a tram-car
Scene in Cairo
Commissioner Street, Johannesburg
The Cyanide Works, Crown Reef Gold Mine Company
Scene on the Cape Railway
Water Chute
Switchback Railway
Railway travelling
"The Child's Food"
Marble Arch, London
Artillery Exercises
Skating on the Seine
Niagara Falls
Views of the Overhead Railway, Liverpool
Coronation of Queen Wilhemina
The Naval Brigade at the Jubilee Celebrations
Procession at the Queen's Jubilee Celebrations
Fire Brigade at Work
Swimming Bath
The Phantom Ride
Native War Dance
A Good Joke
The Glove is Won
His Honour President Kruger
Seaforth Highlanders leaving Cairo for the War (Sudan)
Changing of the Guard
Waves at Fingal's Caves
The German Kaiser
Cape Railway
An Express Train
The King and Queen of Italy
Mailship "Lawardon Castle"
Music-Hall Turn
Horse Race
Piet in the Waterfall
Meeting of the Czar of Russia and President Faure (of France)
St Mark's Square, Venice
Funeral of Mr Gladstone
The Prince of Wales (King Edward) on his Yacht
A Heavy Load
Leaving Springfontein, O.F.S., on the railway
Mailtrain on the Forth Bridge, Scotland
Disembarkation and Return of Marines)

(iii) Until his death in 1943, Mr Piet Grobler was the sole surviving member of the original audience. Interrogated in ~~the~~ a

There is no doubt that South African films were of special interest to overseas distributors and that special efforts were made to obtain them. During 1899, the South African situation grew manifestly more critical and the many short films dealing with the country were attractive to exhibitors all over the world. They were shown in South Africa not only by the Empire in Johannesburg but also by Ada Delroy when she returned to the country during 1899 with a second vaudeville company which included a "New London Bioscope". In the interim, the dissemination of moving pictures had advanced very little though there had been a noticeable increase in the number of kinetoscopes and other instruments purveying LIVING PICTURES at various amusement arcades and mechanical exhibitions. Ada Delroy's presentation was the first reputable show for many months in most of the areas in which her company toured (notably the coast ports) and when it opened at the Opera House in Cape Town, its programme of films represented a distinct advance on what had heretofore been seen. Still faithful to what had become almost tradition, the "Bioscope" gave a faulty opening performance but subsequently successfully showed the latest topical films of the Soudanese campaign including Lord Kitchener ("the Sirdar") landing at Calais; the launching of the "Oceanic", the largest liner of the day (17,274 tons - she was sunk during the Great War) and several South African scenes including the Johannesburg Summer Handicap. The programme was also distinguished by the first official propaganda film shown in South Africa "Britannia's Bulwarks" dealing

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nursing home shortly before his death, he clearly remembered the exhibition of films to Paul Kruger to whom he was then secretary. He remembered more vividly, however, Kruger's intense surprise on first hearing a phonograph playing. (It was alleged by one of his biographers, Miss Marjorie Jula, that a phonograph record of President Kruger's voice was made but destroyed through somebody dropping it when crossing Church Square, Pretoria.)

(iv) Extract from Catalogue of Warwick Trading Company (21) :
No.5115a PRESIDENT KRUGER - Animated Portrait
This photograph, the only animated presentment of the President of the South African Republic, is a very fine example of animated portraiture. The President is portrayed as he leaves his residence and steps into his carriage to be driven off to the Volksraad. The well-known figure of "Oom Paul" is unmistakeably delineated, and the beautiful carriage, the bravely caparisoned horses and the stately attendants, make up a very complete and valuable picture. When the President has taken his place in the carriage, his footman closes the door, jumps up behind and the vehicle is driven rapidly away while a bodyguard of mounted horsemen fall into place behind. The eyes of the world are at present focussed on Mr. Kruger.

with the Royal Navy.(i) A further feature which was not shown in Cape Town but later in Durban was the famous Melies film "The Astronomer's Dream".(ii) Such films, which were extremely popular, became the main feature of all subsequent cinema exhibitions and later Melies produced full-length pantomimes and historical dramas, almost all with fantastic trick effects. Also in the programme was one of the first of a long series of films dealing with "The Passion Play". Though ludicrous and verging on the blasphemous, it aroused no special comment beyond "there is incongruity in showing sacred scenes from the Passion Play after comic songs. Some members of the audience were much annoyed."(22)

Ada Delroy's exhibition of the "Bioscope" advanced the South African public's appreciation of the development of the cinema overseas and subsequent exhibitions, by showing novel and entertaining films, gained steadily increasing audiences for the cinema. Outstanding among them was the South African Biograph and Mutoscope Company which made its first appearance in May 1899 and with which the history

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(i) "Britannia's Bulwarks" showed the drilling and march-past of 3,000 blue-jackets. It was taken at the Portsmouth Naval Depot under the auspices of the Admiralty through the initiative of Charles Urban himself and constituted the first occasion on which a Government had collaborated with film production. The film was shown in South Africa at a cruicial time but it is impossible to speculate on its effect.

(ii) The catalogue description of the film is as follows (23) : "Here is an observatory with telescope, star charts and all accessories. The old astronomer is at work over his calculations. Through the aperture in the dome, the full moon is visible. First there appears a beautiful vision of a lovely lady who disappears again all too soon. Then follow in rapid succession such events as flash through the brain of a man with a temperature of 104o or after eating a Welsh Rabbit at one in the morning. The moon comes down from the sky right into the observatory. He has eyes that move and a mouth that opens and shuts. All sorts of strange things come out of the moon's mouth and the astronomer is so frightened that he throws chairs and instruments into the dreadful slit. Suddenly the moon disappears and takes the shape of a crescent. Perched upon one of the horns of the moon is a lady in scant attire. Then the old astronomer awakes - alas, it is all a dream - three lengths."

of the organised South African cinema may be said to have begun.

The South African Biograph and Mutscope Company was a branch of the parent British Biograph and Mutoscope Company (1), one of the

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(1) The history of this enterprise is closely integrated with that of William Kennedy Laurie Dickson who, it will be remembered, assisted in the invention of the kinetoscope under Edison's direction and later the projectoscope and vitascope, projecting machines. A volatile, impetuous personality, no one had greater faith in the future of moving pictures than Dickson.

Immediately on films' having proved themselves a remunerative commercial proposition in the entertainment world, many small companies were formed to exploit them. In 1895, Dickson left Edison's employ and dabbled in comparatively worthless cinema ventures (one was with the Lathams) all devoted to developing the nascent cinema. His experience in Edison's works was an invaluable qualification. At the time, the kinetoscope was the only form of peep-show on the market but was protected from illegal exploitation by Edison's patent rights. Dickson however, in the course of his researches, had been impressed by another idea - a book of pictures bound together at the top, bent to provide a spring and then slowly released, would provide the same illusion of motion. Engaging interest in the idea, in September 1895 he joined a company consisting of a financier Koopman, a photographic expert Casler, an interested party Marvin and himself. This organisation was called the K.C.M.D. Syndicate and was formed to exploit the "Mutoscopes" or flick-over books of pictures originating with Dickson.

For these pictures, it was necessary to take films in the established manner; but litigation over patents (and particularly Edison's) then being rife, the syndicate decided that it must invent a camera as different from Edison's as possible. After much experimentation in which Dickson's experience weighed considerably, Herman Casler contrived the "Biograph", an extraordinary camera weighing almost a ton and taking films 2½ inches long by 2 inches wide, or about 8 times Edison's standard size. Its unique design precluded any possibility of patent infringement and its films were strikingly good, being drawn by rollers instead of clawed by cogged wheels past the projector lens, and being clear, almost flickerless and with a stereoscopic effect which amazed early audiences.

In the same year, the partners founded the American Biograph and Mutoscope Company - a properly financed and organised cinema company - and "Mutoscopes" or books of still-photographs from films flicked over by a catch-release, began to appear in amusement arcades in competition with Edison's kinetoscopes. These, owing to the excellent quality of the photographs, were immediately successful and the company, having achieved its first purpose, proceeded to manufacture and market the extraordinarily unwieldy projectors that could give public exhibition of its films.

Rigidly protected by patents, the "Biograph" with its enormous films was far superior to current projectors; but its cost and that of its films was prohibitive. Its consumption of vast amounts of electricity meant that it could be mounted only in well-equipped theatres and it had, in addition, to be operated by highly trained and well-paid men. Nonetheless its success was such that the parent company in America established subsidiary companies throughout the world.

At this stage, Dickson left the United States to take charge of some of the business of the British Biograph and Mutoscope Co. in London. Since his departure from Edison's service, his dabbling in other cinema concerns and his connection with the biggest opposition Edison and his associates had had to face, Dickson's position in the United States had not been comfortable. His name was bandied about freely in the litigation over patent rights and it was frequently insinuated that he had used the experience gained in Edison's employ to assist in the invention of the Biograph and other enterprises. It is not known precisely when Dickson left the United States but it is certain that he remained in the employ of the Biograph Company though by no means in a position which his original directorship of the K.C.M.D. syndicate would seem to have entitled him. So far from occupying an executive position, he seems to have been retained as a cameraman (in the light of the Biograph's complicated construction, a highly technical occupation).

subsidiaries instituted by the American Biograph & Mutoscope Company for the exploitation of its unique films of great size which, projected by an extremely unwieldy machine, presented moving pictures of a quality far superior to any other of the time. The British company instituted "Mutoscope" Arcades, containing peep-show machines showing flick-over books of photographs taken from Biograph films, in London and elsewhere and in 1898, it installed a "Biograph" machine in the Palace Theatre of Varieties in London whose superior exhibition of films attracted considerable attention. By this time, the American company had established extensive studios for the production of a continuous supply of programmes.

"Mutoscopes" and the "Biograph" at the Palace were seen (in the same manner as ~~[illegible]~~ Carl Hertz) by a certain J. Hilton Perkins, three days before he was due to sail for South Africa. Perkins was immediately impressed by the superior quality of the Biograph's exhibition of films and, remembering the flickering and otherwise imperfect performance of all "animated photographs" shown in South Africa, he considered that the Biograph would be an excellent speculation in the South African entertainment field. He planned to buy the South African rights for exploitation and to lease Biograph machines to touring theatrical companies. With the help of friends, he negotiated with the financier Koopman (one of the original directors of the American Biograph & Mutoscope Company who was then in London on its behalf) and succeeded in forming the South African Biograph and Mutoscope Company which bought the right to the exploitation of the machine for £5,000 in cash and 7,000 shares.

Perkins arrived in South Africa intending to lease the Biograph and its remarkable films to local touring companies; but all such negotiations failed as soon as it was revealed that the machine was electrically driven and could be operated no other way. In the end, he was forced himself to exploit it and in due course "Biograph" exhibitions began to be given in South Africa, beginning in Johannesburg on the 24th May 1899.

The Biograph appartus was huge and complicated. Its weight made problems of transport and installation and its intricate mechanism was difficult to operate. The electrical powers which drove its one h.p. engine required 110 volts direct current, an almost insuperable problem until Perkins imported a portable electric plant without which he would

have been unable to exhibit in the smaller towns (i) In the supply of films (ii) alone, the Biograph presented no problem, Perkins being assured of a regular weekly programme from London at 7d a foot.(iii)

The first Mutoscope was installed at 67 Pritchard Street (next door to Quinns) in Johannesburg and this "Great Novelty" achieved the same popularity as the earlier kinetoscopes.(iv) The first Biograph exhibition was given at the Wanderers Hall on the 24th May 1899 as part of the Queen's Birthday Festivities organised by the Caledonian Society. The Press Preview on the 23rd was a failure but the first performance was a great success, comment centring on the marvellous size and clearness of the pictures (v) and above all, their comparativ freedom from flicker. Perkins immediately organised a series of "Biograph Concerts" at the Wanderers for which he engaged the services either of James Hyde, the Rand's famous conductor, or of Ernest Lezard well-known musician, whose orchestras played suitable music while the "scenes" were shown. The first "Biograph Concert" was given on the 6th June 1899 and but for two exceptions, they were given every

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(i) Electric power was often available but not at the right current. In Durban, cables had to be run from the Railway Station, across Pine Street into the Town Hall (now the Post Office) where the exhibitions were given.

(ii) They were drawn (not jerked by intermittent motion) across the projector's lens by a cam travelling at between 1,000 and 1,500 revolutions a minute.

(iii) The American Biograph and Mutoscope Company had instituted large production studios not only in the United States where its topical cameramen also operated; but had also instituted topical production in all its subsidiary branches in Britain, Holland, France, Germany, Sweden etc, the films being efficiently distributed through the various central offices. It was therefore itself capable of supplying the needs of all its exhibitors throughout th world. By all standards, the films were exceptionally expensive but those who saw them, are agreed that they are exceptionally goo

(iv) When the Dyke and Duchess of Cornwall (later King George V and Queen Mary) made a tour of the dominions in 1902 during which they also visited South Africa, their yacht 'Ophir" was equipped with "mutoscopes", a great proportion of whose scenes consisted of pictures from films taken during the Boer War by Dickson.

(v) Mr Ernest Lezard still maintains that with the sole exception of sound, the Biograph films, in point of clearness, size and stereoscopic effect, were superior to those of today.

Sunday evening until the 30th September 1899. On the 11th October, war was declared.(1)

Perkins himself delegated the running of the Biograph to Harold Chichester (who maintained his interest in moving pictures and later ran his own shows). The weekly shows, accompanied by full orchestras, attained a prestige and status previously unknown to moving picture shows. Its films, of which about twenty four were usually shown, were almost all topical and taken in England. Its only competitor was the "Edison-Thomas Royal Vitascope" which concluded the programme at the Empire Palace of Varieties. The political situation became increasingly ominous but the Biograph retained its large audiences at the Wanderers every Sunday. By the end of August 1899, Johannesburg was rapidly becoming depopulated, business was almost at a standstill and entertainment had become a hopeless proposition commercially. It was not abandoned however until the last possible moment and courageous

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(1) The first exception occurred under interesting circumstances. The fourth of the long series of 'Biograph Concerts' was advertised for Saturday the 10th June at the Wanderers Hall. Feeling was running exceptionally high in Johannesburg owing to Kruger's persistent refusal to grant the franchise to the Uitlanders. A meeting of the disaffected public was called and lacking a hall to accommodate them, the committee called upon the Biograph management to surrender its right to the Wanderers Hall. This permission was gladly given and on the 10th June 1899, the famous meeting of the Unenfranchised Uitlanders was held where moving pictures should have been shown. On the 13th, the following advertisement appeared:

THE AMERICAN BIOGRAPH
(Under the patronage of the Committee for the Uitlander Meeting)
Wanderers Hall
One Night Only
Wednesday June 14th
The Most Wonderful Invention of the Age
New Pictures received Last Mail
Cecil John Rhodes riding in Hyde Park - 19th May
The Queen laying the Foundation Stone of the South Kensington Museum
Thirty Six Magnificent Moving Pictures
Vocal and Instrument Concert and the Wanderers Band

Admission : Popular Prices 2/- and 1/-. A few reserved seats at 4/-.
Booking at Bonamici's Agency, Jeppe's Arcade. Commence at 8.15.
Mr Harold Chichester - Business Manager

and on the 14th, the following letter appeared in the Rand Press (24) : "Sir - Permit me to remind the people who attended the great meeting of the unenfranchised on Saturday last that the biograph performance was generously given up for that night in order that the meeting might be held. I sincerely trust that as many of our friends as can possibly do so will attend tonight and give the biograph people the "benefit" they deserve for their public spirit. I am etc - Wm.Hosken"
(William Hosken was a pillar of Johannesburg society and a leader of public opinion.) This letter had the effect of securing "an excellent attendance".

The second exception occurred on Sunday the 27th August 1899 which the South African Republican Government declared a Day of Humiliation, the show being given the previous Saturday.

companies continued to play at the Empire[1]. On the 15th September, the Biograph advertised "A Picture of Dreyfus in Prison is due to arrive by this mail and will be exhibited should it come to hand as expected". On the 23rd, it gave its usual Sunday Concert with full orchestra. By then the Empire and the Biograph Concerts at the Wanderers were the sole surviving forms of entertainment, every other theatre, music-hall and cafe having shut. The Empire advertised simply - "CINEMATOGRAPH". On the 30th September, the usual Biograph Concert was given; on the 2nd October, the Empire staged the opening night of a new company; on the 11th October, war was declared and, among many immediate results, entertainment throughout South Africa was completely disorganised.

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(1) Recording the arrival of one of the last companies to play at the Empire, The Star stated (25) - "Allowing for the very pronounced adverse circumstances in the shape of their arrival in a panic-stricken city from which residents are fleeing in thousands, and the progress of an extensive and very destructive fire within a stone's throw of the Empire Music Hall, the company which opened there last night may conscientiously be regarded as a decidedly good one. The reasons given are sufficient to unnerve even the most courageous who may have nothing to do but retire into the solitude of the night and discuss the situation with friends and counsellors; but to perfect strangers, having to face patrons and critics, assume gaiety and afford amusement, it is quite a different thing and even more than ordinary display of nervousness might reasonably be overlooked. In that spirit, the packed audience (sic) seemed to view matters and throughout the entire performance manifested indulgence and appreciation.....A varied and thoroughly enjoyable entertainment was brought to a close by a brand new set of cinematograph pictures."

References : CHAPTER II

(I) "Through South Africa" - H.M. Stanley
"South Africa Today" - Francis Younghusband
"The Transvaal from Within" - Percy Fitzpatrick
Etc etc

(2) "Living Pictures" - Hopwood

(3) Cape Times - I7th, I8th and I9th September I896

(4) Standard and Diggers News - 28th January I897

(5) Standard and Diggers News - 27th July I897

(6) Natal Mercury - 6th November I897

(7) Cape Times - I3th December I897

(8) Cape Times - I7th December I897

(9) Cape Times - I7th December I897

(I0) Natal Mercury - 3Ist January I898

(II) Natal Mercury - 3rd February I898

(I2) Cape Times - I4th February I898

(I3) Cape Argus - I4th February I898

(I4) Cape Register - 9th February I898

(I5) Cape Times - 22nd March I898

(I6) Page I8 - "African Occasions" - Leslie Blackwell

(I7) Standard and Diggers News - I7th May I898

(I8) Standard and Diggers News - 27th January I899
Natal Mercury - 24th January I899
Page I78 - "Out of the Crucible" - Hedley Chilvers

(I9) Standard and Diggers News - I2th July I898

(20) Edgar Hyman in an Interview : Sunday Times - 3rd December I933

(2I) Warwick Trading Company Catalogue published in I900 and presented by Mr Charles Urban to the Science Museum, South Kensington, subsequent to loan to the Author in South Africa in I938.

(22) Natal Mercury - I3th May I899

(23) Warwick Trading Company Catalogue

(24) The Star - I4th June I899

(25) The Star - 6th September I899

Also Original Correspondence with W. Hilton Perkins in the Author's Possession.

CHAPTER III

The Boer War Period - Development in Production and Exhibition

1899-1902

The outstanding feature of the Boer War period was the continuous production of films in the actual field. Three separate enterprises documented the war in most of its theatres, pre-eminent among them being the expedition led by William Kennedy Laurie Dickson.

On the 14th October 1899 (but three days after the declaration of war), financed and equipped by the British Biograph and Mutoscope Company, Dickson left England with two assistants, Cox and Seward, for South Africa on the "Dunottar Castle" in company with General Sir Redvers Buller, his staff and a considerable number of troops.(i) The "Donottar" took fifteen days to make Cape Town where Dickson, impeded by military restriction, found it impossible to proceed immediately to the front and decided to go on to Durban. Here he and his two assistants disembarked, bought a Cape cart, a pair of vicious but capable white stallions, provisions and all necessaries for an expedition to the front with the troops. The Biograph camera, owing to its enormous weight, was mounted on to the back of the cart "so as to be able to fire at a moment's notice".(ii)

(i) Also on board was a young reporter, Winston Churchill, going out as special war correspondent for the Morning Post. Dickson filmed everything he could on board, at the Cape, up the coast and at Durban. His own account of the expedition published in diary form under the title of "The Biograph in Battle" and written in his usual florid style, gives some indication of his production activities and there is also other testimony.
"We have a party of cinematographers on board", wrote Winston Churchill (I)"and when they found we were going to speak the "Nineveh", they bustled about preparing their apparatus. But the cumbrous appliances (sic) took too long to set up and, to the bitter disappointment of the artists, the chance of making a moving picture was lost forever." And again, describing the ceremonious landing of Buller at Cape Town, he wrote (2)- "the crew and stoker of the "Dunottar Castle" gave three hearty cheers, the cinamatograph buzzed loudly, forty cameras clicked, the guard presented arms....."

(ii) Only one illustration of the cart thus equipped has been traced - in "With the Flag to Pretoria" (3), it is shown standing at the side of the road along which the relieving troops are entering Ladysmith.

Meeting with much opposition from officious staff-officers in his attempts to get a permit to accompany the troops right up to the firing line, Dickson with a pertinacity typical of all subsequent newsreel cameramen, eventually succeeded in getting a pass from Buller himself which enabled him to overcome all obstacles. He was at liberty to take films wherever he could transport his cumbrous camera, now rendered even more conspicuous by the white stallions drawing the Cape cart. On the 8th December 1899, the Biograph expedition joined the Naval Brigade. There was intense heat by day, the nights were bitterly cold and there was only tinned food with no bread for days at a time. The party bivouacked in the open among the outposts between Frere and Chieveley. By day, they accompanied the 4.7 guns of the "Forte" and the "Terrible" which, mounted on Sir Percy Scott's special undercarriage, were attempting to harry the opposing forces from the tops of kopjes. Moving constantly over rough and steeply inclined ground, Dickson and his assistants had great difficulty in getting their Cape cart into position. They ran extraordinary risks and endured great hardships for the sake of their films. Constantly exposed to heavy fire to which it offered a clear target, the Biograph camera succeeded in taking excell- films not only of the actual hostilities but also of the crude life of the camps. Officers wrote home describing its activities and the Naval Brigade itself came almost to take a pride in its curious companion.(1) Lord Dundonald took a kindly interest and through his timely warnings of assaults on kopjes and the movements of troops, many remarkable films were made. Every week, a member of the party travelled to Maritzburg to send a parcel of films to England accompanied by manuscripts. Moving from Chievely, as they followed the progress of the campaign for the

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(1) Describing the first firing of the 4.7 gun on Gun Hill on the 12th December 1899, one officer wrote (4) - "All this time, our Biograph friends from home were taking views of us and they took two of myself and my guns while firing"; and again, speaking of the Boxing Day Sports organised in camp (5) - "The Biograph people who are still with us took a scene of the Tug 'o War, our Oom Paul and then a tableau of the hanging of Kruger". This latter scene was described in detail by Dickson himself in his diary (6) and clearly indicates the type of film seen by overseas audiences.

When inspecting a recent battlefield, Dickson one day met a wandering Boer with whom he spoke. The horror of the dead on both sides lying yet untouched on the battlefield was indescribable."The Boer, sitting his horse stolidly, counted within a few feet radius thirty three dead, saying 'Poor fellows, what a pity'. I asked him if he knew anything about the Biograph and he said 'Oh, yes', he had greatly enjoyed it at Johannesburg. I then enquired if he thought I could get some pictures from them later on; at which he gave me a cordial invitation, saying he would speak to the General when I came. His name he gave me as Commander van Niekerk and pointed to his home across the river (Tugela)."(7)

relief of Ladysmith, their entire camp, with the exception of the Biograph camera itself, was looted and Dickson had to make good his supplies before pressing on with the forces.(i) Moving continuously in the forefront, Dickson saw and filmed terrible sights.(ii) His still cameras were always in use and whenever possible, the Biograph camera was dragged into position at risk of life and limb. In February 1900, a serious reverse befell the unit - Cox and Seward became delirious from enteric fever (then decimating the troops owing to the shocking state of water supplies) and Dickson, going on alone with an ignorant sailor to help him, continued to "biograph" everything he saw, once escaping death from a "100-pound Creusot shell" by a miracle. On the 3rd March, he filmed the entry into Ladysmith and the meeting of General Buller and Sir George White.(iii) Shortly afterwards, Dickson himself contracted enteric fever and was forced to return to Durban where he awaited delivery of a more portable camera before joining Roberts' forces in the Transvaal. He arrived in Cape Town towards the end of April 1900, complete with baggage, horses, Cape Cart etc and, staying at the Mount Nelson Hotel, attempted to make arrangements to travel to Bloemfontein. While waiting for his application for a permit to pass through the usual complicated military channels, Dickson took numerous films at the Cape, notably of the guns at Green Point. He also called on Cecil Rhodes at Groote Schuur where he had lunch and met Dr Jameson. Rhodes gave him a letter of introduction to Lord

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(i) "No rest is given our guns, the very earth seems to oscillate as we run to the Biograph, causing the strange and awful feeling akin to an earthquake. The scene was indescribably thrilling as we stood between two fires, watching the smoke from the surrounding hills far and near, cannon and bursting shells."(8)

(ii) The films were processed and printed as quickly as possible in England and shown at the Palace Theatre of Varieties in London. Many people remember seeing them and particularly the appalling films of the wounded after the battle of Spion Kop which Dickson took. A still from one of his films showing crude horse-ambulances crossing the Tugela after the battle gives some idea of the fearful privations of the wounded.

(iii) At Dickson's side stood Winston Churchill whose photograph in colonial army uniform with cocked hat forms one of the illustrations of "The Biograph in Battle" (9)

Kitchener.(1)

Towards the end of May, Dickson reached Bloemfontein where, awaiting his heavy baggage, he filmed the annexation ceremony. From Bloemfontein he went to Kroonstad and thence by train and cart to Pretoria along roads reeking with dead transport animals. On the 6th June, he"biographed" the raising of the Union Jack at Pretoria(ii

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(1) Dickson appears to have formulated some scheme of enlisting Rhodes' aid in establishing the Biograph business in South Africa. It is possible that Dickson himself filmed the well-known "Cecil Rhodes riding in Hyde Park" (see Page 55(1)) and that on that occasion, he actually spoke to Rhodes. He travelled to South Africa on the"Dunottar" waith Rhodes' brother, Major Frank Rhodes as a fellow-passenger and at that time, he wrote - "As the days pass, some of the social chill wears off and we are getting to know each other a little better. Major Rhodes could give me but very little encouragement last night regarding the near possibility of my reaching his brother as he fears that it will take months to rescue him from the Boers. (At that time - October 1899 Cecil Rhodes was in Beseiged Kimberley). He seemed much interested in my letter to Cecil Rhodes and in what I told him regarding my plans, also as to what had been arranged in the matter of opening up South Africa with the Biograph, an undertaking which had been delayed until now for the double purpose of getting war pictures as well."(10)

Dickson, in common with many of his kind, was always grandiloquent and when asked by a reporter in Durban when "on a run down to Durban from the front", what had brought him to South Africa, he replied - "Well, I was invited by Mr Rhodes who explained that he thought the biograph would be a capital method of showing the [illegible] public the beauties of South Africa while at the same time indelibly chronicling the events of the war."(11 It is no longer possible to verify this statement but the fact remains that, owing to preoccupation with more important matters or for other reasons, Rhodes did not actively assist Dickson.

(11) It appears that Dickson arrived too late for the actual ceremony which was filmed by Edgar Hyman for the Warwick Trading Company, and resorted to "staging" the scene. When both his and Hyman's films of the hoisting of the Union Jack at Pretoria were shown in South Africa, it was noticed that the "Biograph" showed a much larger flag than the "Bioscope". Letters were published in the Press and Wolfram, who was one of Urban's most enthusiastic customers, replied as follows (12) :

"Sir - Mr A.J. Wilkes seems to be slightly mixed up - owing probably to the heat. No doubt hundreds of others who attended the Bioscope will testify that the Union Jack was hoisted at Pretoria. It is to be regretted that Lord Roberts insisted upon hoisting a mere pocket-handkerchief in every town he captured (the identical flag that Lady Roberts made), thus depriving historical events of all impressiveness. The "Yanks" are indeed s smart people. Whereas the British operator present at the hoisting ceremony was content to photograph the actual occurrence and thus produce a picture lacking impressiveness (though genuine), the enterprising "Yank" had a large Union Jack hoisted a few days after the event for the purpose of photographing it; and, as the public of Durban and probably Mr Wilkes had the pleasure of seeing a magnificent picture of the hoisting of the Union Jac at Pretoria a few weeks ago, they will admit the smartness of th "Yank"; and the taste of Mr Wilkes for a pretty picture rather than a true one, must have been amply satisfied.(This referred to an exhibition by Perkins' Biograph.) The company I represent, "The Warwick Trading Company of London", refuse absolutely to accept and develop any film not a genuine reproduction of passing events.....W.Wolfram."

and a specially posed group consisting of Lord Roberts reading despatches surrounded by his staff officers. From Pretoria, he attempted again to operate in the firing line, following Roberts' forces as they pursued General Botha's guerilla bands. Dickson appears to have ingratiated himself with some success with staff headquarters. The Biograph cart was borrowed to carry peace envoys to Botha and Dickson, profitting by the opportunity, successfully requested facilities from Roberts who also signed the Cape cart's white flag. Operating from the base camp at Roberts' Heights, Dickson was able to record many historic scenes, including Roberts' meeting with Baden-Powell after the relief of Mafeking. As the war seemed to have taken a quieter turn, Dickson left Pretoria for Johannesburg, the train being sniped at on the way. Here he filmed the mines, native war-dances etc etc and then left for Cape Town by train, the journey taking nearly a week. On the 13th July 1900, he sailed for England on the "Carisbrooke Castle" after "ten months' fever-heat of excitement, toil and peril" in South Africa.(1)

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(1) Of Dickson's subsequent activities, nothing whatever has been recorded. He died between 1930 and 1935, apparently in straitened circumstances. His wife testified (13) that "my husband always insisted on absolute loyalty to his chief, Edison" and that "the Americans never recognised his share in the invention (of moving pictures) and, as he was working in Edison's laboratory and under his instructions, my husband could nor would not put in any claim save that of Chief Technician. There were so many claimants - Lumiere, Paul of London, etc whom my husband was always fighting for Edison's precedence." A certain maliciousness characterises the omission of Dickson's name and the attempts to discredit it in current works. It is significant that in none of them, not even in "A Million and One Nights", the standard work, is mention made of Dickson's epic expedition to the Boer War front. Only in the unsigned preface to "The Biograph in Battle" is credit given for the feats he performed in recording for the first time in history scenes of actual battle.

Dickson's book is a remarkable, if self-opinionated, record of the war but, despite its emotional descriptions, it fails to give an adequate impression of the difficulties he met. One of his contemporaries stated in 1938 -(14) -"Mr Dickson had to contend with heavy and unsuitable apparatus in his work in South Africa. The camera used by the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company at that time consisted of a cam driven by a ½ h.p.motor necessitating the use of 4 boxes of batteries weighing 1,200 lbs, the camera weighed 240 lbs and the tripod 1101bs." The whole of this enormous weight had to be driven up mountains and over broken rocky ground in a Cape cart by two wild horses, often in intense heat or rain and frequently under fire.

Not all Dickson's films proved successful, The negatives deteriorated during the journey from South Africa to London and the prevalent heat in Natal and elsewhere tended to make them foggy. They were sent to England and America and large numbers were shown throughout the world by the various Biograph companies

About 1913, the American Biograph Company destroyed by fire a large number of films which they were unable to store. It is possible that some of Dickson's films were among them. Those in the possession of the British Biograph Company have completely disappeared. The sole relics remaining are a few bromide "stills" taken from the original Biograph Boer War films in the possession

Of the remaining two enterprises in the Boer War field, the smallest was the representation arranged by Robert Paul who, despite the then importance of his organisation as a supplier of films to music-halls and itinerant showmen, merely entrusted two movie-camera to two non-professionals - Mr Sidney Melsom who had enlisted in the C.I.V. and Colonel Beevor R.A.M.C. of the Scots Guards. Both of them acted exclusively for Paul and sent a considerable number of films back to London.(1) "Colonel Beevor's films which I developed here", Paul wrote from London before he died (15), "were the more successful They included "The Entry of the Scots Guards into Bloemfontein","Lord Roberts crossing the Vaal River", "Man-handling a Naval Gun by Blue Jackets", "Royal Engineers with a Balloon near Pretoria", and "Cronje's Surrender to Lord Roberts". I showed these, with many others detailed in my then current catalogue, at the Alhambra,London. They were sold to many contemporary exhibitors."

The Warwick Trading Company on the other hand, made a comprehensive and sustained effort to take advantage of the sensational opportunities offered by the Boer War. Immediately on the outbreak of hostilities, its energetic founder and managing director,Charles Urban sent one of his best cameramen, Joseph Rosenthal, to South Africa. Already acting for the Warwick Trading Company was Edgar Hyman who, as soon as he had seen the Empire vaudeville company

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of Mr Joseph Mason, New Jersey, U.S.A., Mr F.W? Baker of London, Mr Emile Lauste of London, and the Author. The only photograph of William Kennedy Laurie Dickson apparently available is one in the possession of his wife of Twickenham, London.

The only illustrations of the Biograph camera (or "Mutograph" as it was more properly called, the Biograph referring to the projector) in action in the field are in "The Biograph in Battle" and "With the Flag to Pretoria" in which latter it is twice shown - at the relief of Ladysmith (16) and alongside the Naval Brigade in action, the picture carrying the caption :"A Novel Feature of the Battlefield - the Biograph Camera in operation during the Battle of Colenso".(17)

(1) Paul's current catalogue was illustrated by a photograph of Colonel Beevor standing beside a Cape cart and a large cine-camera mounted on a tripod. It was headed PICTURES OF THE TRANSVAAL WAR and continued :

PAUL'S ANIMATOGRAPH CAMERA AT THE FRONT
Embarkation of the Scots Guards

"This fine picture shows the Scots Guards (one of the first to go) leaving for the front as they embark on board S.S."Nubia" at Southampton. The men face the camera as they pass up the gang-way and a clear picture of each man's face is obtained.
Code word :"Scots"Length: 60 feet Price : 45s (18)

safely shipped back to England from Cape Town, entered the field equipped with the neat portable camera with which Urban had supplied him.(i) Both Rosenthal and Hyman took a large number of films which became a popular feature of Urban's catalogues. Both cameramen wore unfiform and followed the forces wherever possible.(ii) After some weeks Rosenthal was recalled from South Africa to cover the Chinese War, his place being taken by Sydney Goldman; but at one stage, Urban appears to have been represented by several cameramen - Hyman with General French; Rosenthal with General Kelly-Kenny; Rider-Noble with Lord Roberts and Bennett Stafford with General Ian Hamilton to whom were added Sydney Goldman and Seymour. From the large number of films listed in the catalogues then current, it is evident that Urban had made certain of covering the entire campaign.

The Warwick Trading Company had surpassed the efforts of the rival Biograph Company in obtaining official recognition for its cameramen operating in South Africa; but their difficulties were by no means over. Hundreds of feet of unexposed negative consigned to them from England never reached them through having "gone astray in the mails" and hundreds more were lost when the "Mexican" sank off the Cape. Another consignment of 5,000 feet (representing fifty to

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(i) The film catalogue of the Warwick Trading Company published in I900 proudly printed a

Facsimile of the
OFFICIAL LIST OF WAR CORRESPONDENTS
issued at headquarters in South Africa for use by the Army officials
List of Correspondents
Daily Telegraph - Bennett Burleigh
Illustrated London News - Melton Prior
Morning Post - Winston Churchill
Etc etc
Cinematograph :
Warwick Trading Co Ltd — Messrs Rosenthal and Hyman

This is the first instance in history where the Cinematograph is officially recognised by the War Office and our Staff of Operators are the only ones accorded the privileges and facilities of regular correspondents during the war with the Transvaal.

ALWAYS WAIT FOR GENUINE FILMS
Do not discredit your exhibits and the general Animated Picture Business by trying to fool the Public with Faked Films. You will be the loser in the long run if you do. The "Warwick" War and Films of Topical Events for all parts of the World are taken on the Spot and are not made on Hampstead Heath, New Jersey, France or in somebody's Back Garden. (I9)

(ii) Illustrations survive showing Rosenthal in the field filming ox-wagon transport crossing a drift in the Transvaal (20) and Hyman in his uniform with his compact camera at his side (2I) and in the field standing next to his laden pack-horse (22).

eighty separate films) was captured by General de Wet at Roodeval, the boxes opened and the unexposed negative strewed over the veld. Finally the Boers persistently harried all transport and even after the British had occupied Johannesburg and Pretoria, there was difficulty in consigning goods safely by convoyed train to Cape Town. Negatives were frequently delayed for weeks at a time and it was never certain whether they would reach their destination or, having done so whether they would be in good condition. Despite these difficulties and many others, scores of films of the war were marketed by Urban in London (i) and shown throughout the world (ii). In London, the Warwick Trading Company's exhibitors competed with the Biograph (iii) which was then showing Boer War films at the Palace Theatre of Varieties and in South Africa where the films returned with surprising celerity after processing in England, there was also fierce competition.(iv)

(i) Only two of the Warwick Company's films are known to have survived "A Skirmish Outside Kimberley" and "The Surrender of Kroonstad", both taken by Rosenthal, which were discovered on the premises of the Paisley Philospsophical Institute and presented to the British Film Institute in 1937 in whose custody they remain.

(ii) Eye-witnesses of the films are still to be found - people who remember seeing them either in big music-halls in the major towns or at the small shows staged by itinerant exhibitors. Recorded testimony exists in some books such as Carl Hertz'"A Modern Mystery Merchant"(23) which contains an illustration showing a street scene before a theatre in San Francisco, U.S.A. entitled CINEOGRAPH THEATRE and displaying two posters worded as follows :

SCENES
from the
BRITISH
BOER
WAR
now being
reproduced
in the
MOVING PICTURES

ACTUAL SCENES
in
LIFE MOTION
of the
TRANSVAAL WAR
Admission 10c.

and "With the Naval Brigade in Natal"(24) in which the author says - "I was told afterwards that my own portrait appeared very often in the cinematographs of these scenes (departing tropps) which were then very popular and were exhibited to crowded audiences in all the London and provincial music-halls and elsewhere."

(iii) This rivalry had been apparent even in the field. Many years later, Edgar Hyman recollected (25) how "my rival in the Natal theatre of war who worked for the Biograph company had a far more bulky equipment" than his own compant camera which gave him greater mobility and range of subjects.

(iv) The first exhibition of Boer War films was held on the 10th March 1900 when Frank de Jong sponsored the staging of a farce at the Cape Town Opera House followed by the "Warograph" showing war films. They were probably taken by Hyman and included "The Armoured Train", "Hospital Corps attending the Wounded, Glencoe", "Northumberland Fusiliers digging Trenches", "Mafeking" and "Nurses on the Battlefield".

This exhibition was followed two weeks later by the Biograph showing Dickson's Natal films at the Oddfellows Hall, Plein Street Cape Town. During their exhibition "exclamations of delight were

heard from the back of the hall which were elicited by the fact that a trooper of the S.A.L.H. recognised himself and several of his comrades in a particular picture. The new moving war pictures which were exhibited were an unqualified success and evoked the keenest enthusiasm, particularly those of Lord Dundonald's cavalry in action and the ambulance at work during a truce for picking up the wounded. The whole entertainment is a historical object lesson that should on no account be missed."(26) Similar success attended the Biograph shows elsewhere in the Cape and when it went on tour.

Meanwhile an itinerant showman Wolfram began showing Warwick films in Durban on the 23rd May 1900 and thereafter he toured them throughout Natal. At his opening performance, the audience "evinced their appreciation by hearty applause....a scene of nurses attending the wounded on the veld was enthusiastically received."(27)

When Wolfram brought his show to the Cape, the Biograph toured the country areas and arrived in Natal by the time Wolfram returned. Wolfram had "bumper houses" at the Cape and the reception of the Biograph's war films was equally enthusiastic in Durban Audiences were packed and ""The Hoisting of the Union Jack in Pretoria at the entrance of Lord Roberts" caused storms of applause and calls for encore."(28)(see also Page 6I (ii)) The two shows frequently collided but Boer War films remained the main attraction of both.

As the war dragged on and cameramen were withdrawn, less new war films appeared. As late as February 1902 however, Edgar Hyman, once more an impresario, gave a Bioscope Display at the Masonic Hall, Jeppe Street, Johannesburg of which a large part of the programme was composed of his and other war films which until then had not been shown in Johannesburg. It "attracted a very large audience which expressed its appreciation of the fare provided in loud and frequent rounds of applause. Though this class of exhibition is not new to Johannesburg, that of Saturday evening had special features which specially appealed to the local public. While most of the pictures were remarkably good, those dealing wit the war naturally created the greatest interest and enthusiasm and the only regret people had was that a few more of these did not find a place in the programme. That depicting the landing of Lord Roberts at Cape Town (taken by Hyman) fully justified all that had been said of it in advance; indeed it may safely be described as one of the greatest triumphs of the picture machine."(29)

This exhibition (which was later given again at the Wanderer Hall and elsewhere) was followed on the 18th March by the Biograph which, leasing the Standard Theatre, gave its first performance in Johannesburg since the outbreak of war. It also marked the reopening of the Standard Theatre and acknowledgement was made to the Military Authorities for their kind permission to do so. A large orchestra of 18 musicians under the direction of James Hyde accompanied the performance. The importance of Dickson's films was fully realised by the Biograph's usual large audiences - "The reopening of the Standard Theatre by the South African Biograph Company was distinguished by an exceptionally good attendance and the "living pictures" displayed on the screen by means of the biograph, though many of them were by no means new, nevertheless elicited frequent and enthusiastic applause. The occasion seemed to have been made an opportunity for a foregathering of old Johannesburgers. The stalls and circle (they cost 10/- and 7/6d respectively) were crowded with well-known faces, the military being also well represented. The arrangements for displaying the pictures left nothing to be desired whilst their selection for the opening night could scarcely have been bettered and included every variety of interesting and imposing spectacle.....Amongst the war pictures thrown on the screen was the never-to-be-forgotten wounded at Spion Kop....One of the most popular pictures was that of General and Lady Audrey Buller's reception at Waterloo. The audience cheered the scene to the echo. A capital picture was also shown of Lord Roberts receiving a despatch on the steps of his Pretoria headquarters. Another outburst of applause signalled the representation of Lord Milner's reception by Lord Salisbury and Mr Joseph Chamberlain....."(30) The Biograph continued at the Standar with large audiences until the 31st March, a record season for moving pictures, when it once again went on tour with its Boer War films.

The availability of these films and the general prostration of established forms of entertainment owing to the war, combined to make something entirely new of "animated photographs" and to elevate them to an honourable place in the entertainment world. At the outbreak of war, their position had been very disparate. On the one hand, they had become an established form of amusement in Johannesburg; on the other, they had made only rare and often inauspicious appearances in all the other towns. The country as a whole knew them hardly at all; nor, despite the passage of almost four years since their introduction, had moving pictures finally disabused people's minds of the idea that like skating, ping-pong, diabolo and other "crazes", they would soon disappear. The Biograph in Johannesburg had done much to dissipate the prevalent conception of "mechanical marvel"; but, as far as the total population of the country was concerned, knowledge of the existence of moving pictures was comparatively negligible. Cape Town, for instance, saw no moving pictures at all between Ada Delroy's presentation of the "New London Bioscope" in February 1899 and the 16th October 1899 when Edgar Hyman brought the fugitive Empire compan to the Good Hope Hall with its "Edison-Thomas Vitascope". Similarly between Ada Delroy's visit in May and the first appearance of the fugitive Biograph in October, Durban saw only "Living Pictures" presented by the American Combination Co (a third-rate show) at the Beach Hotel in June and by the "American Globetrotters", an acrobatic troupe, in July when films were shown free of charge on the canvas side of a marquee by way of advertisement.

The immediate effect of the war was to reduce the entertainment world to chaos from which the established exhibition of films wa to emerge. Until then, entertainment in South Africa had flourished. The Wheelers, Frank de Jong and other lesser impresarios had assured a flow of imported musical and dramatic companies in all the large towns (Durban, for some reason, was never as well supplied as the others). The centre of all such enterprise had naturally been Johannesburg where ready money and the need for distraction marched together. In Johannesburg alone, vaudeville flourished; Cape Town, though theatre-loving, had no music-hall.

The companies imported by the Wheelers and de Jong played long seasons in these two towns and then went on tour. Intervals of some length separated their appearances in the smaller towns but these were

bridged
by entertainment parties organised by quasi-professionals. Though not of high standard, these shows kept the theatres in use and maintained public interest in anything to do with the stage. "Doing the smalls" had become an active, if somewhat unremunerative, occupation for small bands of players who, if rewarded with merely mediocre success, at least evidenced the interest of the rural public in theatrical entertainment, whatever its kind. There were too, occasional shows staged by amateurs.

The war wrought a complete and thorough change in this pattern. On the one hand, a fecund territory for professional exploitation had disappeared in the abandonment of Johannesburg, Pretoria and the Transvaal generally; while the closing of the Free State with its capital Bloemfontein, the investiture of Kimberley and country-wide disorganisation militated against any entertainment enterprise. Furthermore the amusement resources of these towns were, to a large extent, visited on those remaining (Edgar Hyman, for instance, brough the Empire vaudeville company to Cape Town where it played in the Goo Hope Hall; Ernest Lezard took to conducting orchestras in Durban; etc Finally not only were overseas artistes too apprehensive of war conditions to be induced to visit South Africa but the sea port towns alone did not appear to present sufficient scope to make such enterprise profitable. (Variety stars of the day were paid very highly.) There were in addition, military restrictions to be overcome.

For the first few months of the Boer War therefore, entertainme was completely disorganised throughout the country. On the other hand the war exercised a direct influence not only on its later rehabilitation but also on its form. Firstly refugees from the affected areas swelled the populations of certain towns such as Durban (to which thousands flocked, making any kind of accommodation impossible and secondly, the Imperial troops began to arrive in thousands. Both these factors, together with the general state of tension, created a demand for distraction.

The prevalent disorganisation and the flight of professional artistes from the country prevented any immediate provision of "legitimate" forms of entertainment. For the first few months therefore, amateur effort contrived to provide amusement. Charity concerts of all descriptions were given, regimental bands played, Phonograph Concerts, recitals, amateur theatricals, military displays, orchestra

etc were organised. Soon however the attractive prospects of the entertainment field began to appeal to professional speculators and commercial places of amusement began to appear. An epidemic of music-halls broke out in all the large towns, sea-port and inland, wherever troops were concentrated in any number. Local talent was conscripted for the turns of which "Living Pictures" or "Animated Photographs" almost invariably formed an item. Social conditions had however declined to a state of widespread vice and crime (i) for which many of these music-halls provided a focus. Long before entertainment could again be organised on a professional basis to meet the general public's need, moving pictures had begun to fill the gap. They were at least an amusement which decent people might patronise.

The only moving picture entertainments in South Africa at the outbreak of war were both in Johannesburg and both went to the coast where activity was greatest and the need for entertainment highest. The Empire company, owing to the anxiety of its artistes to return to England, gave only a short season at the Good Hope Hall in Cape Town where the "Edison-Thomas Vitascope" featured largely on the programme.(ii) The Biograph, on the other hand, went to Durban

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(i) Various areas of the sea-port towns (Cape Town and Durban in particular) became sinks of iniquity in which drunkeness and prostitution were rampant. The sudden and continuous influx of troops who, if not bored by camp life, had just landed from the wearisome voyage from England or India, provided the occasion for every kind of vice. The lowest elements in Johannesburg, notorious for its crime record, had early fled to the Cape. Many Capetonians still remember the "French" ladies driving insolently about the town in open victorias or lounging on their exposed stoeps in Roeland Street. (Eventually Kitchener ordered a round-up and packed them back to Europe on a specially chartered ship.) Missionary work was done by the Social Reform Committee (which was later to take the "bioscope" in hand); but not all their efforts could prevent the landing and immediate employment of young girls some of whom, according to the committee's secretary, the late R.G. Ross, earned as much as £250 on the night of their arrival. As late as October 1901, a deputation waited on Sir James Rose-Innes, then Attorney-General at the Cape, drawing his attention to the fact that there were about 600 white and 300 coloured prostitutes in Cape Town and at least 150 brothels. Conditions in Durban were much the same, a feature being innumerable "shops" which sold nothing but carried on extremely nefarious business.(31) Of the Pekin Palace of Varieties in Cape Town it is said that the leather seats of its chairs were full of either beer or blood every night. The entertainment purveyed by such places was always of the lowest order.

(ii) Its films of the Royal family and of troops caused great enthusiasm and those of Paul Kruger and the Johannesburg Mounted and Foot Police ("Zarps") were considered sensational. Crowded houses filled the Good Hope Hall nightly for three weeks and it was noticed that "there is now a fair sprinkling of ladies in the hall enjoying the performance."(32)

where it opened on the I7th October I899, its patriotic pictures of the Queen, Chamberlain, etc being met with vociferous applause.Then it went to Cape Town where after a private preview to which the Press responded with fulsome praise, it opened at the Good Hope Hall on the 29th November I899. The superior merits of the Biograph films, their extraordinary size, clearness, stereoscopic effect and lack of flicker assured it of appreciative audiences anywhere; but in Cape Town, tensed and craving distraction where none was available, it had unprecedented success.(i) The installation of the machine at the Good Hope Hall had involved time, trouble and the services of several electrical firms but its success prompted Perkin to institute "Biograph Nights" which took place every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.(ii) He also made an arrangement with the Cape Government Railway Department by which any member of the public residing betweer Wynberg and Cape Town could obtain a free first-class return ticket from suburban stations when booking for a Biograph performance.

(i) Even at the private preview, 'the audience cheered, laughed and cried like a lot of children; whilst at the patriotic pictures, they literally rose, the sight of Her Majesty driving in Windsor Great Park bringing every man, woman and child to their feet." (33) On the opening night, the Good Hope Hall was packed and "to say that the pictures met with an enthusiastic reception is to put the fact in a mild way."(34) Most of the films were topical shots interspersed with a few scenes from current plays such as Beerbohm Tree in "King John" etc. Under then circumstances, the topical films had great appeal, especially that of Rhodes riding in Hyde Park. The Biograph's improvement on all previous moving picture shows - its noiselessness and lack of vibration - was at once noticed and the hall was packed every night. A current phrase was that "the next best thing to seeing events in real life was to see them reproduced on the Biograph".

(ii) Typical of the exuberant enthusiasm which accompanied these shows is the following comment : "The S.A. Biograph and Mutoscope Company (Limited) are certainly the most enterprising body of caterers we have yet heard of and their marvellous apparatus is as far ahead of the ordinary "living pictures" as the high class photo is of the daguerrotype of our grandfather's days. They have clearly the open sesame to spots tightly closed against the ordinary cameraman. For instance, one of their views on Saturday night was that of the Queen reviewing some troops at Windsor; the operator must have had his stand within a few yards of the Royal carriage for every movement of Her Majesty and the two princesses is reproduced with a fidelity quite embarrassing to the plain man unaccustomed to such close contact with his sovereign. Again, Mr Rhodes out riding in Hyde Park is absolutely life-like on the screen; his smile, his every motion, there they are, to be instantly recognised and cheered. The company seems to penetrate everywhere in search of "subjects". Its agents brave the stormy main to show us a grand reproduction of a tug in a heavy sea; they lurk about fire stations on the chance of a "call" and its thrilling dash and ordered haste; a ship launch in Belfast is given us here in Cape Town with a magic power that puts us actually on the spot; cavalry charges, the tremendous flight of express trains, steeplechases, boat races, even accidents certainly not caused to order, are presented as the unfailing sensitive film seizes them. It is a wonderful show, clever in conception and perfect in the manner of its showing."(35)

Perkin added other attractions to the show (1) which continued so successfully that it remained in Cape Town for more than six months. During this time, it began to meet opposition. The Empire's "Bioscope" had been rented for "Open Air Promenade Concerts" at the Green Point Track; but Perkin, upholding the honour of his company which insisted that every advertisement should carry the line "Invented by Herman Casler of New York", at once advertised :

BIOGRAPH
Not Bioscope
THE BIOGRAPH RECENTLY SHOWN AT THE GOOD HOPE HALL, CAPE TOWN, AND THE WANDERERS HALL, JOHANNESBURG, IS NOT IN ANY WAY CONNECTED WITH THE "BIOSCOPE" ADVERTISED TO BE SHOWN AT THE GREEN POINT TRACK TONIGHT

It was then quite feasible that other moving picture shows should attempt to capitalise on the Biograph's special popularity. It was soo supplied with Dickson's Boer War films which gave it added superiority and which inspired its promoters to advertise largely :

The March of Progress
cannot be stayed
And one of the mightiest factors in that
Great Onward March
is the
BIOGRAPH
showing
Living Moving Pictures

The Biograph is an
Educator
presenting historical events to the astonished gazer with a fidelity and marvellous realism that will leave a lasting impression on the memory of the beholder.

Leaving Cape Town at the end of April 1900, the Biograph was subsequently shown in Wynberg(Cape), Grahamstown, Port Elizabeth, East London, Kingwilliamstown, Kimberley and Durban (difficulty always being experienced in arranging the supply of electricity).

While the Biograph successfully provided decent entertainment at Cape Town, other towns for almost months on ends were without organised amusement except for occasional concerts given by "Edison's

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(1) As the Christmas season approached and increasing numbers of troop arrived, popular enthusiasm increased. The applause which followed the showing of films of the Queen, Sir Alfred Milner, Lord Salisbur and Mr Joseph Chamberlain was "deafening". "The enthusiasm reached its climax when Madame Miller appeared on the platform. Her rendering of Rudyard Kipling's "The Absent-minded Beggar" caused a perfec outburst of patriotic applause and she responded to vociferous encores. Madame Miller had finally to comply with a universal call to leave the platform and collect within her tambourine contributions which she afterwards declared to amount to £12."(36) Later Perkin employed the well-known Cape singer, Madame Kate Drew, to sing "The Absent-minded Beggar" with equal success.
He also added to the attraction of Dickson's war films, the entire collection of lantern slides of the war belonging to René Bull, the famous war correspondent.

Grand Concert Phonograph". Soon small enterprises began to meet the lack, an outstanding example being the Bijou Orchestra at Durban, organised and conducted by Ernest Lezard, which became a feature of the town. The relief of Ladysmith (and later Mafeking) provided the occasion for numerous patriotic concerts in aid of the wounded; but for the first part of 1900 at least, organised entertainment was almost non-existent. Before many months had passed however, showmen had begun to follow the successful example of the Biograph.

As early as December 1899, the "Lumiere Cinematograph Touring Company" had given inconspicuous shows in the small towns and in April 1900, Ernest Lezard had tried exhibiting a cinematograph at performances of the Bijou Orchestra in Durban but the initial show was a "distinct failure" and the project was temporarily abandonned. Meanwhile lantern slide lectures on the war were frequently given and possibly distracted attention from the probable attractions of moving pictures. On the 23rd May however, the first meritorious itinerant showman, W. Wolfram, leased the Masonic Hall in Smith Street, Durban and staged a CINEMATOGRAPH EXHIBITION consisting largely of Boer War films. There were about fifty films in all (emanating from the Warwick Trading Company) and the advertisement announced :

"No "still" pictures will be exhibited except a portrait of Her Majesty decorated with Union Jack, Thistle, Rose and Shamrock." (1)

The show made an inconspicuous start but before long, it became known that "Wolfram's Bioscope" was of superior quality, that its films were clear and almost flickerless and that admission was only 3/-, 2/-, and 1/-. Audiences improved and by the end of the week, Wolfram was playing to full houses. He gave one or two more performances at the Durban Town Hall before leaving for a tour of Natal. Thence he travelled to Cape Town, arriving by the middle of July and exhibiting at the Good Hope Hall, proceeded from diffident to enthusiastic audiences and "bumper" houses, which necessitated his leasing the Oddfellows Hall for further performances. Wolfram then

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(1) Wolfram always employed capable performers to provide the piano accompaniment of his programmes of silent films. In Durban, his pianist was Charles Hoby who subsequently conducted the Bijou Orchestra and at other times, he employed well-known local musicians. Subsequently the "bioscope pianist" became a separate genus.

toured the Cape Province, returning to Natal in November. Everywhere his show, by reason of its reliable presentation on the Warwick "Bioscope" and the interest of its films, topical and otherwise, earned increasing audiences and began genuinely to popularise the "bioscope".

The same missionary work was being done at the same time by the Biograph which, still contending with electrical difficulties and advertising largely its difference from all previous "-scopes" and "-graphs", had reached Natal and was giving very successful exhibitions at the Durban Town Hall. Its attractions in the amusement-starved town were enhanced by the Bijou Orchestra which played appropriate music with singular imagination.(i) In October 1900, the Biograph was showing at the Durban Town Hall while Wolfram was at Ladysmith. When Wolfram came to Durban, the Biograph went inland. He had, if anything, a slight advantage in the possession of extremely imaginative films (often in colour) emanating from French studios and from Meliés' in particular.(ii).The Warwick Trading Company from whic Wolfram drew his supplies, distributed the products of American, British and Continental firms whereas the Biograph Company, by reason of its unique machines, was confined to the productions of its own cameramen and studios. Before long, Wolfram was able to show films of the Chinese War (iii) which Urban's cameraman, Joseph Rosenthal, had left South Africa to take.

Both enterprises not only popularised the cinema in South Africa at this time but also succeeded in making considerable profits (iv) For some time they had no opposition but their success inevitabl encouraged competition and by the end of 1900, when both Wolfram and the Biograph were exploiting the commercial advantage of large concentrations of troops in Natal, the nature of organised entertain-

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(i) Ernest Lezard, its conductor, recollects the "sound effects" of trains, galloping horses, etc which the orchestra produced and how at one small town where the Biograph, through the portable electrical equipment with which it was later supplied, was able t give a performance, the local fire-master leapt to his feet at the sound of a bell and rushed out of the hall.

(ii) Many people maintain that the modern cinema has never surpassed the fantastic and artistic films made by Georges Meliés. They are remembered in South Africa by people who saw them shown by Wolfram from 1900 onwards. These amazing films with their "dissolving views" and spectacular trick effects fascinated the ingenuous public of the time and served to pack Wolfram's shows nightly.

The Warwick Trading Company's catalogues of this period abound with "pantomimes", "historical plays" etc such as the

following (37) :
4219-4224 CINDERELLA - A grand spectacular production illustratin every scene of the fairy tale, supplemented by marvellous tricks, dissolving effects, ballets, marches, etc in which over 35 people take part, in twenty tableaux. The most extraordinary cinematograph film ever photographed. Total 7 lengths, about 400 feet. Price complete £17/10/-. Superbly coloured £35.
(The scenes were :

I - Cinderella in her Kitchen
2 - The Fairy, Mice and Lackeys
3 - The Transformation of the Rats
4 - The Pumpkin changes to a Carriage
5 - The Ball at the King's Palace
6 - The Hour of Midnight
7 - The Bedroom of Cinderella
8 - The Dance of the Clocks
9 - The Prince and the Slippers
10 - The Godmother of Cinderella
11 - The Prince and Cinderella
12 - Arrival at the Church
13 - The Wedding
14 - Cinderella's Sisters
15 - The King, Queen and Lords
16 - The Nuptial Cortege
17 - The Bride's Ballet
18 - The Celestial Spheres
19 - The Transformation
20 - The Triumph of Cinderella)

4264 JOAN OF ARC A grand spectacular cinematograph production in 12 scenes. Length 800 feet. Price plain £45/-/-, Coloured £80 (Description of scenes)...admits of twelve different changes of scenery, all important, about 500 persons enacting the scenes, all superbly costumed.
This film was advertised by Wolfram as follows (38) :

A Great Historical Play in 12 Scenes
entitled
JOAN OF ARC
The longest moving picture ever shown in South Africa, taking
20 Minutes to Exhibit
Synopsis of Scenes

1 - The Village of Domremy
2 - The Forest of Domremy
3 - Joan of Arc's house
4 - The Portof Vaucouleurs
5 - The Castle of Baudricourt
6 - Triumphal Entry into Orleans
7 - The Coronation of Charles VII
8 - The Battle of Compiegne
9 - The Prison
10 - The Interrogation
11 - The Execution
12 - Apotheosis

(iii) They were extremely gruesome, the actual decapitation of Chinese prisoners being shown to horrified South African audiences. Their effect was somewhat mollified by the juxta-exhibition of the comic films of which Wolfram made a special feature.

(iv) The South African Biograph and Mutoscope Company had only a short career but according to Perkin (39), "during the life of the company, we took many thousands of pounds".

ment began slowly to change. Theatrical impresarios resumed activitie and de Jong-Flemming dramatic companies, Hall's Australian Juveniles, and other companies began to give performances in the coast towns. An "Anglo-American Company" showing the Warwick Company's "Bio-Tableaux" of the war attempted to import some entertainment into the smaller towns without much success and there were other such shows. Entertainment however showed signs of reviving in another direction - the music hall.

By the beginning of 1901, small and gaudy establishments of unsavoury reputation appeared in most of the large towns. Their turns (often conscripted from local talent) were of the poorest quality but adequate to the undiscriminating needs of the soldiers who thronged them. One of them was almost always "Animated Photographs" or "Living Pictures". Such exhibitions were given at the New Pavilion on the corner of Mostert and Zieke Streets in Cape Town (the whilom Pekin Palace of Varieties); the Alhambra Palace of Varieties in St John's Street, Cape Town; Dell's Palace of Varieties in Maritzburg; and other such places. The real reputation of moving pictures continued however to be established by the Biograph and Wolfram's Bioscope which continuously toured the country and, during the whole of 1901, gained a steadily-increasing public. Attractions were added (1) in the face of increasing competition from the legitimate stage which steadily revived during the year, several dramatic and musical companies being imported including Nance O'Neill, the famous American tragedienne; a George Walton comedy company; Wheeler-Edwardes Gaiety and Comedy companies; Sass-Nelson comedy companies; Hall's Australian Juveniles; etc. The stage was further fortified by the first appearance of Leonard Rayne as actor-manager. Despite this revival in organised entertainment, the popularity of moving pictures increased and newspapers began to remark that "the bioscope has certainly caught on".(40)

Several factors accounted for this maintenance of public interest firstly, the current over-all need for amusement; secondly the high

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(1) Wolfram employed the Bijou Orchestra conducted by Lezard in Durban and Perkin resumed arrangements with James Hyde and an orchestra of 30 exiled musicians in Cape Town.

standard of performance given by both shows; thirdly, the constantly novel programmes which were imported weekly (i) and more particularly the topical films. Probably no other film served to entrench the popularity of the cinema in South Africa more than that of Queen Victoria's Funeral which was shown by the Biograph five weeks after the event and by Wolfram soon afterwards.(ii) Other such films, and particularly of the Boer War, were of incalculable value to communities isolated by slow and variable communication and even in the largest towns, tribute was paid to their vitalising of published news (iii).

The almost complete monopoly enjoyed by Perkin's Biograph and Wolfram's Bioscope broken during 1901 by the advent of several other

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(i) "We had several miles of films before we finished up (in 1902)", Perkin stated later.(41)

(ii) "Although since the demise of the late Queen, the public have been inundated with views of the funeral obsequies in all the illustrated papers, it was not until last evening that the citizens fully realised the solemnity and grandeur of the ceremonial in London. Starting from the arrival from Portsmouth, a moving reproduction of the cortege from Hyde Park Corner was pictures on the screen, occupying fully ten minutes. Another grand though sad spectacle was the funeral cortege passing through Windsor. Throughout the depicting of Queen Victoria's Funeral, silence prevailed in the theatre, broken only by whispers "There's the King", "That's the Emperor","The Life Guards", "The Beefeaters", etc etc. This was followed by a splendid series of films showing His Majesty's King Edward VIIth attending his first Parliament. As the King passed, responsive to the raising of hats in London, last night's audience rose. The scenes were wonderfully clear and almost free from flicker. Another feature of the bioscope was the scenes of the present war and from those, though all were good, we specially select for commendation the 'Surrender of Kroonstad" with Lord Roberts and Kitchener crossing the river and entering the town. "Bobs" was loudly cheered. "The Essex Regiment crossing the Vaal in Flood" was loudly applauded, as was "Pontoons for General Buller leaving Durban" and "With the Flag to Protoria - the Handy Man having a Final Rehearsal on Durban Beach". Another clever view was a 4.7 gun crossing a river in the Transvaal..... Throughout the evening a large audience evidently enjoyed themselves. The name of each item being thrown on the screen previous to the showing of the pictures saves much rustling of programmes. We might suggest to the management that no one should be allowed to enter the theatre when a picture is on the screen. A variation on the tall hat was observable in the stalls, a lady introducing her four-year old toddler and standing the child on a chair. Good for the girlie but not for those sitting behind."(The show was Wolfram's.)(42)

(iii) "That the newspaper supplies in print, the Bioscope gives in illustration, the only difference being that while the first simply tells the story of how the world wags, the latter actually shows us the operation in progress. No wonder then that the Bioscope has come to stay. It is the complement of the paper and well-nigh as indispensable...."(43)

itinerant showmen operating principally in Durban and Natal, possibly owing to the presence of large bodies of troops, the fact that Durban was the principal war-time sea-port, and also the Natalian public's peculiar affection for cinema entertainment maintained during modern times. The Biograph was beginning to experience difficulties and in May 1901, Wolfram met new competition in "Rees and Meyer's Bioscope" which was to become an established institution in Natal. Later W.H. Baker began to tour with an "Imperial Motor Pictoroscope" which, assisted by Mrs Baker who sang and one or two other performers, gave bio-vaudeville concerts throughout Natal. Both these enterprises toured as far as Johannesburg in 1902 but it was in Natal that "Rees's Bioscope", the "Pictoroscope" and later "Howard's Bioscope" became household names. Their appearances were increasingly frequent and, owing to the compactness and simple method of operation of Warwick projectors, they were able to exhibit in the smallest towns. On occasion, three moving picture shows would advertise on one day in Durban papers.(i)

There were other itinerant exhibitors at this time but, apart from W. Fraetas who, equipped with a Warwick "Royal Bioscope"(ii), toured the Cape, their names and itineraries have not survived. To them was added "The Latest Up-to-Date Bioscope" which figured as one of the turns of the Imperial Circus brought to South Africa in 1901 by Bonamici and Frank Fillis.

By the end of 1901 therefore, the era of the itinerant showmen had begun. In the space of one month (March 1902), at least six such exhibitions were given in and around Johannesburg alone. The papers began to speak of "the ever-popular bioscope" and by the time the Peace of Vereeniging was signed in March 1902, it was obvious that

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(i) For instance, the 13th September 1901 when Rees and Meyer's Bioscope (which was for some time managed by Ernest Lezard) was showing at Harrismith; the Biograph notifying its forthcoming appearance at the Durban Town Hall on the 18th; and Baker's "Imperial Motor Pictoroscope" advertising part of an itinerary:

Cato Ridge Schoolroom - 16th September
Pinetown Public Hall - 17th September
Bellair Volunteer Hall - 18th September
Isipingo Public Hall - 19th September
Port Shepstone - 21st and 23rd September

(ii) His appreciative letter to the Warwick Trading Company was reprinted in their current catalogue.(44)

moving ~~pic~~ pictures had found a place in the social scene even if not on a permanent basis.

Conditions for their development were not altogether favourable particularly when the post-war depression set in; but even before then, the South African Biograph and Mutoscope Company had ceased to operate.(i) Its exceptionally heavy running costs and the fact that its enormous films eight-times normal size cost 7d a foot, made it impossible for Parkin to operate the Biograph in competition with other shows continuously supplied with cheaper and more topical films Towards the end of 1902, the Biograph ceased to exhibit . The remaining itinerant showmen, with the exception of Wolfram, instituted a service which was always variable. Sometimes months elapsed between 'Bioscope Displays' even in the largest towns and very often, they were of indifferent quality. The abominable flicker continued and greatly irritated audiences. Blemishes and blurs on the films (which rapidly deteriorated after a few exhibitions), faulty lighting and frequent break-downs combined to deter the public from patronising the "bioscope" more largely. The prevalent vulgarity of films(ii)

(i) "Apart from its being war-time, the population of South Africa was not large enough to provide sufficient money to pay for the expensive new films and the cost of running an electrically driven plant." (45)

(ii) Apart from many "humourous" films of kissing in tunnels and various slapstick incidents in low taste, the following are typical
"A HIGH OLD TIME - A genial party of four who are drinking one another's good health, are interrupted by a knock at the door. The hall porter enters announcing the arrival of a lady visitor. Being uncertain as to her views of intemperance, they hurriedly slide the glasses and bottles under the settle. The visitor however proves to be of genial disposition with no objection to joining them in a bottle, they requiring no further encouragement to again produce the champagne, the effects of which soon put them all on most familiar terms. The young lady is appealed to to give an exhibition of her dancing abilities to which she readily responds. Much merriment is caused by the gentlemen also joining in their own fashion, some climbing upon the tables, pouring champagne down one another's backs. The end of the film portrays a most appropriate climax to these hilarious proceedings. Although the duration of the exhibit is four minutes, the film is full of action and surprises and is one of the best humourous subjects ever photographed -200 feet(46)
"TWO OLD SPORTS - One of the most laughter-provoking films yet produced. Two old 'boys' at the club are turning over the leaves of "Footlight Favourites". Their faces as they inspect the illustrations are a most amusing study. The pictures seem to remind them of past experiences judging by the nudges and laughter of the old rascals. The faces were taken very large, the parts being played by two most experienced actors and it is next to an impossibility to avoid catching the spirit of their fun. Shown in nearly every London Hall. 75 feet (47)
"AUNTIE FLIRTING (American) - A fine portrait film showing how sad it often is for people to realise the effects of time and the course of natural decay. A lady is seen seated in front of a mirror talking to some masculine friend. Although to the onlooker, it is very apparent that the beauty that may have existed in bye-gone years has long since disappeared and that artificial aids have been largely requisitioned, the lady herself, judging from her express-

encouraged the attendance of a gallery public which frequently impaired the show by vociferous remarks, stamping, ironic applause, etc thus dissuading other people, notably women, from attending. The "bioscope" therefore began under a cloud which only the excellent showmanship of Wolfram and others, together with their wise choice of programme, eventually dissipated.

Topical films such as the Derby and other races, the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race, the wedding of Queen Wilhemina, the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall on tour, the new torpedo boats, the Galveston Cyclone, etc (i) were always attractive and occasionally there were special sensations such as the "Oberammergau Passion Play" which Rees and Meyer showed in Durban in August 1901 (ii) and later the Horitz Passion Play (iii). The main attraction however remained the French and American films, and particularly the fantastic productions of Georges Meliés. The vulgar humour of prevalent comic films and the(iv) extraordinary novelty and originality of Meliés "pantomimes" and other films not only attracted audiences to the itinerant shows but to a large extent obliterated their consciousness of the flickers and jerks, blurs and blemishes which disfigured almost every exhibition

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~~x~~ ion, is quite satisfied with her appearance and is practising a few wiles for the further subjugation of mankind. (50)

(i) There was also a faked film of the Coronation of King Edward made by Georges Meliés at Montreuil-sous-Bois with 150 players from Paris theatres who travelled down every day, the production costing the hitherto unheard-of amount of £1,200.

(ii) It was later toured all over Natal but in Durban it "was received with a great hushed stillness by the vast crowd that filled the Town Hall. It is said that the picture is so realistic that some of the lady members of the audience were carried out in a fainting condition."(51)

(iii) Performed annually at Horitz in Bohemia by 300 players, this Passion Play was specially filmed by the Warwick Trading Company at an alleged cost of over £2,000, entailing the work of ~~three~~ several cameramen for three weeks. There were thirty separate films totalling 2,300 feet and a lecture on the series was supplied with each complete purchase. This commentary was published in a booklet of twenty pages and contained instructions for pauses, changes of film, etc. The Horitz Passion was one of the most widely-shown films to appear in South Africa.

(iv) Many of these comic films which became so popular in South Africa from about 1900 onwards emanated from the United States where a "slapstick" tradition in production was early instituted and continued for many years. Others were produced in England and were of a rather bucolic type of humour. The following are typical examples :

"THE LADY BARBER - Per want of skill is atoned for by her dexterity as a surgeon. Her customer's face is finally covered by sticking plaster, yet he seems to thoroughly enjoy the innovation 75 feet (52)

"GAME OF NAP - This, the third of the "Old Sports" series, will appeal to all as one of the best humourous films published. A quiet social game for good stakes, each holds a splendid hand and bets accordingly, the game is played and ended. The Nap hand loses on the last trick being won by the deuce of trumps. The surprise, triumph and disgust in the faces of the players is a treat to witness. Every exhibitor will want this film." (53)

"THE VOKTUS' DINNER - reversing - Two farmers are seen at their dinner, stuffing spoonfuls of pudding into their mouths accompanied by all manner of grimaces and dumb talk (their mouths being too full to speak). At this stage, the film is printed showing reversed action. Instead of their shovelling food into their mouths, they apparently put the spoons up to their lips and drag therefrom heaps of pudding which they deposit on their plates. This looks more appetising than it sounds. Very funny. 75 feet(54)

The imaginative films purveyed by Méliés were of every kind, including the pantomimes and historical dramas previously mentioned. The popular themes which formed their basis did not however give Méliés enough scope and accordingly he made a large number of films emanating from his own imagination of the following type :

"THE DEVIL'S CASTLE - This picture shows a room in a mediaeval castle, carved stone pillars and vaulted ceiling. A huge bat flies around in circles. It is suddenly transformed into a Mephistopheles. He walks round, makes a magic pass and a large cauldron appears out of which, in a great cloud of smoke, a little old man comes out of the floor carrying a big book. Then the cauldron disappears. And so it goes on. Cavaliers, ghosts, a skeleton and witches appear and disappear at a sign from the Evil One. Finally one of the cavaliers produces a cross and Mephistopheles throws up his hands and disappears in a cloud of smoke. From start to finish, the action is rapid and the interest is sustained through the picture. The illusions are wonderfully clever. Three lengths." (55)

"THE X-RAY FIEND - A pair of lovers on a seat are approached by a professor with X-ray apparatus. He reveals their bones and, having satisfied his scientific curiosity, retreats as quietly as he came leaving the lovers to continue their spooning quite unconscious of the grotesque figures they have cut. Very funny." (56)

"CLOWN VERSUS SATAN'- This is one of those marvellous change films which are so difficult to describe. A clown tries to hang his coat on a chair which promptly vanishes and in its place is a bucket of water. Seizing a broom, he dips it into the water and proceeds to brush his coat which immediately catches fire and a soda water bottle comes in very useful. Feeling slightly disturbed in his mind over these occurrences, he sits down on a chair to think only to find that it has suddenly changed into a lighted lamp which makes things very warm for him. His Satanic Majesty appears and the clown tries to catch him but is only a very poor second and finally throws himself head first into a large water barrel where presumably his troubles are ended." (57)

References : CHAPTER III

(I) Page 8 - "From London to Ladysmith" - Winston Churchill

(2) Page 20 - "From London to Ladysmith" - Winston Churchill

(3) Page 480 - "With the Flag to Pretoria"

(4) Page I5 - "With the Naval Brigade in Natal" - C.R.N. Burne

(5) Page 26 - "With the Naval Brigade in Natal" - C.R.N. Burne

(6) Page 95 - "The Biograph in Battle" - W.K.L. Dickson

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(8) Page I25 - "The Biograph in Battle" - W.K.L. Dickson

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(I4) Letter of Joseph Mason to Glenn E. Matthews, Kodak Research Lab. copies in the Author's Possession

(I5) Original Correspondence - Robert Paul in the Author's Possession

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(I9) Warwick Trading Company's Catalogue - photograph in the Author's Possession

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(2I) Original Photograph in the Possession of Mr. Edgar Lyman

(22) Warwick Trading Company's Catalogue - photograph in the Author's Possession

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(24) Page 5 - "With the Naval Brigade in Natal" - C.R.N. Burne

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(37) Warwick Trading Company's Catalogue 1900-April 1901 (in the Science Museum, South Kensington, London)

(38) Natal Mercury - 15th November 1900

(39) Original letter - W. Hilton Perkin in the Author's Possession

(40) Western Province Herald - 1901

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(50) 7525 Supplement to Warwick Trading Company Catalogue April 1901

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CHAPTER IV

The Itinerant Exhibitors

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The immediate popular reaction to the end of the Boer War was one of exuberance. Even before the end of hostilities, orthodox entertainment had revived and the theatres in the larger towns began to hold a fairly regular succession of dramatic and musical companies By 1903 they included Mrs Lewis Waller, Katherine Pole, Sass-Nelson and de Jong-Mouillot musical companies, Annie Mayor (at one time, Leonard Rayne's leading lady) and dramatic company, the famous cellist Auguste van Biene, the well known entertainer Mel.B.Spurr, and others . Inevitably as the Imperial troops were withdrawn and the period of political reconstruction began, economic depression slowly supervened and public elation subsided. Liberal patronage of the theatre declined to the point of extinction and where in 1904, there had been Leonard Rayne's dramatic company, Wheeler-Edwardes Musical and Gaiety Companies, the Moody-Manners Opera Company, a Sass-Nelson Musical Company, the famous singer Madame Albani, and Ada Crossley, by 1907 organised entertainment had declined to such a degree that apart from the rare appearances of Leonard Rayne's, Alfred Wood's and Mrs Brown Potter's dramatic companies in the big towns, the circus was on the only form of entertainment other than the"bioscope" that was consistently maintained. For months at a time, there were no musical or dramatic performances even in the largest towns and the entertainment field was left free for "bioscope" exploitation.

The end of the war found moving pictures being actively exploited by several itinerant showmen - W. Wolfram (the quality of whose exhibitions was superior to the others), Rees and Meyer, W.H. Baker, H. Howard and several others who concealed their identity either under the name of a "company" or of an impressively-designated machine. This activity was concentrated in the north, notably Natal, and though several moving picture shows toured the Cape Province, this territory was not as profitable as Natal, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Un til 1909, Wolfram made Durban his headquarters.

It says much for his reputation that as far as the memory of the general public is concerned, the early South African cinema consisted only of Wolfram. Actually he was the pioneer of a consider-

able body of itinerant showmen, many of whose names also became "household words". Wolfram's however deserves to be remembered not fo his priority but for the superiority of his shows.(i)

Enthusiastically interested in moving pictures from the moment when he bought his first projector from the Warwick Trading Company, he gave his personal care and attention to his shows. (In the early days, Wolfram took the money at the door and when the house was full, himself operated the projector.) His personal interest and enthusiasm conjured out of the early machines the best exhibitions that were the possible and at a time when numerous amateurs and pedlars were attemp ing to exploit the "bioscope" on "get-rich-quick" principles, the public was quick to appreciate his efforts. In the hands of other exhibitors, Wolfram's programmes (many of which included lengthy documentary films) would have appeared tedious and uninteresting; but through excellent projection with the minimum of flicker on the best machine Charles Urban could give him, Wolfram induced an atmopphere which made people think they were seeing something superior and interesting as well as entertaining. In addition, he exercised scrupulous care in the choice of his programmes. Not only were they always the latest that could be provided through the weekly mail service but also - and Wolfram frequently emphasised the fact - they excluded the extremely coarse and vulggr films then current and popular. His selection was by no means prudish, comic films abounding in all his shows; but throughout his career, Wolfram cherished an affection for "educational" films which he always made a point of showing.(ii)

(i) Although "Wolfram's Bioscope" became a South African institution, curiously little is known about Wolfram himself. His previous profession, what determined his interest in moving pictures and how he came to show them in South Africa in 1900 are facts which it has proved impossible reliably to trace. Of German origin, it is thought that Wolfram came to South Africa to find employment in the mining industry. Once interested in the "bioscope" however moving pictures became a ruling passion with him and, continuing unmarried all his life, he never ceased to devote scrupulous attention to them. (His contemporaries are able to contribute ver little light on Wolfram's character beyond that he was a very honourable man, that he was very attached to small children and that he was what is known as a "one-match" smoker, that is, he li his first cigarette with one match in the morning and continued throughout the day lighting others from finished butts.)

(ii) Technical proficiency was Wolfram's first care and he maintained it with such success that his "Bioscope" soon achieved an entirely individual reputation for reliabaility. For long periods, it was necessary for other itinerant exhibitors to advertise :

FREE FROM FLICKER
Rock Steady
PRACTICALLY NOISELESS
Perfect Definition
eliminating all Hazy and Blurred Effects
NEW PICTURES

whereas Wolfram had only to advertise "Wolfram's Bioscope on such and such a night" to be assured of sizeable houses. It was not unusual for people to be turned away at the doors and for crowds to congregate in the streets of the bigger towns.

It was also unnecessary for Wolfram to follow current advertising procedure and announce "New Pictures". His films were always new and the sole concession he made to current practice was the occasional quoting of eulogistic newspaper reports or the rare insertion of the following two-line advertisement in close print :

"Wolfram's Bioscope is the only concern in South Africa receiving the World's Latest Productions in Animated Photography by every mail".

Similarly it was needless for him to advertise his performanc as "Refined". Films of the period were sometimes of incredible vulgarity and suggestiveness. Advertisements of "French Films" and "Continental Novelties" were frequent and indicated either George Melies' fascinating illusions with "dissolving views" and other trick photography (they were sometimes a little risqué) or near-pornographic pictures which attracted the gallery public then constituting the cinema's largest audience. British production, though frequently of crude and earthy humour, never deteriorated to the extent of French and American. The "slapstick" of early American production was not restricted to the custard-pie-throwin type but frequently inclined to feminine disrobing and surprise embarrassments which ladies in the early audiences found far from amusing but in which the gallery delighted. In other than Wolfram's hands, moving pictures began to earn an unsavoury reputation which considerably retarded their universal popularity He, on the other hand, excluded all vulgar and suggestive films from his programmes while maintaining the maximum amount of "comics" of which he sometimes gave complete and highly popular programmes. The integrity of his performances was one of his main concerns and he specifically asked newspapers to state that "Mr Wolfram desires us to particularly mention that he does not accept any picture from his London agents that contains vulgarities or horrors or is in any way objectionable to any portion of a mixed audience".(I)

Wolfram devoted himself not only to the mechanical proficiency and "tone" of his performances but also very specifically to the programmes. Exhibitors of the time were assured of audiences with a programme consisting of "comics", "French" films and a few topicals. Wolfram, believing in the future of the cinema as a civilised entertainment, flattered his audiences by the invariable inclusion of "educational" as well as entertainmen films. The following, which was shown towards the end of 1903, was typical of his programmes :

New Sensational Novelties just received by Mail Boat
A New Spectacular Play entitled
WONDERS OF THE DEEP
or
The Kingdom of the Fairies
79 Artistes of the principal Parisian Theatres take part in this stupendous performance !!
Scene of the play : The Universe
Tableaux
The Betrothal of Prince Bel-Azor
The Gifts of the Fairies
The Curse of the Jilted Damsel
The Boudoir of Princess Azmine
Abduction of the Princess by the Demons (the Chariot of Fire)
The Top of the Tower - the Castle in Alarm
Flight through the Skies in the Chariot of Fire
The Armoury of the Castle
The Vision in the Haunted Chamber
The Genius bestows on the Prince the Armour
The Impenetrable Armour - the Prince knighted

Embarkation in the Royal Galley
Encountering a Tempest at Sea (New Effects - Thunder and Lightning and Torrents of Rain - the Horizon overcast by angry Clouds - the Heaving Sea, Mountainous Waves and Rain produced by Real Water)
The Ship wrecked on the Rocks
Sinking to the Ocean Bed (Real Fishes and Sea Monsters)
The Prince rescued by the Mermaid Queen
The Submarine Caves - Encounter with a Cuttle Fish
Review of the Habitues of the Deep - Father Neptune's Car
The Palace of the Lobsters
The Azure Grotto - the Flowers of the Sea
In Neptune's Empire (Great Submarine Spectacle)
The Whale - "The Omnibus of the Deep"
The Land once more - the entrance to the cave
The Cavern of the Spirits - Encounter with Prehistoric Monsters and a Gigantic Boa
Sleep overcomes the Luckless Voyagers - the Mountain Torrent and Falls (real water with dissolving effects)
The "Palace of Boots" - Dance of the Boots
Escape from the cavern - on the Edge of the Precipice
The Plunge of a Hundred Yards
The Castle of the Devil - the Witch in League
The Castle of Fire - Rescue of the Princess (new magnificent Fire effects and Sensational Change of scene in full view)
The Death of the Witch (enclosed in a cask and cast from the Cliffs into the sea)
The Terrors of the Gulf
The Palace of the King - the Wedding Procession
The Queen of the Air in her Domain
Apotheosis - The Kingdom of the Fairies

The duration of this exhibit is about Twenty Minutes. A continuance of Marvellous Surprises, Startling Visions, Full of Humour, Action and Quick Changes. Wonderful Dissolving Views. Introduction of New Fire, Element and Cyclonic Effects.
Gorgeous Scenes and Costumes

ANIMATED MICRO-ORGANISM
photographed by the latest scientific invention
The Micro-Bioscope

For the first time in history will an audience be able to view minute creastures, scarcely visible to the naked eye, in all their movements, appearing the sizeof crabs.

Natural History Subject
THE BUSY BEE

A magnificent series of 15 pictures depicting every phase of Bee culture.

The Toad's Luncheon
etc etc

"Wonders of the Deep" was ofcourse a Georges Melies film of which there were many at this time and which Wolfram always fulsomely advertised owing to their extraordinary popularity. Microcinematography was sponsored by Charles Urban as early as 1898 (its foremost producer was the famous Percy Smith who died in 1945 after a lifetime inconspicuously devoted to filming instructional films of rare quality) and the particular film shown by Wolfram in this programme "reproduced a section of ripe Stilton cheese magnified many diameters and the micro-organisms which, as said the advertisement "were the size of crabs", could be seen wandering at large on the cheese." (A deputation of cheese-producers waited on Charles Urban in London with a request that the film be withdrawn from circulation as it adversely affected their sales.) "The Busy Bee" was another of the remarkable documentaries which Charles Urban sedulously popularised at this time and was one of a series which, taken in coöperation with the Regent's Park Zoo, were shown all over the world.

Generally speaking, Wolfram's early programmes consisted of topical films, Georges Melies' fantasies, comics and some of Charles Urban's extraordinary advances in cinematography such as close-up studies of bees, flies, ants, etc as well as comprehensive scenic films. Later, when trick films began to pall, Wolfram concentrated on the lengthy documentary films for which Urban sent his cameramen all over the world. They portrayed a great number of subjects - from English herrings fleets to the wilds of Borneo, from complete film descriptions of Canada, Australia and other countries to the detailed manufacture of a newspaper. Perhaps the most popular was George Sims' "Living London" in whose production the author collaborated (his portrait concluded the film).(i)

Wolfram was "featuring" documentary films long before the feature film itself was conceived. When the first crude fiction films appeared, he continued to keep the "educational" documentary at the head of his programme leaving the "made-up" film somewhere near the end as an amusing novelty. In time, the dramatic film ousted all others but Wolfram never lost his affection for edifying cinema entertainment. During the ten years his "Bioscope" toured the Union, the Press did not fail to recognise and acclaim his efforts.(ii)

(i) Produced by the Warwick Trading Company and first shown in South Africa in 1906, it was a detailed documentation of London scenes and activities and for months (almost years, owing to "revivals"), could attract audiences on its own account. Apart from its "box-office" appeal, it was Wolfram's particular and personal favourite

(ii) "The bioscopic entertainment given by Mr Wolfram in the Wanderers Hall (Johannesburg) last evening proved a great success. At each succeeding visit to Johannesburg, this popular entertainer brings with him such excellent varieties and pictures as cannot fail to appeal to the public taste and enhance his reputation....The publi should not miss the opportunity of seeing the entertainment."(2)
"No better evidence of the popularity of Mr Wolfram's bioscope entertainment could be desired than the attendance at the Town Hal (Durban) last evening. Long before the entertainment was advertised to commence, all seating accommodation was monopolised and there were crowds round the doors....."(3)
"The average patron of the bioscope has got to that stage now when considerable competition in the business has made him discriminating; and it is probably because Mr Wolfram is indisputed leader in the field which he created locally (Natal) that he can attract such crowded houses."(4)
At the most disreputable time in its history, Wolfram succeeded in making a decent entertainment out of moving pictures, thereby gaining for them a widely-diverse audience where otherwise only the lower elements of South African society would have constituted early audiences. In this respect, he contributed very substantially to the development of the cinema in South Africa.

When the Biograph went into liquidation towards the end of I902, Wolfram's prineipal competitor was W. Rees who toured a "bioscope" with consistency and thoroughness throughout Natal, sometimes travelling to the southernmost Cape and sometimes to the Transvaal.(i) "Rees's Bioscope" soon attained a reputation almost equal to Wolfram's and had special success in Natal where its proprietor became a popular personality with an ever-increasing public. From I902 until the end of I908, Rees and Wolfram all but monopolised the showing of moving pictures in Natal.(ii) Towards the end of I907 and well into I908, they gave bioscope shows in conjunction, the season being prefaced by an elaborate advertisement.(iii) Insofar

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(i) On one adventurous expedition, Rees toured through Portuguese East Africa and Mashonaland, intending later to go to Uganda.

(ii) A statistical survey of available recorded instances shows that of the moving pictures shows given at the Durban Town Hall, Rees and Wolfram gave the following percents : I902 - 60%;I903 -66%; I904 - 7I%; I905 - 94%; I906 - 65%; I907 - 59%; I908 - 68%.

(iii) "
Durban Town Hall
REES AND WOLFRAM'S BIOSCOPE COMBINED
The Established and Reliable

In consequence of uncalled-for remarks made a few days ago by a new cinematograph firm (Hartley ?)
REES AND WOLFRAM
wish to state that the bioscopes used by them are in use in Twenty Six Theatres controlled by the Moss-Stoll Syndicate (the largest theatrical syndicate in the world); and after exhaustive tests with other machines, were chosen above all other bioscopes as the
Most Efficient, Flickerless and Up-to-Date Machine
on the market and is at present installed in the
Alhambra, London

REES AND WOLFRAM'S
bioscope experience of seven years causes them to use
Only the Best Machines

REES AND WOLFRAM'S
Picture Subjects are Educational, Instructive, Elevating and Amusing. They have long ago eliminated all French "Fakism" relating to religious subjects.

REES AND WOLFRAM
is the only firm in Africa
that exhibits
on every occasion
a Full Mile
of Bioscope Pictures - 5,280 feet and over (not 3,I33 feet)

REES AND WOLFRAM
do not have long waits or apologies (to save pictures)
Our Films embrace all subjects on the face of the Earth

REES AND WOLFRAM
open at the Toan Hall
on Friday and Saturday - I5th and I6th November I907 "

The current abuses of film exhibition are ventilated in this advertisement. The reference to "French "Fakism' relating to religious subjects" is dealt with further on in this text.

as the dissemination of the cinema throughout South Africa is concerned, Rees ranks with Wolfram as one of its most thorough and enthusiastic agents. Like Wolfram too, he later set up one of the first permanent cinemas; but, confining his activities to Natal in general and ultimately Durban in particular, his name was never so widely known.

Another of the early itinerant exhibitors was H. Howard, a Natalian who first began showing moving pictures in 1902. He confined himself to no particular territory but toured the whole country thoroughly until 1904 when he abandonned his bioscope business in spectacular manner,(i) Another Natalian successfully to tour moving pictures throughout South Africa was W.H. Baker who, with Wolfram, was one of the pioneers of the cinema during the Boer War. His "Imperial Motor Pictoroscope" became well known over a wide area and later his "Empire" or "Imperial Bioscope" made erratic appearances, the last being in 1907. Other well known names were H.D. Roberts, "Granier's French Bioscope" (Granier was later concerned with one of Durban's first permanent cinemas), "Raleigh's Bioscope", Dagnall (operating mostly in the Free State) and Hartley.(ii)

(i) On the 28th April 1904, in a half-column advertisement in the Natal Mercury, Howard announced that he would give three bioscope performances in the Durban Town Hall at the conclusion of which he would give the whole going concern valued at £400 to the person who correctly guessed the attendance for the three nights. According to Howard, his bioscope was known from Cape Town to Beira and earned £100 a month. His reason for thus disposing of it was that "his property in Natal required the whole of his attention". Prior to the first performance, Howard made

A Further Magnificent Offer
A Special Gift to Clergymen

Should a clergyman or minister of any denomination be the fortunate winner of the Bioscope, Mr Howard will also present him with the famous Horitz

Passion Play

the films of which are 2,400 feet long and cost over £50

Despite this spectacular publicity, the combined attendance amounted only to 572, two men correctly guessing the number (they were probably able to count it). They gave Howard a receipt and settled the matter between themselves afterwards. Thereafter Howard disappeared from among the itinerant showmen but in 1922 re-entered the cinema field, to leave it with equal aplomb.

(ii) In 1909, Hartley had a passage at arms with Wolfram in Cape Town through simultaneously showing the same Passion Play. Much commercial rivalry in this period was vented in the amusement advertisement columns of daily newspapers and there seems to have been serious friction between the itinerant showmen when their paths crossed which occurred with increasing frequency.

Apart from these itinerant showmen who toured moving pictures throughout South Africa from 1902 till 1907, there were several others whose identity was concealed beneath the name of a "company". Such were the "Royal Vi-Scenery Co.", the "Royaliste Biograph Co.", the "American Kinetoscope Advertising Co.", the "Marconi Bioscope Co.", the "Scottish Electric Bioscope", the "London Bioscope Co.", the "Royal Bioscope Co.", the "American Bioscope Co.", the "Olympic Bioscope Co." which showed films of the Olympic Games, the "S.A. Bioscope Co." which was organised to exploit films of the Springbok Rugby Football Team playing in England in 1906. There was also the "London Bioscope Co." which attempted to support an abortive renaissance of skating at the Feather Market, Dock Road, Cape Town and a week or two later, became the "Elite Bioscope Co." for the purpose of showing Springbok Football films. "Willane's Animatograph" made one or two insignificant appearances in Cape Town's suburbs in 1903. The most extraordinary of these enterprises was "Singing and Living Pictures" which was scheduled to open at the Good Hope Hall, Cape Town on the 21st May 1906. The machine was an ingenious electrical contrivance of cinematograph and gramaphone but "owing to the failure of the electric current", the opening night had "to be deferred". Subsequently the apparatus attracted good audiences as it appeared to have deserved, the synchronisation at times being quite remarkable.(1) In December of 1907, a similar venture called the "Biophone" gave a few performances at the Standard Theatre in Johannesburg. Unlike the itinerant showmen who made their living in the country, these enterprises came and went, either finding the territory unprofitable or, having "done" it, moving on to more remunerative fields such as Australia or India.

Over and above these appearances, moving pictures were also shown by Fillis's Circus whose bioscope operator J.T. Blake was also a cameraman and took many "local views", notably of the audience entering the big tent which they were expected to come to see at another performance; various second-rate vaudeville companies; one or two magicians and conjurors such as "Professor Wilmo's Living Pictures" and Wellesley

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(1) The highlight of the performance was Harry Lauder singing "Stop your tickling, Jock !" with extremely exaggerated gestures.

Lynn both of whom appeared in I905; the famous comedian R.D.Knowles who also in I905 used films to illustrate hypothetical travels including his voyage to the Cape which he humourously commentated in his one-man show; and the famous war-correspondent and journalist A.G. Hales who made a lecture-tour throughout the country in I904 speaking on the Russo-Japanese War and the Macedonian Disorders assisted by "Original Bioscopic Pictures taken specially at the Front for these Lectures" which were very successful. The cinema also found a semi-permanent home in the Beach Hotel at Durban where, from I904 onwards, efforts were made to provide some kind of entertainment for an amusement-starved town. A variety programme of one or two undistinguished artistes was provided nightly to which was added the "Casino Bioscope" showing out-of-date films. A "Bioscope" also figured in the Cape Gala held in the Government Avenue in Cape Town in I907.

The most singular appearance of moving pictures occurred in February I906 in Cape Town when Messrs Cleghorn and Harris projected films on to the white-washed wall of their Plein Street emporium (1)

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(1) This extraordinary example of commercial initiative has remained in memory. It was advertised as follows :

The
World-Famed
BIOGRAPH
will be operating
Tomorrow Night
at
CLEGHORN
and
HARRIS
Plein Street

showing a unique series of up-t-date Animated Photographs,Humorou Sensational and Historical Pictures of interest to young and old

During the evening we shall at various intervals make a series of offers upon the Biograph screen that will prove to be unprecedented in the history of this or any other store's Bargain Giving, and lucky will be the folk who are present to read our offers when they appear on the screen and are able to accept them

It is Our Wish

to bring our stores and their unequalled values into even greater prominence than they have enjoyed in the past and

To Attain This,

to introduce our goods, we intend to offer picked lots from our great stocks of Boots and Shoes at such prices that profit becomes out of the question and the evening's trading devolves in

A Huge Advertisement
THE BIOGRAPH
Free Show
Tomorrow Night
at
Cleghorn
and
Harris Ltd
Plein Street

Huge crowds, consisting mostly of coloured people, assembled.

The transitory nature of moving pictures in South Africa durin this period was compensated by the fact that both the two premier music-halls, immediate on their opening, installed the "bioscope" as permanent item on their vaudeville programmes. The Empire in Johannesburg restored its Bioscope on the 7th March I903 and when the Tivoli opened in Cape Town on the IIth September I903, it installed the "Tivolioscope" which, in later years, was to assist vaudeville programmes in providing the only entertainment in Cape Town.

Although between I902 and I907, moving pictures were being actively exploited throughout South Africa and particularly in Natal, there remained long intervals between "Bioscope Displays". In Natal, the exhibition of moving pictures steadily increased but at the Cape it was most erratic. In I902, only one "Bioscope" seems to have visited Cape Town itself; in I903, only three indifferent shows; in I904, two exhibitions by Hales, one by the Photographic Society and "Willanes's Animatograph" in the suburbs; in I905, four or five very insignificant exhibitions of which H?D. Roberts was the first and onl itinerant showman; in I906, a few travelling shows including Wolfram twice; and in I907 (the height of the depression), only two exhibitions, one of the football matches and the other at the Cape Gala.Only in I908 did moving picture exhibitions appear with any frequency in Cape Town. The proportion was not very much higher in Johannesburg but itinerant showmen included the town on their tours some considerable time (about I904) before Cape Town.

On the other hand, the cinema was gradually but surely being disseminated through the country itself. If itinerant showmen avoided the ~~fixxt~~ big towns at first, it was largely because they were fully occupied in the small dorps where the manifest imperfections of their shows would be less unfavourably received and where moving pictures were still welcomed with awed surprise. They were at this time consonant with "professors of medicine", pedlars of patent appliances travelling fairs and other rural itinerants which appeared overnight presaged sometimes by handbills, stayed for a day or two and then disappeared. Only the faintly "magical" air of these exhibitions of animated photographs in the country permitted their continuance. They were given under the most deplorable conditions without any regard whatever to the genuine possibilities of moving pictures as entertainment. Many of their promoters "welshed" when a sufficiently profitabl

audience had gathered and others, using moving pictures as a"side-line" and having no qualification whatever for the occupation, put on performances which infuriated the most bucolic public.(1)

Electricity was completely unknown even in the largest dorps. Consequently most showmen carried a portable gas apparatus which fraught the process of projection not only with precariousness but with danger. Mounted on a pile of boxes, a stepladder or anything else convenient in the middle of a hall, garage or store, the projector was waveringly focussed on to a sheet stretched against the opposite wall. Scattered around it was the paraphernalia of the lighting apparatus which emitted a smell of potassium chlorate and dioxide of manganese and, very often, small explosions and flashes of flame which, in scaring the audience, also enhanced the marvel of the exhibition. As soon as the show began (in pitch-darkness broken only by the erratic performance of the gas lamp), the chaos surrounding the projector was increased by a tangled mass of film which poured out of the machine or wound itself in close proximity to the naked light. The feeble notes of a piano or the almost inaudible noise of an arly gramaphone failed to conceal the whirr and rattle of the projector or the sputters of the gas light.

The films - when they appeared consecutively on the screen - were mostly of a topical nature with a leavening of extremely crude

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(1) The type of "pedlar's" performance put on in the country at this time is described in the following personal reminiscence (5) : About 1903, there appeared in the dorps of the Free State and elsewhere an ox-wagon containing three people - a tall thin Englishman with dark hair and piercing blue eyes, his wife who was suffering from lung disease (which accounted for the modus vivendi of the family) and their daughter, a little girl of about seven years. The family travelled from dorp to dorp earning a meagre livelihood selling cheap jewellry, needles and cottons, and other small articles attractive of farmers' wives. Technically the Englishman might have been termed a "smous" and relegated to the category of charlatans and pedlars who regularly toured the dorps, were it not for the fact that he also gave moving picture shows wherever there was a hall available.

At such places, the wagon was outspanned, a nativex was hired and, equipped with sandwich-boards and a bell, was sent through the dorp advertising the show. Sometimes "dodgers" or hand-bills were printed and distributed; and sometimes the small children who came to stare at the strangers were induced to sell tickets, small prizes such as twisted wire bangles with imitation bone pigs attached, being given to the seller of the largest number. Almost invariably, practically the whole population attended the show - it was the only kind of "sensation" that ever came their way and they were accordingly compatatively indifferent to its inferior quality.

(This type of "non-professional" pedlar was however more rare than the "professionals" who regarded country audiences as legitimate game for making money through moving picture exhibitions of the worst standard.)

"slap-stick" comics and the early beginnings of melodrama in which the actors, preoccupied with the idea that they were performing in moving pictures of a few moments' duration, conducted their parts with unusual energy and rapidity. A pronounced flicker persisted and the films were generally marked with blurs, blemishes, thick black scratches and a general fuzziness to which jerkiness was an invariable concomitant. The early films cost anything from a halfpenny to six pence a foot and those shown by itinerant showmen in the dorps were most often second-hand, breakages being frequent.(i) Delays in the performance were inevitable, either through the film breaking, the lighting apparatus failing to function or some other of multifarious causes. Few showmen could afford a "Concert Phonograph" and accordingly themselves filled the gaps by singing or by playing guitars, combs mouth organs or other modest instruments.(ii)

The isolation of country villages and the complete absence of any other form of amusement (hundreds of dorps were too small to sustain a visit from the circus) together with their inherent fascination combined to maintain the popularity of moving pictures. In addition, country audiences were notoriously ingenuous and, taking long to become habituated to pictures that moved, were easily entertained by the many "sensations" that were possible upon them such as oncoming locomotives apparently on the point of rushing through the screen to crush the screaming audience, galloping horses and ofcourse the numerous tricks (such as reversing the film) practiced by early

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(i) Early country audiences were distinguished by considerable patience and though they frequently manifested displeasure by shouting ribald remarks, by stamping, ironic clapping and sometimes even assault and battery when the show was a total failure, they were prepared good-humouredly to endure long waits between the showing of each "animated photograph".
Certain showmen objected to some of their own films on the grounds of boredom. One of these was "The Invasion of England", a documentary dealing with military manoeuvres and a mock battle. Wearied by the frequent showing of this rather undramatic subject, operators cranked the handles of their projectors as fast as they could and, if the film failed to break, the audience watched a dizzying mass of khaki-clad figures tearing frenziedly about the screen.

(ii) One of the earliest itinerant exhibitors, B. Hawkins who later became Wolfram's operator at his first permanent cinema in Cape Town, used to sing ten songs a night when touring the smallest Cape dorps such as Zuurbraak and de Rust. Under then circumstance many showmen found some of these dorps "not financially comfortable".

producers.(i)

Apart from the more proficient showmen such as Wolfram, Rees, Howard, etc, there appears to have been a considerable number who toured the country dorps from between I902 and I907 onwards. One of these was H.N. Stewart who first showed moving pictures in Scotland in I900, then toured England and in June I902, sailed for South Africa on the "Kildonan Castle", animating the voyage by giving a Bioscope Show" at sea of which he still possesses a programme. He toured his bioscope from Livingstone and the Victoria Falls to Port Elizabeth by ox wagon. Another was H.V. Barnes whose "Imperial Chrono King of Bioscopes" became quite well known in the larger towns as well from I906 onwards.(ii)

The fact that during this period, moving pictures steadily increased in popularity until by I908, "movie-madness" was alleged to have struck the country, is due not so much the economic conditions and the absence of other forms of entertainment as to the perpetual novelty which they purveyed. These were the formative

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(i) It is stated that strong men leapt in fear from their seats when they saw the famous Black Diamond Express coming straight at them from the screen. In I903, Wolfram actually advertised(6)

A DARING DAYLIGHT ROBBERY
Exciting Chase and Capture by the Police
Note : This picture is so realistic that the Chief of the Police in a country town so far forgot himself as to jump from his seat to capture the burglars.
(The "country town" was Uitenhage and so much was thought of the event that it achieved considerable prominence in the newscolumn of the daily papers as well.)

(ii) H.V. Barnes preserved a collection of "dodgers" of which the following is an example :

Recreation Hall
Jumpers Deep
Thursday May 28th I908
at 8.I5 p.m.

Return Visit of the
"CHRONO" KING OF BIOSCOPES
with a magnificent display of Animated Pictures
Special Engagement of Mr Harold Chapman, the Celebrated Whistle in his Unique Whistling Songs and Solos.
Entire Change of Pictures which include
Fountains at Versailles - a magnificent spectacle
Baffled Burglar - a side-splitter
Whaling in North Atlantic - a picture that should be seen by on
His First Silk Hat - can you smile ? you will at this & all
Cross Country Chase - typical English scenes
Children's Match - one for the kids
Diabolo - the latest craze
A Broken Idyll - don't miss this
Parade of Horse Guards - grand military spectacle
Too Much Scotch - illusions
Angler's Dream - more illusions
Another Good Laugh - A Substantial Ghost
When the Devil Drives - phenomenal train journey over and under
Etc etc the sea, over bridges and clouds

years of film production - years during which the documentary and(1) topical film developed to the then utmost, and the dramatic film was first introduced and rapidly developed. Moving pictures had been showing for seven years before the production of dramatic films was seriously undertaken; but by 1907, they were firmly entrenched in all moving picture shows. By then too, moving pictures had passed through so many phases, each of which contributed in some part to the permanent institution of the cinema, that fully to understand their growing hold on the South African public, it is necessary to detail each of them.

By the year 1903, it is possible to distinguish the various types of film and also those most popular and most frequently shown. From then until 1908, the only type that retained unaltered popularity was the topical film while the balance of programmes had shifted from "trick" and comic films to dramatic. Thus in 1903, the outstanding typical films were :

Topical : Jeffries versus Fitzsimmons Fight
The Great Motor Derby (Dieppe)
King Edward's Coronation (Meliés' Fake - see Page 79 (1))
Other Royal Family Films
The Delhi Durbar

Humorous : "The Workman's Paradise"

Dramatic : The Horitz Passion Play
Many pantomimes and "spectacles" of French origin

Documentary : "Logging in Canada" and many scenics

Trick : "A Trip to the Moon"

At this time, the topical and comic films were the principal attraction in programmes. The "comics" were simple in conception, "The Workman's Paradise" being a trick film taken at very slow speed so that when projected, workmen laying bricks appeared almost magically to construct a wall. The sensation of the year was the Horitz Passion Play which received a very mixed reception but which was very widely shown nonetheless. It was first shown in 1902 and

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(1) Producers of the actuality film, and particularly Charles Urban who sent his cameramen all over the world, displayed astonishing enterprise. The Warwick Trading Company's cameramen travelled in every continent, sometimes in only partially-explored regions, and Joseph Rosenthal "covered" the Russo-Japanese war including the filming of Russian troops on frozen Lake Baikal.

continued to be shown throughout 1903.(1)

The following reflects how in 1904, the dramatic film was already beginning to assert prominence in programmes :

Topical : The Russo-Japanese War
The Great Fire at Toronto
The Flying Machine at Earl's Court
Hackenschmidt versus Jenkins

Humorous : Many comic shorts
"A Tramp's Surprise"
"The Dear Boys home for their Holidays"
"Starting on a holiday"

Dramatic : "East Lynne"
"Marie Antoinette"
"The Great Train Robbery"
"Driven from Home"

Documentary : Many scenic and travel films
"An Expedition into the Wilds of Borneo"

Trisk : Many Sensational Shorts
"Butterfly's Metamorphosis"

Full documented by many cameramen, there were many films of the Russo

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(1) Differences in Press reaction are reflected by the following two reviews of the Horitz Passion Play presented by Howard's Bioscope
"....There was given an impressive exhibition of the Horitz Passion Play, a similar edition of which has drawn so many thousands of pilgrims to Oberammergau. The privilege of witnessing the powerful tragic scenes in the life of Christ was welcomed by large number of local (Durban) people, the Town Hall being filled and it will no doubt be again filled this evening. The most noteworthy parts of the great religious play were reproduced with realistic effect, the whole of the movements of the three hundred people who take part could be plainly followed and the scenes impressed everyone. The representation called "The Sign of the Cross" and "Quo Vadis" but it was infinitely more tragic. We might add that as the entertainment is shorter than usual, a few pictures in lighter vein might be added at the close."(7)
"Saturday evening's entertainment at Scott's Theatre (Maritzburg) was patronised by a very fair house but its nature is amply evidenced by the fact that numbers of the audience trickled out and departed in couples and threes throughout the show. The King and Queen at Devonport and a brace of Princesses at a dog show were the only scenes worth mentioning in the entire repertoire. A "fake" Coronation picture was certainly laughable and the remainder of the evening was given up to the presentation of what a smart contemporary calls "a history of the Christian religion condensed into a column". Adam and Eve in Eden open the ball but the characteristics of their estate prior to the Fall seem to have been tights and brief skirts. No less than a couple of demons of the pantomime species were thrown in and the serpent poked his head out of a hole and waggled it consciously. Moses in the bullrushes was another feature of the show and the bulrushes, we readily concede, were admirable. Moses wasn't, though. Manna falling in the wilderness took the form apparently of biscuits. The enunciation was tragic and idiotic and the angel was singularly unprepossessing. The adoration of the Magi followed and then came the Flight into Egypt on an excellent ass that quite threw himself into the spirit of the thing. The life of Christ was then voluminously pictured in a style only capable of description as fatuous blasphemy. The whole thing produced the impression one feels on hearing a child curse - it dared and failed. But anything more miserable or ponderous than the show as a whole, we find it impossible to conceive."(8)

Japanese War showing close-ups of the commanders, scenes of the guns firing, forts being bombarded, the surrender of Russian generals, etc They made a great impression on their audiences and the potentialities of moving pictures as a living newspaper were again emphasised. Though the "made-up" comics continued to be the biggest draw ("The Dear Boys home for their Holidays" was the precursor of the modern "Our Gang" series) and French "illusion" films continued in popularity though now somewhat less frequent, novelty was introduced by the first few tentative dramatic films which were of great crudeness and did not at first make much impression. The earliest were very short, high-speed dramatisations such as "East Lynne" and "Marie Antoinette"(in which audiences were horrified to see the heroine's head cut off).(i) Wolfram began to show dramatic films with increasing frequency though his audiences were at first somewhat taken aback at their novelty. They made their greatest appeal to the gallery which was not slow to identify itself with the fortunes of the hero or heroine, as the case might be.(ii) Vocal expressions of such sympathy were almost continuous during the showing of these silent films and, while contributing to the enjoyment of one section of the audience, undoubtedly deterred other members of the public from attending moving picture shows.

(i) The American production "The Great Train Robbery" which is generally maintained to be the first dramatic film, was shown at the Empire in Johannesburg and by Wolfram with great success. It ran for ten minutes, was full of jerky action and revolved round a well-constructed story. Its "realism" was its most impressive feature.

(ii) Typical of the earliest dramatic films is the following (as advertised) which Wolfram showed about the middle of 1904 :

DRIVEN FROM HOME

This picture will touch the heart of everyone and bring tears to many eyes. A girl marries against her father's wish. The scene changes to five years after. The husband is lying on his death-bed with the doctor in attendance in a poorly-furnished room. The young wife is crying. The scene changes. The bed is empty. The heart-broken mother is being consoled by her little daughter. Everything is sold and pawned. The little girl takes up her doll and leaves the room. Next she is seen entering the pawnbroker's, placing her doll on the counter. Parting from her darling makes the child cry. The shop assistant draws the attention of his master to the child and her doll. Gazing at her face, the master is struck with the likeness of the features of the child to his own lost daughter. Asking the child's name, he places the doll in her arms and leaves with her, entering the dwelling as the broker are about to remove the last poor sticks. Mutual recognition. Finale. Unspeakably pathetic.

By 1905, "drama" os this kind had become an integral part of all moving picture shows.

During 1905, the emphasis swung steadily towards dramatic films

Topical : Russo-Japanese War
Races, Steeplechases, etc

Humorous : a great number of slapstick comics and French "illusions"

Dramatic : "Ora Pro Nobis"
"Rescued by Rover"
"Samson and Delilah"
Pantomimes of French origin

Documentary : "A Day at the Zoo"
"Deer Hunting"
Many Scenics

Trick : "Barnum's Trunk"

The essential nature of moving pictures continued steadily to swerve away from the actuality to the "made-up" film - either "comic", "illusion" or dramatic. Melodrama of a very crude order became a sine qua non of programmes (1) and films "with very strong plots" came with increasing profusion. They were dominated by the idea of sensation. From their inception, moving pictures had always been a source of sensation (amazement, horror, amusement, etc) and the early producers

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(1) The following pre-performance account is typical of the development of dramatic films in moving pictures programmes :
"Mr Rees received by this mail several new pictures of a highly sensational order which he is showing tonight. "Revenge", "an animated novel in a nutshell", possesses a very strong plot. The scene opens in the house of a supposed lunatic who has been imprisoned in a lunatics' asylum from which he escapes and arrives back at his home and finds present the asylum master who is carrying on an intrigue with his wife. By this time, his escape has been discovered and the warders arrive and take him back to confinement. The second scene is where he makes another dash for liberty. He ties the bedclothes together, fastens them inside the room and quickly slides down to the ground. In scene three, he makes for his home and carries off his little daughter. He is now closely pursued by the warders who fire at him; one bullet hits the child who drops lifeless to the ground. The father snatches a rifle from one of the men and aims at the asylum master. The wife now appears on the scene and falls a victim to her husband's shot. He is now too horrified and grief-stricken to resist capture. In scene four, he again escapes and a wild chase across country, precipice, etc ensues. The prisoner comes out best in the race for life but returns to the asylum to settle with the master. Scene six finishes amid great excitement and retribution for the asylum master. This picture is followed by "Mr and Mrs O'Toole's Visit to the Seaside" which, we are told, is only one laugh but that laugh lasts a long time and comes as a happy release to the above tragedy. "Raid on a Coiner's Den" is another film of a sensational order."(9)

searching for novelty to sustain the market, sought only to exploit this quality. Their last consideration was that audiences might be genuinely interested in the unravelling of a dramatic plot or the contemplation of good acting. Their sole object was to titillate the public's feelings - to "make their blood run cold", or "their hair stand on end", or "their hearts skip a beat" or, most desirable, to make them weep.(i) American production in particulaf concentrated on heavily moral melodramas and sensational tales of crime and violence. In Britain, production centred rather on more touching themes such a. "Rescued by Rover" and "Dumb Sagacity".(ii) As it became evident tha' such sensational "dramatic" films were becoming an indispensable part of moving picture programmes, audiences began to welcome them and to "follow their unfoldment with close interest". Trick films had begun to pall and though they continued to be shown, the attention of the South African public had successfully been diverted to crude cinema drama.

The actual events of 1906 contributed towards re-installing the popularity of the topical film. Its documentation of several occasion

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(i) One of the most popular films of 1905 and onwards was "A Prodigal Son" which was produced in many different versions, always attain ing commendation through its satisfying moral tone. It was currently described as "an excellent picture. It represents a young man who commences betting and loses heavily on a big race. He gets a loan of money from a "sport" and as he is unable to repay the borrowed money, he is forced to rob his father's safe i order to meet his debts of honour. He goes off to the goldfields where he is seen busy at work and has a lucky find. He is congrat ulated by his work-mates. He then thinks of his father whom he robbed and resolves to return home. In arriving at his old home, he finds it has been sold. He searches for his father whom he find begging in the street. The prodigal son takes his father to a hom where he lives comfortably ever after."

(ii) Both these films were made by Cecil Hepworth and copies have bee preserved in the British Film Institute. They were produced in 1905 and were shown in South Africa in that year and in 1906. Bot were played, produced and filmed by the Hepworth family in their home with the assistance of their pets, a horse and a dog. "Rescued by Rover" told the tale of the dog's rescue of the Hepworth baby and "Dumb Sagacity" (or "Black Beauty" as it was more frequently called in South Africa) dealt with a more complicated story which is later described in this text.

of international importance raised it in public esteem and once again contributed towards popularising moving pictures. Examples, as well as those of other types of films shown in 1906, are as follows :

Topical : The Russo-Japanese War
King Alphonso's Wedding
The San Francisco Disaster
The Prince and Princess of Wales in India
The Russian Revolution
The Olympic Games
The Grand National
Films of the Springbok Rugby Team in England

Humorous : "Those Terrible Kids"

Dramatic : "Sing Sing Prison Escape"
"The 'Jugg' Bank Burglars"
"Rescued in Mid-Air"
"Sherlock Holmes" or "Held for Ransom"
"Monsieur Beaucaire"
"The Adventures of Raffles"
Many Continental "historical dramas"

Documentary : "Holland"
"Scotland" (the Herring Industry, etc)
Other Countries
"Living London"

Trick : "The Dream of a Rarebit Fiend"
"Living Flowers"
"At the Bottom of the Sea"
etc etc

Outstanding among the topical films were those of the San Francisco(i

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(i) Wolfram toured them throughout South Africa and was consistently rewarded with press reports such as the following :
"The feature of the programme will be an extensive series of views taken after the appalling earthquake at San Francisco. Skyscrapers are still seen burning furiously and miles of wreckage and destruction, caused by earthquake and fire, are reproduced by the camera. This series has been the greatest attraction all over South Africa, many of the Town Halls, notably at Durban and East London, being too small to accommodate those seeking admission on the first night and an extensions of the season became necessary."(10)
"Amongst the many pictures thrown on the screen last evening, the most fascinating of the series were those depicting the destruction of San Francisco. With a fidelity to life which was also distressing, the bioscope reflected the devastation of the City of the Golden Gate in all its hideousness. The effect was certainly realistic in the extreme and enabled the audience to obtain an infinitely better knowledge of the horrors of the upheaval than any reporter could possibly do."(11)

The inevitable inclusion of newsreels in cinema programmes from about 1911 onwards has tended to obscure the effect of these early documentations. Immediate written and pictorial information has become a sine qua non of civilised existence but at the turn of the century, it was almost non-existent. News and pictures described accomplished facts sometimes weeks after they had taken place. There was no radio or other expeditious means of communication such as the teletype or trans-continental telephone and since cables were expensive, they were often extremely laconic. Moving pictures animated the often cryptic descriptions published by the Press and, enabling the public for the first time to <u>see</u> what had happened, wrought fundamental social changes, notably in political attitude.

Disaster which made lasting impression wherever shown. Another was that showing King Alphonso's Wedding and including the attempt on his life.(i) The success of the first dramatic films had emboldened producers throughout the world to embark on wider fields than crude meledrama and on the Continent particularly, historical productions became a vogue. Many French and Italian productions of dubious artistic or entertainment value were shown in South Africa (ii) and there began to be comment not only on the technique of their acting which was violent and grotesque and exaggerated by flicker, but also on their contents which, in including "horrors" and ultra-realism, aroused resentment and once, hostile action.(iii)

(i) The film opened with scenes of the wedding procession on its way to the Cathedral - "for five or six minutes, the procession wends its way gaily enough. Then it suddenly stops and the operator ran to the spot where the explosion of the bomb occurred and,promptly starting his camera again, obtained a view of the wrecked Royal carriage and the dying horses, as well as a glimpse of the Royal couple driving away in a reserve coach."(I2)

(ii) In June I906, Rees, whose exhibitions were well attended and frequently applauded, showed an Italian historical film to astonished audiences - "Perhaps the view of the evening was one depicting the Christian martyrs. The scene is laid some time before the great fire started by Nero. A burning sun shines upon the closely-packed crowd of the Coliseum and gladiators, slaves, lictors, martyrs and wild beasts with all the panoply of the Roman soldiers go to make up a very impressive effect. The next scene depicts Daniel in the lion's den and the final picture of the set gives a vivid portrayal of Belshazzar's festival. The Emperor and his courtiers, garlanded with flowers, are seen stretched in drunken imbecility upon the ground surrounded by dancing girls. When nearly all have dropped into deep slumber,the Emperor is aroused from his couch and sees the startling known words written in letters of fire upon the wall by an invisible hand : "Meme, Tekel, Peres"; and falls back in terror in his couch. A thick smoke permeates the palace and the doors are thrown down as the Persians, now masters of Babylon, burst upon the crowd, slaying all who come their way."(I3)
Italian producers specialised in this type of film dealing with historic debauchery.

(iii) At one time, sensationalism of the worst order masqueraded as authenticity and though audiences were prepared to forgive the sight of Marie Antoinette's head rolling in the dust at the foot of the guillotine, there were other scenes whose horror quelled even the gallery. Wolfram made a special point of excluding such films (see Page 88 (iii)) but many other exhibitors were less scrupulous and brought moving pictures into further bad repute. The climax of such exhibition occurred in Cape Town in August I906 when an extraordinary scene occurred. Advertising their programme for exhibition at the Good Hope Hall, the "Marconi Bioscope Company" announced a "triumph of Bioscope art" :

The Most Wonderful Series of Pictures
THE SPANISH INQUISITION
in five scenes crammed full of exciting and interesting pictures

The show was extensively advertised throughout Cape Town, largely by vivid posters and on the opening night (3rd August), the Good Hope Hall was crammed to the doors. It was subsequently estimated that between I,700 and 2,000 people had been packed into the hall and by 8 o'clock, the doors had to be closed.
The first part of the programme consisted of the usual topical films and "comics" and was appropriately applauded. After

the interval, the lights went out and the words "The Spanish Inquisition" appeared on the screen. Almost unnoticed in the dark, a number of men surged quietly towards the stage. The first scene showed a miserable huddle of prisoners - men, women and children - housed in a dingy cell. A few were forebodingly led out. The tense atmosphere which gripped the audience was rent by a few loud shouts but most of the people thought that a few of its members were trying to be funny.

The second scene, called "The Torture Chamber", increased the feeling of horror which had begun to envelop the audience. Weird music from a metallic piano accompanied a scene showing a woman being flung into a cell, flogged with whips and eventually stretched on a rack. Included in the scene was the figure of a man hanging from the ceiling by his hands with a weight attached to his feet. The appearance of this scene precipitated pandemonium. Amidst shouts and yells, eggs were thrown at the screen, the machine was stopped and the lights put on. The audience stood up amidst great noise and disorder. Men rushed the stage and tore down the screen and in the heaving crowd, women struggled in vain to reach the exits. Chairs were smashed and the few policemenk who appeared could do nothing except stand by the stage until the pandemonium had spent itself.

It was alleged that for ten minutes, the audience gave vent to its rage. The proppietor of the show appeared but was howled down. The operator tried to speak but was similarly silenced. The police stood impotently by and eventually guarded an unknown individual who promised the audience their money back. Even this appeasement failed to stop the clamour and chaos continued for some time.

Eventually a prominent member of the Catholic community, Mr Shawelhood, made a wildly-applauded speech commending the action of the crowd in actively disapproving the slur on the Church. He enveighed heavily against "fakes in the lowest possible taste" and with the arrival of more police, the crowd was eventually induced to disperse, leaving a scene of destruction.

Next morning, the Cape Times published a double-column account on the cable page headed :

EXTRAORDINARY DISTHRBANCE
Last Evening
"The Spanish Inquisition"
Eggs and Protest

Its description was most vivid and served to heighten interest in the event. The distmnbance had evidently been organised by zealous Catholics in defence of an imagined slight on their religion (similar efforts were made in later years, notably in connection with the film "Martin Luther" which was to have been shown in 1929.) It appeared that they had already approached the Attorney-General in an attempt to prohibit the exhibition and that, not having the power to do so (there were ofcourse no censorship regulations), he had requested the management not to show the film.

Oddly, the film had not aroused such demonstrations elsewhere in South Africa though it is obvious that its reputation had preceded it by the time it was shown in Cape Town. Three months earlier, it had been shown in Durban under unusual circumstances. The Town Hall was packed for the opening performance of the "Marconi Bioscope Company" and the audience appeared well pleased by the number of coloured films. "The majority of the pictures shown", said a contemporary account (14), "are obviously of French origin and in "made-up" scenes and incidents, the French show a resource and skill in mechanical device that would be difficult to beat....The piece de resistance was a picture supposed to represent the Spanish Inquisition. Prior to showing it at the beginning of the second part of the programme, the manager intimated to the audience that the exhibition of the film had been objected to by one of the religious communities of the town (sic) and the management had been approached on the subject by the authorities; but as it had been advertised and shown elsewhere without objection, it was felt that it would be unfair to the audience to withdraw it without intimation. The company however had no desire to offend the susceptibilities of any section of the audience and if there existed any desire on the part of those present against showing the picture, it would be witheld. The wish of the audience however was very clearly in favour of seeing the picture and it was exhibited in the usual way. It is a sort of gallery of horrors and is

The intended more reputable showmen however, did not show these films confining themselves to American and other productions which, while wildly sensational, were of impeccable moral tone except in the case of "gentleman" cat-burglars and other genteely romantic figures.(i) Wolfram in particular made a feature of many remarkable documentary films which, surprisingly, could command large audiences on their own merits(ii); but there was no gainsaying the popular appeal of the

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intended to represent the various forms of torture employed by the Inquisition; but to take offence at it or to forbid its exhibition would be to treat it too seriously altogether. As a film it was one of the best shown, being much steadier and clearer than some of the others."

It is possible that the film was either the same or a new edition of one listed in the Warwick Trading Company's catalogue of 1900 which was described as follows :

No.4189 - THE SPANISH INQUISITION - Cremation. Showing the interior of a torture chamber in the middle of which is seen a grill surrounded by burning embers and logs. The executioner is seen dragging in a victim with a rope around her neck. He throws her over the grill and ties her down to the same, stirring up the fire which consumes the woman who is struggling and straining at the ropes in her agony. Suddenly a spectre of the martyr arises from the ashes and in his endeavour to destroy the same with a headsman's axe, he falls over the grill and is in turn consumed by the fire.

Note : Marvellous effects are produced by colouring this subject which is specially made for this purpose. The colouring is applied in a most artistic manner by a new process at a cost of £3 extra."

This remarkable episode in Cape Town has remained in memory but temporarily it had little effect in reducing the exploitation of the basest sensationalism. In the end however, tarnished with growing disrepute, French "fakes" gave way to the dramatic film proper.

(i) A popular film of the period was

THE ADVENTURES OF RAFFLES

The Gentleman Highwayman and his Pal Bunny

Synopsis
Robbing the Guests at a Lawn Party
Holding up a Society Couple
Raffles rescuing Bunny by impersonating a Policeman
Holding up a New York Clubman
Robbing a Bank Messenger
The Escape of Raffles through the Trick Cupboard

There were many such films (some of which probably conduced to crime) as well as ingenious scenes such as "the story in photographs of the adventures of an unfortunate lady who, while clinging to a church steeple, is rescued by a most wonderfully constructed airship".

(ii) Notable among them were those of Holland, Scotland, other countries and the famous "Living London" exhibited in a large number of scenes. "The success of these marvellous pictures" wrote the Star (15) "has been unprecedented in Durban and Maritzburg where they have drawn more people to the Town Halls than any subject introduced by the bioscope. In these times of depression, many who would wish to pay a visit to the Homeland are debarred from doing so and the opportunity of spending at least one hour in imagination in the crowded streets of London, recalling memories of its past, should be exceedingly welcome."Other such documentaries received equal praise and public acclamation did much to counteract the evil reputation of "fakes" and horror films.

"made-up" films, both dramatic and "comic" of which there were still many French examples.(1)

During 1907, the dramatic film increased its popularity very considerably although this was also the period when Wolfram and other showmen successfully (but only temporarily) popularised the documenta-

Outstanding films of 1907 were :

Topical : various items of comparatively unimportant events

Humorous : "Those Terrible Kids"
"The Plank"

Dramatic : "A Case of Arson"
"Black Beauty"
"Love Wins Out"
"The Corsican's Daughter"
"The Prospectors"
The Passion Play

Documentary : "An English Fox Hunt"
"A Trip through North Borneo"
"Canada"
"Mysteries of Paris"
"Living Japan"
"Scotland" and other countries
"Cape to Cairo"
"The Victoria Falls"
"The Herring Fisher"

The comic films were of crude simplicity, "The Plank" for instance (which is still lovingly remembered), consisting merely of the incidents befalling a man walking through a crowded village with a long plank on his shoulder. Dramatic films however became more and more complicated, presenting the maximum of action in the minimum of time. They were seldom more than a few hundred feet in length and though Wolfram steadfastly maintained the "educational" documentary at the

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(1) One of the best known "comics" was "The Dream of the Rarebit Fiend" which was shown for many years and which constituted one of the few morally-acceptable uses of trick photography. A contemporary newspaper (16) remarked : "Ofcourse no bioscope exhibition would be complete without the comics and these are quite up to Mr Wolfram's traditions. Fun is fast and furious during some of the ridiculously funny pictures....If only to see "The Dream of the Rarebit Fiend", a visit to the Town Hall would be amply rewarded. A diner partakes too well of lobster and wine and experiences a terrible night. Everything in the street goes round and his experience in bed is most ludicrous. The representation of a nightmare is positively perfect. The bed rocks to and fro and ultimately the well-dined gentleman, bed and all, takes a journey into the clouds. A hurried transit over New York City is made and at last a weather vane stops the gentleman's progress. He is caught by the arrow and when at last the night garments part company, the bibulous individual drops with a thud through the roof into his bedroom. And he wakes up !"

head of his programmes (i), fiction films were steadily outweighing all others. There was no art in their acting and frantic gestures indicated such violent emotions that no audience could be in doubt as to what was being portrayed. In addition, vividly explanatory captions began to appear, many unscrupulous producers devoting scores of film footage to this convenient expedient. American production, during this period, began to explore the possibilities of the "Wild West" and other areas, particularly the Klondyke, where passion and crime were supposed to march hand in hand.(ii)

(i) A typical Wolfram programme of the period is the following :

WONDERS OF CANADA
(detailed description of the many scenes of this documentary)

"Black Beauty"
A thrilling picture story of a horse displaying almost human intelligence. A rider is robbed and assaulted in the forest; the horse, finding his master helpless, turns for home and rings the bell; the young wife, seeing the horse riderless, swings herself into her husband's saddle and the horse takes her to the scene of the outrage; remaining by her husband's side, she writes a note to the Police which the horse safely delivers and brings back assistance. A most touching picture received everywhere with storms of applause.

"Love Wins Out"
A Great London Sensation ! Capture of the Vicar ! The Marriage in the Motor running at Express Speed !

"The Conjuror's Pupil
"How Willie made a Cake in his Grandfather's hat"

This exhibition, given early in 1907, was regarded by the Press(17) as being "of an extremely high order, much care having been devoted to the excellent arrangement of these films and Mr Wolfram is to be congratulated on the pleasing variety of the views he is supplying to his clientele."

(ii) The following type of announcement was frequent :

"The Prospectors"
A stirring drama of the goldfields depicting how a plucky woman avenges her murdered husband
or
"The Miner's Daughter"
A Thrilling and Sensational Drama by Williamson
The Greatest Success of the London Season

This latter was an English emulation of the American formula and was described as "a very affecting little narrative - a love story in animated photography - the various scenes and incidents of which have been skilfully arranged in order to produce the most dramatic effects and which notably succeed in their object, to judge by the number of handkerchiefs withdrawn by sympathetic and susceptible ladies in the audience."(18)

The introduction of little golden-haired children, animals and other touching creatures first demonstrated the capacity of moving pictures emotionally to move audiences. Previously only the baser emotions had been simulated but the development in production technique was so rapid that even at this early date, it was possible for audiences to ignore the flicker and noise of projection and to respond emotionally to the crude sentimental appeal of early film dramas. This was a significant development in establishing the priority of the dramatic film.

During 1907, as with almost every year until about 1912, the Passion Play was again shown, apparently a French version in colour which received varied comment but nonetheless commanded audiences.(1

By this time, moving pictures had effectively demonstrated their perennial potentiality for novelty and increasing economic distress in South Africa had failed to impede the progress of their popularity. The depression which had begun about 1903, reached its worst intensity about 1907 and, apart from economic difficulties, the country was in an extremely disturbed state politically. The rival claims of federation and union began acrimoniously to be contended and the issue was further complicated by the secessionist sympathies of Natal. In addition, there were industrial upheavals which, in the Transvaal at least had been temporarily solved by the importation of Chinese labour. Though this step achieved the salvation of the gold mining industry and with it, the country's economic foundation, it had dubious social results. By the middle of 1907, unrest was rife in and around Johannesburg. Responsible government was about to be

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(1) The infatuation of early producers with the theme of the Passion Play is difficult to explain except on the grounds that they hoped thereby to raise the reputation of moving pictures. In the early instance of the Horitz Passion Play, the performance actually existed and required only to be filmed; but subsequently every Passion Play was staged. The first was "faked" on the roof of a New York skyscraper in 1897 but many others later appeared in South Africa, always attracting large audiences and, unlike other religious films, never creating disturbances although frankly blasphemous. The Passion Play invariable figured as an item in a programme consisting of the usual "comics", news films and documentaries and it was only after 1907 that exhibitors thought of presenting it with special musical accompaniment.

Occasionally reviewers wrote candidly of the various versions, the French productions being notoriously "theatrical". When Hartley showed the latest version in Durban in November 1907, "the Town Hall was crowded when the chief attraction was a long series of pictures illustrative of the life of Christ from the Annunciation to the Ascension. The pictures were no doubt very clearly arranged but at times, the obvious theatrical effects and such incongruities as angels in fleshlings and open-work French boots, were in jarring contrast to the sacred scenes portrayed. The long series of pictures however may be regarded as a triumph of animated photography and the scenes were followed with close and reverent attention by the large audience."(19)

The entire film in a large number of "scenes" was in colour and such was its popularity that Hartley had to give repeat performances at a later date. It was similarly acclaimed in other parts of South Africa.

granted to the Transvaal and there was widespread political discussion and activity. The dissension over the importation of Chinese labour was accentuated when the Chinese themselves grew more and more lawless. Murders occurred almost daily in Johannesburg and the white miners, so far from coöperating with organised authority under these circumstances, came out frequently on strike and were constantly performing brutal acts of hooliganism in the town itself. Such conditions reflected the country's general lack of a sense of direction and the disturbing effect of depressed economic standards.

Under these circumstances, the organisation of professional entertainment became extremely hazardous and for months on end, the Empire Palace of Varieties provided the only amusement in the most remunerative town in South Africa. Elsewhere the situation was little better. In 1905 alone, the touring "bioscopes" run by Wolfram, Rees, Hartley and others were the only form of amusement in Durban and even these were inconsistently maintained. The prevalent atmosphere of uncertainty and indecision coupled with severe economic stress disinclined the public from patronising entertainment; most of all the comparatively expensive distraction of the theatre. The circus and the cinema alone remained - the circus (Pagel's, Willison's and Fillis's) touring painfully from town to town with comparative success; the cinema, represented by an increasing number of itinerant exhibitors, achieving greater and greater popularity as its programme grew more varied.

Every circumstances of this distressed period pointed towards the popularisation of moving pictures. Its attraction lay principally in the cheapness of its admission rates (usually 2/-, 1/- and 6d) and the fact that its films surpassed in novelty and diversity anything that the legitimate or variety stage had ever had to offer. By 1907 therefore, the "bioscope" had completely changed its character - whereas immediately after the Boer War, it had been a rather surprising and inconsequential novelty, by 1907 it had become a firmly entrenched institution and in certain areas such as Natal, a recognised and regular form of entertainment.

Conditions continued to militate in its favour. The depression took long to lift and apart from Johannesburg where Leonard Rayne and his stock dramatic company had assumed a semi-permanent

occupation of the Standard Theatre, entertainment continued at a ver low level. During 1908, the sole imported companies to appear were a Wheeler-Edwardes Gaiety Company playing "The Girls from Gottenburg" and other light operettas, Katherine Pole and dramatic company in Shaw plays, and the Epstein Opera Company. Edward Branscombe also presented the Cherniavski Trio (then little boys) for the first time in South Africa. The intervals which separated the appearances of these companies were very long and amateur theatricals and gramaphon recitals barely filled the gaps.

Comparatively speaking, conditions were best in Johannesburg where Leonard Rayne was at the Standard, there was variety at the Empire and visiting companies occasionally occupied His Majesty's (which had been built by the Wheelers). Durban suffered long periods during which there was no entertainment at all (there was no music-hall except for a short period towards the middle of 1908 when the Empire Theatres Company ran vaudeville at His Majesty's). In Cape Town, the Opera House was frequently closed though the Tivoli stagin variety struggled on before diminishing audiences. In June 1908, the Empire Theatres Company discontinued its lease of the Tivoli and for a few weeks there was no theatrical entertainment whatever in Cape Town. (At this time, Wolfram leased the Good Hope Hall and was forced to advertise "Standing Room Only".) Towards the end of 1908, the Tivoli reopened under new management (H. Stodel) and staged Stephen Black's phenomenally successful "Love and the Hyphen" in November; but until then, there was not even a circus.

Moving pictures not only compensated for the prevailing absence of recognised forms of entertainment(1); they also began to intrude on those forms. Thus as early as December 1907, the Tivoli began to stage "Cinematinées" or recitals by a "Concert Gramaphone" and the "Tivolioscope" in lieu of its variety programme. Furthermore the scratch vaudeville companies which were optimistically organised

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(1) The following table enumerating the appearances of moving pictur shows in the years 1907, 1908 and 1909 (though not infallible, i includes all recorded instances) gives some indication of the intrusion of moving pictures at this period :

	1907	1908	1909
Cape Town	2	17	34
Johannesburg	8	18	41
Durban	22	19	41

featured the "bioscope" as the leading turn. Finally, where no organised entertainment was to be found, it now became not unusual for two and sometimes three itinerant exhibitors to give moving picture shows simultaneously in the same town.

The showmen of previous years - Wolfram, Rees, H.V. Barnes, Granier and others - were now joined by an increasing number of rivals among whom was Sage, a worthy competitor. This body of exhibitors contrived to show moving pictures with growing frequency over a widespread area in South Africa. By now, there was hardly a dorp that had not seen them at least once. Wolfram remained in the exalted position he had earned and continued to receive tributes from press and public wherever he toured his "Bioscope".

The insistent intrusion of moving pictures at this period was distinguished by a number of notable innovations, one of which was a series of further attempts at "talkies". Apart from one or two abortive attempts at combining the phonograph and the cinematograph such as the "Singing Pictures" of 1906 and the "Biophone" of 1907, no further development had followed the kinetophone of 1895. On the 31st January 1908 however, the "Continental Projecting Company" exhibited "Gaumont's Chronophone" at the City Hall in Cape Town. Invented by Leon Gaumont, the machine was an ingenious electrical combination of gramaphone and film producing a highly variable synchronisation which did not prove very impressive at its first exhibition but improved when presented in Johannesburg.(i) W. Rees bought one of the machines and showed it, after extensive advertising, at the Town Hall in Durban but also with little success.(ii)

The Chronophone acted as a prelude to "Gaumont's Chronomegaphone" which was imported by the Empire Theatres Company a few weeks later and, preceded by impressive publicity, was exhibited at the Empire in Johannesburg and the Tivoli in Cape Town. Largely on account

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(i) The main programme consisted of silent films, the few "talkies" which were in colour, being songs such as "The Belle of Mayfair", the Swing Song from "Veronique", excerpts from "The Mikado" and "Walking Home with Angeline". The synchronisation was not successful and the Chronophone lacked volume; but it Johannesburg, it made some stir and special performances were given "by request".

(ii) The first performance was a failure but the second, taking place on the 12th March 1908, was "before an exceedingly good house and it was apparent that some of the intricacies of the machine had been overcome".(20) The sole item however to achieve perceptible synchronisation was "The Flowers that bloom in the Spring" which the audience heartily applauded.

of its novelty and the dearth of current "sensations", the machine attracted a certain amount of attention when it was first shown in March (i), The Star remarking that "the bioscope (which always concluded the Empire's programme), undismayed by the advent of its polysyllabic competitor, is still giving a series of excellent films". (2I) Opening in Cape Town on the 29th April at the Tivoli, the "Chronomegaphone" proved sufficiently successful to remain on the programme until the 9th June.(ii) In January I909, the Fishers exhibited a similar machine at the Good Hope Hall (an event which is vividly remembered by a large number of people) and in August I909, a new machine called the "Synchrophone" based on the same principle made an abortive appearance.(iii)

The problem which confronted inventors was primarily not of synchronisation but of the amplification of sound. In the phonograph, Edison had dispensed with the need of tubes for the ears by the provision of a large trumpet; but even the largest "Concert Phonograph" was inaudible tp any but its immediate neighbours. In I907, Hartley exhibited an "Aux-e-to-Phone" with his travelling bioscope. Invented by the Hon. Charles Parsons, this apparatus was attached to a gramaphone and operated by compressed air in the same manner as an organ. Its performance was very variable and it frequently failed to work at all. In February I908, Wolfram largely advertised an "Aerophone" which purported to reproduce songs and instrumental pieces by compressed air (by literally blowing them into the hall). Despite vaunted technical superiorities, the Aerophone remained for only a few performances on Wolfram's programme and he continued to

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(i) The appearance of the "Chronomegaphone" was heralded by a full-column advertisement far exceeding the preceding publicity for Little Tich or indeed any other famous variety artiste. The task of synchronising projector with gramophone electrically devolved on J.B. Fitts and though many mishaps occurred, the union was occasionally successfully accomplished.

(ii) The "Chronomegaphone" opened at the Tivoli as a "star turn",the name alone impressing audiences - "a word", wrote the Cape Times (22)"that sticks in the diaphragm like the Jabberwocky".

(iii) The synchronisation was so faulty that it gave only one or two performances. It purported to reproduce Tetrazzini and Caruso singing excerpts from opera; but the imperfections of the instrument were too manifest to secure it any kind of public support.

rely on a pianist.(i)

The absence of sound was hardly noticed by audiences of the time. The excessive action and frantic gesticulation of the first dramatic films as well as the general totteriness and flicker almost completely absorbed attention and, in addition, the "bioscope pianist" performed suitable music usually with remarkable imagination (ii) Enterprising showmen continued however to try to compensate for the deficiency and "mechanical effects" of a startling order were introduced. The drummers of the Empire and Tivoli orchestras added "sound machinery" to their normal equipment (such as ball-bearings in a box to simulate rain) (iii) and the showmen, particularly Wolfram, engaged inspired musicians such as Isidore Fisher and Barlow Coulthard and sometimes whole orchestras.

After more than ten years of public performance, moving pictures also began to be used for ancillary purposes. In January 1908, a South African Industrial Exhibition was opened in the Good Hope Hall in Cape Town and included a "Bioscope" showing educational and other films which, in the course of a considerable time, was said to have exhibited to 14,000 children and 10,000 adults. Moving

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(i) The Aerophone was said "to differ from the other instruments in having, instead of a diaphragm, a sound box containing a valve through which compressed air is forced by an air pump in larger or smaller quantities according to the greater or less depth of the depressions of the record. It is claimed for the new machine that with good records, the songs reproduced are louder than originally sung by the artistes."(23)

(ii) A possibly apochryphal story is told by both Isidore and Harry Fisher than when accompanying the Passion Play with "suitable music", they looked up at the screen and, seeing a stormy sea with a man walking on it, played "A Life on the Ocean Wave". Faux pas of this description were frequent.

(iii) "The Bombardment of Port Arthur" was a favourite vehicle for "sound effects" and well-timed bangs on the big bass drum to coincide with cannon firing endowed the film with such realism that audiences were much impressed.
In a programme of 1909, "films admired and applauded were those telling the old old story of the triumph of virtue and the desserts of villainy. A section of the audience was highly interested in a film entitled "The Pirate Ship", the hand-to-hand fighting coupled with the "splash" of bodies which, by the way, conveniently managed to move out of the picture, being quite thrilling."(24)

pictures were also used by the Salvation Army for proselytising purposes during 1909 (1) and at random "Bioscope Displays" at the Royal Skating Rink at the corner of Hoek and Noord Streets in Johannesburg, Lord's Grounds in Durban and other places. Their real popularisation however remained in the hands of the itinerant showmen who, during during 1908, exhibited inter alia the following films :

Topical : The Springbok Rugby Team Overseas
The Reign of Terror in Russia
The Moroccan War
The Farman Aeroplane
The Zeppelin
The Dieppe Motor Race
The Olympic Marathon Race
The Destruction of Hyderabad by Earthquake
The Gordon-Bennett Balloon Race
Races, Steeplechases, etc etc

Humorous : "The Mother-in-Law Race"
"The Runaway Horse"
"The Plank"
"Her Master's Tea Service"
"Harry Lauder in a Hurry"
"Farmer Hayseed's Bargain"

Dramatic : "The Siege of the Mission"
"Black Beauty" or "Dumb Sagacity"
"The Prospectors"
"Daniel Boone"
"Baffles"
"Lady Letmore's Diamonds"
"The Pony Express"
"A Son's Crime"
"Romeo and Juliet"
Many panotmimes such as "Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves"
The Passion Play

Documentary : "Ireland", "Canada", "Australia" and other countries
"The Chain-making Industry"
"Living London"
"Publishing 'The Scotsman'"
"An English Fox-Hunt"

Trick : "The Mesmerist"
"Animated Mattress"
"Magnetic Removal"
"The Juggling Bluebottle"

During this year, the importance of the topical film in vitalising news was re-affirmed in its illustration of scientific develop-

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(1) By means of large advertisements :

EVANGELISATION
by means of the
BIOSCOPE

the Salvation Army induced large crowds to attend performances at the Cape Town City Hall in January 1908. Some of the pictures, most of which publicised the Army's work as well as engaging recruits to its cause, were so popular that audiences demanded encores. The whole enterprise also toured the country and subsequently the Salvation Army gave "Grand Bioscopic Exhibitions and Gramaphone Recitals in the Peninsula.

ments of which the general public would otherwise have had a very imperfect conception. This was particularly apparent in the films showing the first aeroplanes which were universally welcomed with interest and wonder.(i) Humorous films continued to furnish the main attractions of programmes and, continuing crude and simple (ii) in

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(i) On the I3th January I908, Henry Farman won the Deutsche Archdeaco Prize of £2,000 by flying I,630 yards. It took him I minute 28 seconds and he rose to a height of 25 feet. On the 5th Februar I908, Wolfram showed a film of Farman's aeroplane in Cape Town and subsequently also films of Wilbur Wright and other pioneer aviators. The effect of these films was pronounced. In December I908 when Sago showed them in Johannesburg, The Star remarked(25) "It would be difficult to say which was the best picture but one that proved of intense interest was undoubtedly "Modern Airships" This depicts the startling advancement made in aeronautics and modern flying machine inventions. The realistic film brings home in startling manner the fact that flying through the air in safety at the rate of 40 miles an hour in any direction at will i an accomplished fact."

In Durban, the film was described as "a most unique and original series representing the Wright aeroplane in all its aspects - suspended, at rest and in full flight. A capital portrait of Mr Wright is shown as he makes ready for flight. Also a close view of the airship and its propelling gear. Then comes the start. A swift run along the rail (?), a slight ascent and a dash into the distance at the rate of 40 miles an hour. The airship takes wide circles, soaring over the tops of trees with the ease and grace of a bird and answering to every touch of the guiding hand. A near view of the airship in flight is afforded us as the inventor steers direct for the camera."(26) Wilbur Wright' flight as seen on the film was later described as "careering through the air at some 40 miles and hour".

Other such films dealt with Count Zeppelin's Air Ship, Santos Dumont's aeroplane and other contemporary scientific developments. Great interest was also aroused in the films of the Great Marathon Race in which the South African Hefferon figured and in

THE GREAT DIEPPE MOTOR RACE
The most sensational race in history !
Terrible Accidents !
Motors overturned and smashed to pieces !
The sight of a lifetime !

(ii) "The Plank", first shown in I907 (see PageI05), was even more successful in I908. When shown at the Tivoli in Cape Town, "uproarious laughter follows the vicissitudes of a plank as it is carried to its destination. The length of deal plays havoc with hats, upsets the dignity of grave and reverend gentlemen,knocks a patient fisherman into a river, capsizes a baby, plays havoc with crockery and generally has a high old time until its jinks are forcibly stopped."(27) "The Runaway Horse" was produced according to the same principle and showed the havoc caused in a French village by a bolting horse. "Her Master's Tea Service" depicted the tribulations of a maid instructed to fetch a parcel of crockery which is finally delivered in an entirely smashed condition. "Farmer Hayseed's Bargain" showed an old farmer buying a cow, being induced to exchange it for a pig and so on until he is left with a worthless trifle in exchange for his original valuable animal.

Films of this ludicrous nature, assisted by"suitable music", genuinely reduced audiences to helplessness. They could be seen many times without loss of effect and though in time, the type of "comic" became forced and unamusing (especially in American hands these early examples are still remembered.

conception, began to be rivalled by the excessive excitement of dramatic films. Many "Wild West Dramas" such as"The Adventures of Daniel Boone" which purported to tell in a few scenes the life of the famous Indian scout, "The Pony Express" and others came from American studios which continued to produce heavy moral dramas such as "A Son's Crime"in which there was always atonement for misdeeds. Theft, assault gambling, duplicity, etc etc were all atoned in these films in the course of many emotional scenes, the villain either suffering just retribution (ostentatiously indicated by a caption) or the hero extensively reforming. The dramatic film having proved a success, producers extended its range, particularly in England where already competition was inadequate to the wildly-exciting American melodramas. Reproductions from current stage successes were undertaken and in 1908 Wolfram showed one of the first, "Lady Letmere's Diamonds" for which he had bought the sole South African rights.(i)

The Passion Play continued successfully to be shown during the year but "documentary" films, despite being of unusually high quality began to lose their popularity. Their slow-moving detail could not compete with the high speed and action of the melodramatic films and the "comic" and trick films, the latter of which maintained their novelty.(ii)

By now the popularity of moving pictures was obviously leading up to a climax. The itinerant showmen had insistently driven a wedge into orthodox entertainment and the persistent novelty of their programmes had canvassed a larger and larger public. It was however a public of a specific kind - "Screaming Comics", "Thrilling Epics" and "Parisian Novelties" were designed to attract the hoi polloi and despite showmen advertising "a most refined entertainment to suit all classes", its very existence fell outside the social consciousness o

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(i) In November 1908, Wolfram also showed :
"The Sensation of 1908, a Magnificent Cinematograph Version of the Great Shakespearean Tragedy
ROMEO AND JULIET
produced by members of the theatrical profession recently engaged in the Lyceum production, London :
Romeo.....Mr Godfrey Tearle
Mercutio..Mr Gordon Bailey
Juliet....Miss Mary Malone
Tybalt....Mr J. Armand
"For never was a story more woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo"

(ii) In "Magnetic Removal", furniture flew out of a house and packed itself into a van. The real triumph of trick photography was achieved, not by a French firm, but by an English in "The Juggling Blue-bottle".

a large proportion of the general public. On the other hand, by 1908 the public prepared to support moving pictures had grown to such proportions that the first tentative attempts to found permanent cinemas were launched.(i) That they failed proved that they were premature but these enterprises at least gave testimony of the irresistible attraction of moving pictures at the time. It was indeed

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(i) One of the first such enterprises was the Apollo Theatre in Johannesburg which, on the 18th December 1906, advertised :

NEW APOLLO THEATRE
of
NEW PICTURES
39 Pritchard Street
will open on
Saturday 19th December

Under above name and conducted in European style, the management has made arrangements with the best houses in Europe to supply weekly a new set of pictures, thereby ensuring a constant variety for the public.

Visitors may rest assured that the Proprietors will always be ready to do their best to make the programmes so attractive that their visitors will be delighted with the entertainment.

Open 10 a.m. to 11 p.m.
Admission : 1/- and 1/6d
Children half price. Tickets and Programmes at the door

Less ambitious but equally premature was the type of establishment of which the following example was inaugurated by H.V. Barnes at about this time :

VISITORS (to Durban)
should not fail to pay a visit to
the
ANIMATED PICTURE SALOON
at Campbell's Model Tea Rooms
where the
"Chrono" King of Bioscopes
will give
6 Grand Exhibitions of the Latest Pictures Daily
at
11 a.m., 12 noon, 3 p.m., 4 p.m., 7.30 p.m. and 9 p.m.
The Pictures will include
"A Cross Country Chase" - Typical English Winter Scenery
"His First Silk Hat" - see this and have a good laugh
"Too Much Scotch" - another good laugh
"Horse Guards Parade" - Grand Military Spectacle
"Broken Idyll" - some dramatic scenes
"Whaling in the North Atlantic"

A Picture of Unique interest to Durban and Visitors, depicting the whaling industry in all its phases. Magnificent Seascapes, whales, etc.

"When the Devil Drives"

Marvellous Railway Journey along Telegraph Wires, under the Sea, over Mountains and Clouds.

etc etc etc

Pictures to Instruct — Pictures to Amuse
Pictures to Elevate — Pictures to Enthrall

Admission
Adults 1/- Children (about 14) 6d Young Children 3d

merely a question of time before they were finally established as a permanent form of entertainment. During this interim period, conditions continued to militate in their favour. Renewed confidence in the coming union of the country wrought a notable improvement in entertainment as a whole. Improved economic conditions and the gradual lifting of the depression made it once more possible for impresarios to operate in South Africa and though long intervals continued to separate the performances of theatrical entertainments in certain towns such as Durban, the established theatre may be considered to have recommenced.

Leonard Rayne's dramatic companies, now led by Freda Godfrey, began to go on tour and by the middle of 1909, Rayne imported the well-known actress Amy Coleridge to fortify his company. Hugh Gwynne Katherine Pole and a comedy company appeared in popular plays such as "The Mummy" and Julius Royston led another touring dramatic company in light pieces such as "Who's Brown ?". The Wheelers (1) imported several companies including a dramatic company playing Guy du Maurier's famous war play "An Englishman's Home", a Juvenile Musical Comedy Company in operettas such as "The Orchid" and a Wheeler-Edwardes Musical Comedy Company playing "Our Miss Gibbs" and other popular pieces. Arthur de Jong who had successfully maintained the business built up by his brother Frank and had been associated with previous presentations of de Jong-Mouillot and Sass-Nelson companies in South Africa, introduced the Royal Welsh Ladies Choir (under the direction of Ivor Novello's mother, Madame Clara Novello Davies) with considerable success. De Jong's greatest success howeve was the "discovery" of the South African journalist and playwright Stephen Black for whom he organised a South African company to play Black's "Love and the Hyphen". This social satire on South African life and characters "caught on" in an amazing manner, beating all records at the Tivoli in Cape Town at the end of 1908 and achieving equal success at the Standard in Johannesburg early in 1909. It late

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(1) Ben Wheeler died in August 1908 but the firm continued to operate under the same name. At the end of 1908, "The Wheelers" went into voluntary liquidation to escape a lease of the Durban Theatre Royal but subsequently continued their activities.

toured the other large towns. The Cherniavski Trio continued touring the country and Ada Forrest and Madame Antonia Dolores (previously known as Antoinette Trebelli) gave successful recitals. The blind organist Alfred Hollins also gave recitals wherever possible. The variety presented by the Empire Theatres Company included many famous artistes such as Ada Reeve (then in her prime and much acclaimed) and Wee Georgie Wood. The firm of J.& N. Tait presented "The Royal Bosses 'o the Barn", a very popular concert party; and the "Steele Payne Bellringers" began a career which was to make their's a household name in South Africa. Both these latter enterprises marked an new departur in entertainment. The hazards of dramatic and musical presentation were still great - apart from the initial costs of importation, touring and production, public taste could never safely be gauged. First-class concert parties however, with a number and variety of turns, were far more likely to please and during 1910, more appeared. Almost always, a "Bioscope" featured as one of the main items on their programmes.

The very real improvement in entertainment may be judged from the fact that whereas previously in Johannesburg alone, the Empire had provided the sole amusement apart from amateur endeavour, in March1909 on any given night there was Katherine Pole and a dramatic company playing "Prunella" at the Standard; a Wheeler-Edwardes Juvenile Company playing "The Country Girl" at His Majesty's; vaudeville at the Empire; a Promenade Concert or R.V. Barnes "Bioscope" at the Wanderers Hall; Rees' or another Bioscope at the Masonic Hall; one or two amateu concerts; two skating rinks and balls or dances at the week-ends. Though this standard was by no means evenly sustained throughout the country (Durban, for instance, was very erratically supplied), conditions had so far improved that organised entertainment became increasingly possible. So far from suffering from the competition, the "Bioscope" prospered concomitantly with improving conditions.

During 1909, Wolfram toured continuously throughout the country, concentrating now on the Cape rather than Natal. At the beginning of the year, he spent some weeks in and around Johannesburg and his "Bioscope" became a feature of the weekly Wanderers Club Concerts held on Sundays. In Natal, he always had excellent patronage and in Cape Town which he had hitherto visited infrequently, he immediately acquired an enviable reputation. Exhibiting at regular interv

Good Hmope Hall, "Wolfram's Bioscope" soon became "one of the chief attractions of the city". It was given the same praise at the Durban Town Hall but Wolfram had found the Cape a more fruitful field and towards the end of 1909, he ceased touring and settled in Cape Town.

This may be considered the period of Wolfram's zenith. His reputation stood inaccessibily above that of his rivals - a fact which was continuously acknowledged by the Press - and doubtless relying on it, he was able to show better-class programmes than competitors still concerned with soliciting public patronage.(1)

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(1) Typical Press tributes of the period are :
".....a better all-round programme has seldom been seen. The public support was extremely good....Practically all the pictures were new and as they were free from scratches and the like, it was quite a pleasure to follow them, Wolfram's apparently being the only bioscope which has got rid of these defects."(28)
"Wolfram's present bioscope entertainment surpasses even its former records for excellence and variety. There can be no doubt about the high-class nature of the interesting and educational spectacles following each other with such rapidity. Moreover Mr Wolfram is invariably successful in unrolling his films with an absolute minimum of flicker and the result is that the eyes are not distressed by this trouble.."(29)
(Apropos Wolfram's showing of a documentary dealing with Wales)
"These periodical excursions to distant lands are a great boon to the public for to most, they constitute the only sight-seeing to be indulged in. It is gratifying to note that the eagerness of children to see moving pictures is being taken advantage of by their parents, to judge by the large crowds that have lately attended the matinees given by Mr Wolfram; for a well-~~xxxxxx~~ selected programme in which instructive and educational films alternate with those only intended for amusement, is an excellent substitute for book-learning and oral instruction..."(30)
Typical of Wolfram's programmes at this time are the following two shown in March and May 1909 respectively :

Wolfram's
BIOSCOPE
will present
ITALY'S MARVELLOUS CAVALRY
The most daring
and
astounding feats of horsemanship in the world !
Climbing and Descending Precipitous Cliffs !
Jumping into Treacherous Rivers !
Leaping over Immense Obstacles !
Sensational, Thrilling and Exciting !
Scores of Accidents !

Industrial :
The Ricefields of Japan
Tunny Fishing in Sicily

Dramatic :
"Flash James, the Adventurer"
"Saved by the Telegraph Code"

Humorous :
"A Mysterious Thief"
"Will he Overtake Them ?"
"Parisian Life in Miniature"
"Let's Hurry Up"
"The Lady Doctor's Husband"
"A Double-barrelled Suicide".

Wolfram's
BIOSCOPE
will present
Life in the
BRITISH NAVY

The Most Comprehensive, Most Inspiring and Instructive Collection of Moving Pictures of our Navy ever brought before the Public, depicting the work of the Bluejackets in all classes of war vessel from the mighty Dreadnought to the invisible submarine; the manoeuvring of Squadrons; the firing of Monster Guns and Torpedoes; the explosion of submarine mines and concluding with a terrific and realistic

Naval Battle

cinematographed by West's "Our Navy" by special permission of the Admiralty.

"IN SEARCH OF OBLIVION"

A soul-stirring emotional drama of great intensity acted by M. Marie de Lisle of the Odeon Theatre and published by the Societé de Film d'Art, vividly portraying the mental anguish and torture, approaching to madness, of the man who would but cannot forget the unworthy woman he loves.

A Masterpiece of Dramatic Art

Moorish Cavalry in Pursuit of Rebels
The Principles of the Gyroscope
"The Pulveriser"
"A Disciple of Sherlock Holmes"
"The Story of an Aching Tooth"

"Life in the British Navy" which ran for exactly an hour, was one of the most popular films of the day. "The series is one of the best of the many fine films that have been shown in the City (Cape Town) by Mr Wolfram from time to time. The "emotional drama" which at present is in high favour with bioscope audiences (sic) found a place in last night's programme. This one was entitled "In Search of Oblivion" and the machine depicted a magnificent piece of acting. Every film of the new selection is exceedingly interesting and the laughable "fakes" are exceedingly ingenious, the principal ones being "The Pulveriser" and "A Tooth and a Smack in the Face". "The Principles of the Gyroscope" is a film is an exceedingly instructive nature. Altogether it is one of the best bioscope entertainments presented in the city."(31)

It gave Wolfram special pleasure to hear the shrieks of children at the "comics" in the programme. In Durban, he instituted an "All Comic Programme" which met with great success and people were seriously advised not to attend if "their constitutions could not stand two hours' continuous laughter". This programme was also shown elsewhere with equal success.

Wolfram also preserved his affection for The Passion Play, a new version in colour being issued in 1909 and advertised by him as follows :

Wolfram's New
BIOSCOPE
will present the
NEW PASSION PLAY
or
THE LIFE OF CHRIST
The Most Magnificent
Most Stupendous Production
in ~~Animated~~
Animated Photography
Exquisitely Coloured Throughout
This Wonderful Picture which is nearly
One Mile in Length

and requires one hour to exhibit without a single interruption from beginning to end, is a veritable

Work of Art

of the highest perfection humanly attainable and has caused the

Greatest Sensation

throughout the civilised world since the introduction of Animated Photography. It embraces every

Memorable Episode

in the life of Christ, from His Birth to His Death and Resurrection and conveys more

Biblical History

in one hour than diligent reading and studying

"the English and American (or Anglo-American) Kinetoscope Company", "the Franco-Swiss Bioscope Company", the "Urban Bioscope Company" (in Cape Town and suburbs) and "West's Famous Pictures" which was a well-organised concern controlling fifteen touring shows - nine in Australia, two in England and three in the colonies. (It advertised - "West's favour a visit to those wayside towns where electricity is unknown as they carry their own plant".) In addition there were several other touring shows in which moving pictures figured such as the Steele-Payne Bellringers, the Cousen-Orr Variety Entertainers and a number of quasi-amateur vaudeville companies which visited the smaller towns.

An exception to these comparatively insignificant enterprises was the exhibition in 1909 of a single film - that of the Burns-Johnson fight the South African rights to which had been bought by Harold Carr from the Hon. Hugh D. MacIntosh of Sydney, Australia, its promoter.(i) Its popularity was remarkable and in Durban alone, it ran for a full week at the Theatre Royal.(ii) (Harold Carr subsequently staged "Concert and Picture Recitals" or bio-vaudeville shows in which the films were presented by a "Dramascope" but owing to the revival of entertainment and the intense competition between travelling "bioscopes", they had little success.)

The competition of these many organisations did little to improve the standard of "bioscope shows" and "get-rich-quick" principles continued to prevail except in rare instances. The showmen themselves were anxious to break down the widely-held belief that the "bioscope" constituted merely a coarse amusement for the vulgar masses and advertisements such as the following published by Hartley, began to appear with increasing insistency :

(i) The fight between Burns and Johnson had aroused great interest among the South African sporting community. It had been stopped by the police in the fourteenth round and the film, which showed every movement and every detail of the contest, was therefore assured of a certain amount of patronage.

(ii) This was the first single film to stage so long a run since the historical Corbett-Fitzsimmons fight film of 1898. This response inspired H.V. Barnes (who had always specialised in fight films) to show Jimmy Britt fighting Johnny Summers for the light-weight championship, with considerable success.

"These pictures are perfect masters of bioscopic photography and projected on the screen with our perfect electric appliances which we carry with us at enormous expense, we are capable of giving a bioscope entertainment which is worthy of the attention of the most intelligent and enlightened people, nothing better being presented either in London, Paris, Berlin or New York.

The days have passed, or at least are coming fast to an end, when it will be impossible to give bioscope entertainments, grinding the pictures out like meat out of a sausage mill, without any regard to the enlightenment or education of the public. Our programme is made out so that it will be distinctly understood by the audience from commencement to end and will receive your unqualified endorsement."

These efforts were however defeated by the films themselves. By 1909, the dramatic film had completely dominated programmes though every other type continued still to be shown, as follows :

Topical : Modern Airships (Wilbur Wright)
The Messina Disaster
Oxford and Cambridge Boar Race
The Grand National
The King's Derby (won by Minoru)
Bleriot's Flight across the Channel
Ziegler's North Pole Expedition
Shackleton's Expedition to the South Pole
The King's Visit to Berlin

Humorous : "The Prehistoric Man"
"The Lady Doctor's Husband"
"The Plank"
"Mother-in-Laws Race"
"Liquid Electricity"
"Twitching is Infectious"

Dramatic : The Passion Play or "Life of Christ"
"Flash James"
"Rescued by Rover"
"A Son's Crime"
"C.Q.D."
"Lady Letmere's Jewels"
"The Guardian of the Bank"
"Charlotte Corday"
"The Last Days of Pompeii"
"The Auto Heroine"
"Monsieur Beaucaire"
"The Three Musketeers"
"Napoleon - Man of Destiny"
"Kenilworth"
"Mary, Queen of Scots"
"Benvenuto Cellini
Many pantomimes and historical dramas

Documentary : "The Life of a Wood Ant"
"New Zealand", "Holland", "Wales" and many other lands
"The British Navy"
"The Making of Waterman Pens"
"The Making of a Dreadnought Gun"
"Amazons of Different Periods"
"Italy's Cavalry"

Trick : "Living Flowers"
"The Juggling Bluebottle"
"The Mysterious Thief"

Dramatic films emanated largely from England, America, France and Italy, the continental films dealing mostly with historical subjects in which the general grotesquerie appeared slightly less emphatic. Filled with frenzied action and a crudely triumphant morality, the general run of dramatic film alternated between the sensationalism of

hectic escapes and feats of prowess, and the pathos of domestic scenes in which wrongs were ultimately righted and prolonged suffering dissolved into happiness. Emphatic characterisation had followed on the first dramatic technique and - the villain, hero and heroine being immediately idenitifiable - the audience vociferously acclaimed them accordingly. Prodigal sons, little golden-haired children, innocent maidens and moustachioed mountebanks now became the feature of fiction films and though Wolfram declared "Napoleon - Man of Destiny" his favourite film and repeatedly showed it (1), audiences obviously preferred the cruder types of drama.

Comic films maintained their appeal, "The Plank" and "The Runaway Horse" continuing to be shown, and further "Screams" appeared in such tasteless pieces as""Twitching is Infectious" in which a gentleman, attacked by a peculiar spasm, communicates it to those around him with the most amusing results"(33) and "Liquid Electricity a French film in which a "scientist" discovers a peculiar substance

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(1) It was a French production and was revived again and again, being "followed with the greatest of interest. It depicted Napoleon visiting the room of the Empress Josephine after her death and as he sat down to reflect, he saw various visions of the most important events of his past life, such as the various battles he had been engaged in, his coronation, his marriage to his second wife, his son being presented to the Court and later the play, and finally Waterloo and St Helena. Many historic characters figured in the various scenes, the acting being excellent through out and the costumes of an ornate character. The last scene of all - Napoleon at the seaside at St Helena gazing out to sea - was particularly impressive..... "The Orphan of Messina" was very very pathetic. The little girl of well-to-do parents dies and the parents are inconsolable until their daughter appears, apparently in spirit form, and is supposed to tell them that they should adopt one of the poor children who have lost their parents in the catastrophe of Messina. This is done and the adopted child brightens the home of the two...."(34)

"The Guardian of the Bank", a popular film of the time, showed a bull dog protecting his charge against burglars; "The Auto Heroine" was a "bioscopic exhibition of a series of pictures which depict the heroism of a daughter who takes her father's place in a motor race against most trying odds. The pictures are really well worth witnessing."(35)(They were advertised as "the most sensational bioscope picture ever seen".)

"Rescued by Rover" in which a dog performed prodigious feats of intelligence and heroism in saving a baby, continued a firm favourite; also "A Son's Crime" which was another version of "The Prodigal Son".

Though the Continental films with their over-ornate decor and costumes astonished audiences into comparative silence, the sensational dramas from England and America were vociferously received and were possibly the more popular.

which, when injected into people, causes them to rush around with excessive energy.(i) Films which were shown for their trick effects only and not as"comics" were "Living Flowers" (a charming Percy Smith film in colour which showed seeds being planted in pots, growing up and blooming within the space of a few minutes - an effect achieved by turning a camera(crank) once every few hours for several weeks); "The Juggling Bluebottle" which continued to fascinate audiences, and "The Mysterious Thief", and old-type illusion (ii).

The topical films of 1909 were of outstanding interest,notably those of the Messina Disaster which were taken by cameramen of the Italian firm Cines and distributed by Charles Urban. Lasting for fifteen minutes and showing the effect of Etna's eruption, the films were extremely graphic and again aroused comment on the indispensable quality of moving pictures in supplementing newspaper accounts. This remark also frequently attached to numerous aviation films and particularly to that showing Bleriot flying across the Channel.(iii) The historic films of Shackleton's expedition to the South Pole, when

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(i) This was one of H.V. Barnes' most popular films. The genius of French producers for trick effects was profitably used in other such films - "One of the funniest pictures was that entitled "The Prehistoric Man". An artist draws a picture of him, the picture becomes alive, the prehistoric man stpps out of the canvas with a huge club and starts making investigations. The scenes he creates in the streets and in a public house cause the utmost consternation. Finally, to get rid of him, the artist draws a ferocious prehistoric animal which also comes to life and hauls the prehistoric biped off to its lair. The film shows how cleverly photography can be manipulated."(36)

(ii) "The Mysterious Thief" showed "to what a high state the art of photographic or cinematographic faking has reached - the thief apparently crumpling himself up into pieces of waste paper and other things, or being flattened out and so being able to pass under doorways and the like. Anything like it has not been seen before."(37)

(iii) "We see the courageous aviator seated in his monoplane ready to start, a few turns are given to the propellor in front just to see that it is in working order, the lever is pulled and we see M. Bleriot rising into the air and describing wide preliminary circles, then the monoplane is headed towards the Channel. One sees it like a huge grasshopper or dragon fly crossing the line of breakers and rapidly speeding out of sight towards Dover. Then there is the enthusiastic welcome of the intrepid aviator on his victorious return to Calais. To see this film is alone worth the money...."(38)

Another film of great interest showed the Flying Contest at Rheims at which aviators from all over the world competed in a variety of aircraft.

shown by Wolfram at the Good Hope Hall in Cape Town, were enlivened by suitable music by Isidore Fisher (i); but even these and the many outstanding documentary films shown during the year (ii) were doomed to insignificance in the face of the fiction film which, by 1910, had completely dominated programmes and apparently fathered moving pictures with inalienable characteristics of crudity and vulgarity. By then, a certain section of the public had become fanatically attached to the cinema. Halls began to be "crowded to suffocation", audiences arrived only to be turned away, seasons had to be prolonged Though the younger and less intelligent portions of the general publi thus early succumbed to the "movie-madness" which swept the world at this time, there continued to remain a considerable proportion who either ignored the "bioscope" completely or regarded the prevalent mania with incredulous surprise. If one or two touring shows visited Johannesburg simultaneously for instance, the newspapers would remark that the town "was particularly well supplied with bioscopes" or, with a vestige of astonishment, that "cinematograph displays had obtained a big hold on the public". No previous craze had endured fo this length and it continued for some time to be remarked that "the bioscope still holds its own" and that "the interest displayed in

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(i) "The pictures of the penguins, both the smaller and Emperor varieties, caused great merriment. They surely bear the palm amon living things for grotesque weirdness. The picture of the seal c the ice was another remarkable novelty. As it groped its way ove the ice, it looked like some great fat slug. Like the penguins, it is only in the water that it displays power and harmony of movement. When Mr Fisher at the piano, with an apt sense of humour, adapted the tempo of his music to the steps of the ludicrously solemn penguins marching, to the cooking pot, the whole thing became killingly funny...Mr Fisher's music as usual added very much to one's enjoyment. One owes much to him for th manner in which he colours the pictures with subtle hues derived from the concord of many sweet sounds."(39)

(ii) These included many travelogues and documentaries of industrial processes. One of the most remarkable documentaries shown by Wolfram in 1909 was

THE LIFE OF THE WOOD ANT

The Nest - The Queen Ant - Winged Male Ants - Defending the Nest against the Invading Army - Carrying off the Slain - Ants love Honey - Lifting a Half-Sovereign - A Modern Atlas - Drawing the Silver Coach - Killing and Dismembering a Bumble Bee - Combat with Spiders - Fighting and Capturing Caterpillars

After 1909, the documentary languished in popularity and soon disappeared completely.

bioscope pictures is remarkable". Typical of the prevalent astonishment is the following notice which appeared towards the middle of 1909 - "After the long succession of bioscope shows which have of late been given at the Good Hope Hall, one might almost have imagined that Cape Town would have been sated with this class of entertainment It speaks volumes therefore for the inherent power of the bioscope to interest, to amuse and to draw the public that there appears as yet no sign of decline in the patronage afforded to moving pictures and cogent evidence of the fact was afforded on the occasion of the opening of a short season of Thornton's Bioscope in the Good Hope Hall last night."(42)

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(3) Natal Mercury - 25th May I905

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(5) Original Letter - Miss M.K. Jeffries in the Author's Possession

(6) Eastern Province Herald - Ist September I903

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(IO) Cape Times - I8th September I906

(II) The Star - 7th July I906

(I2) Natal Mercury - 27th July I906

(I3) Natal Mercury - 4th June I906

(I4) Natal Mercury - I8th May I906

(I5) The Star - 29th January I906

(I6) Natal Mercury - 22nd August I906

(I7) Natal Mercury - 4th February I907

(I8) Natal Mercury - Ist April I907

(I9) Natal Mercury - 2nd November I907

(20) Natal Mercury - I3th March I908

(2I) The Star - 7th March I908

(22) Cape Times - 30th April I908

(23) Cape Times - 5th February I908

(24) Cape Times - 27th January I909

(25) The Star - I9th December I908

(26) Natal Mercury - 8th January I909

(27) Cape Times - 30th April I908

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(29) Cape Times - I3th September I909

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(33) The Star - 30th December I908
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(35) The Star - Ist June I909
(36) Cape Times - 8th February I909
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(38) Cape Times - I3th September I909
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CHAPTER V

The First Permanent Cinemas 1909-1910

CHAPTER V

The First Permanent Cinemas

1909-1910

The first move to exploit the extraordinary popularity of moving pictures in South Africa during 1909 and onwards did not come from the country itself but from England. During 1908, Frederick Mouillot, partner of the de Jong brothers in the organisation of professional entertainment (i), visited South Africa and was impressed with the possibilities of establishing the "bioscope" industry on a permanent basis in the manner recently initiated in Europe and America (ii) Mouillot had formed a company in England entitled "Electric Theatres Ltd" which had established small permanent cinemas in the big cities, forming a "circuit" for the circulation of programmes of films. He accordingly formed a subsidiary company to exploit the South African field and on the 29th July 1909, the first "Electric Theatre" in South Africa was opened in Durban.(I)

Operated by the "Natal Electric Theatres Ltd" and managed by Prince Russell, this "Electric Theatre" occupied small premises in West Street and, charging only 6d admission, promptly attained a considerable measure of success (iii). In October 1909, W.Rees who

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(i) From about 1898 until his death at Tenerife in 1903, Frank de Jong one of South Africa's great impresarios, frequently collaborated with Frederick Mouillot in the importation of theatrical companies to South Africa. These companies toured current London Musical successes for the most part and went under the name of "de Jong-Mouillot" and sometimes "Sass-Nelson" companies. Arthur de Jong continued this association after his brother's death and was responsible for the organisation of a great deal of South Africa's professional entertainment of every kind.

(ii) Mouillot launched his English enterprise at the right time and it met with great initial success, the circuit covering London and the provinces. The "Electric Theatres" were conducted on the simplest principles. Large shop premises were rented in the main thoroughfares of London and other large towns, benches were installed, a sheet hung on the far wall and a projector mounted at the back. Charging a few pence admission, performances were given from early in the morning until about midnight, the only intervals being to remove one audience and admit another. Programmes were changed about once a week, the films being circulated among the large number of Electric Theatres that immediately appeared until they had completely "done the rounds", by which time they were hardly fit for exhibition.

(iii) Its popularity was enhanced by the fact that it employed a "bioscopist" who took films of Durban itself which were shown shortly afterwards at the Electric Theatre. In 1909, this cameraman filmed the July Handicap.

claimed to have toured moving picture shows in South Africa for ten years, joined the staff of the"Electric Theatre" "in a very responsible position" and in November 1909, when the business had been organised as a limited liability company, he managed the monthly "Electric Tours" organised by the theatre to make further use of its films. These tours covered the smaller towns of Natal and neighbourhood and, at an admission rate of 1/-, gave two nightly performances wherever sufficient population and an adequate hall could be found.(i) By the beginning of 1910, these tours were said to "have become exceedingly popular throughout Natal and the Orange River Colony, patrons in each town looking forward with pleasure to the visit".

The Durban "Electric Theatre" proved continuously remunerative and for weeks at a time, it provided the only entertainment in the town. In December 1909, it was altered and redecorated to cope with increased patronage and on the 11th December, Natal Electric Theatre opened a further "Electric Theatre" on the corner of Grey and Alice Streets in Durban for "Coloured People Only", mainly Indians.(ii)The success of these ventures prompted Mouillot to establish further outlets for his films and shortly after the opening of the Durban "Electric Theatre", he leased an old store belonging to J.D.Logan(iii) at the foot of Adderley Street in Cape Town (where the Colosseum

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(i) "The conduct of such a tour round the country entails a great deal of expense to the promoters as, apart from travelling expenses and rents for the various Town Halls, the 12,000 (?)odd feet of film shown round the country represents the best part of a couple of hundred pounds and therefore it has been found impossible to run it for the nimble sixpence charged locally, so no expense it to be spared in making the Electric Tour permanent and popular."(2)

(ii) Its first programme showed scenes outside the Mosque in Grey Street taken by its own "bioscopist" and subsequent programmes, apart from the films, included Khalifa ceremonies and dances by Nautch girls. The enterprise seems to have attained as much success as the European "Electric Theatre", Durban's Indians early proving enthusiastic cinema-goers.

(iii) The well-known "Jimmy" Logan was refreshment caterer to the Cape Government Railways, friend of Cecil Rhodes and sometime Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Building now stands and on the Table Mountai side or above the whilom "Wolfram's Bioscope"). Suitable alterations were made and on the 9th September 1909, the "Theatre de Luxe" was opened to the public.It was financed by the London "Electric Theatre Company" and was managed for them by a local man, Arthur de Jong watching the business on behalf of the parent company. Performances were given from 2.30 until 6 in the afternoon and from 7.30 until 10.30 in the evening. Admission was only 6d and the programme was divided into "Travel" (including "Diamond Mining at Kimberley"), "Topical", "Comic" and "Drama", about ten short films being shown in all. The "bioscope", having attained "a permanent habitat in the elegant little theatre at the foot of Adderley Street"(3) continued popular and on Saturday nights in particular, the "Theatre de Luxe" was packed, crowds standing on the pavements outside.

Continuing the establishment of a "circuit" in South Africa, Mouillot opened an "Electric Theatre" in Port Elizabeth on the 18th February 1910 (1). It was situated in Main Street and had formerly been a pawnbroker's shop, seating for only 200 being possible and admission being the usual sixpence. A further "Electric Theatre" was opened in Germiston, Transvaal in July 1910 which was only 60 feet long by 30 wide. By this time, other permanent cinemas had appeared in the big towns - two in Cape Town and one at Woodstock, two in Durban as well as the Indian "Electric Theatre", and several in Johannesburg and Pretoria.

The South African "Electric Theatres Company" was short-lived owing to its being founded on the short-term principle of small but rapid turn-overs. As keen competition soon arose, it was unable to maintain the success of its initial adx ventures. The primary cause of its failure was not so much the low charge of admission but the fact that the parent company regarded South Africa as a "dumping-ground" for the films worn out on its English circuit and as a source of immediate financial gain rather than as a field for future development

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(1) Its opening programme included South African films, one being of the Premier Diamond Mine. The Port Elizabeth Advertiser remarked : "the bioscope is a popular form of entertainment and we wish success to the stationary one now started in our midst."(4). It did not however survive for long.

By the time the films reached South Africa, they were not only out-of-date but scratched, blurred and torn and unable to compete with the new, comparatively flickerless films imported weekly by Wolfram from the Warwick Trading Company. The Durban "Electric Theatre", owing to lack of opposition, succeeded in celebrating its first anniversary and continued for some months longer; the "Theatre de Luxe" in Cape Town (which soon had to face the immediate juxta-position of "Wolfram's Bioscope") ceased to operate about the middle of 1911; and other "Electric Theatres" elsewhere soon closed down in the face of intense and superior competition.(i)

When the "Theatre de Luxe" opened in Cape Town, Wolfram was showing films of Bleriot's flight across the Channel at the Good Hope Hall. Whether the manifest success of the "Electric Theatre" motivated him or whether he had entertained the idea previously is now unknown; but within a month, Wolfram had started his own permanent cinema in Cape Town. Pending the equipment of his own theatre, Wolfram gave a few more performances at the Good Hope which, despite the opposition of the "Theatre de Luxe", were attended by crowds and fulsomely eulogised in the Press and then, on the 4th October 1909, he began "Continuous Performances" at the Oddfellows Hall in Plein Street. In prices of admission and duration, the shows were identical with those run by the "Theatre de Luxe", programmes being changed every Wednesday. The Oddfellows Hall seated 460 (the "Theatre de Luxe" only 307).(ii)

Meanwhile other permanent cinemas had appeared in Cape Town - the Empire Bioscope Theatre in Victoria Road, Woodstock which gave continuous performances in the evening and matinees on Wednesdays and Saturdays; and Rideut's Bioscope, a second-rate show at the Princess (National) Theatre in William Street, District Six, where the charges

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(i) Despite the fact that he took no steps to ensure their sustained success, to Frederick Mouillot belongs the credit of opening the first permanent cinemas in South Africa. He died in August 1911 and was mourned as "one of the pioneers of picture palace entertainment".

(ii) When Wolfram obtained an exceptional film such as "Furthest South with Lieutenant Shackleton" (which was shown under the patronage of Their Excellencies the Governors of the Cape and of Natal - Sir Walter Hely Hutchinson and Sir Mathew Nathan), he leased the Good Hope Hall for several performances while maintaining his permanent cinema at the same time.

were only 3d and 6d (this latter soon disappeared). In January 1910, the Fishers opened the"Alhambra Bioscope Theatre" in the Masonic Hall St John's Street and on the 16th April, the "American Bioscope"opened at the Oddfellows Hall, Plein Street when Wolfram vacated it. On the same day, Wolfram opened his own cinema next to the "Theatre de Luxe" at the foot of Adderley Street with one of his favourite films - "Nero - or the Burning of Rome".

"Wolfram's Bioscope" - already a household word and still entrenched in thousands of memories - seated only 565 but immediately became an institution in Cape Town. Admission was only 6d, programmes were changed weekly and the films, except for a few beloved comics and exceptional dramatic films, were always new. On Saturdays, hundreds thronged the pavements waiting to get in. In the face of this competition, the adjacent "Theatre de Luxe" soon succumbed and the reputation of "Wolfram's Bioscope" stood unchallenged, its few competitiors (except for the Fishers) being of minor order.

The Fisher family led by the father, Mr A.M. Fisher, who had always been implicated in moving picture shows, first opened the "Alhambra Bioscope Theatre" in the Masonic Hall, St John's Street in March 1910. This enterprise proving unsuccessful, they re-commenced in July with the "King of Bioscopes" at the Good Hope Hall on a continuous basis, a venture which was sustained for some time. On the 2nd August 1910, the Fishers opened the "Union Bioscope" in the Dutch Reformed Church Hall in Parliament Street which maintained a separate existence for several months; and on the 20th October, they opened another permanent bioscope called the "Royal Bioscope" in the Royal Arcade, Plein Street. Their most important and lasting enterprise however was the opening of "Fisher's Elite Bioscope" in the Metropolitan Hall, Burg Street on the 3rd March 1911. This bioscope soon rivalled Wolfram's in popularity and reputation (1) and similarly became an

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(1) In 1918, after giving up the Elite Bioscope, the Fishers temporarily occupied the Grand Theatre in Cape Town before embarking on free-lance activity; but by that time, they had attained a unique reputation as independent showmen. In point of showmanship and feeling for public demand, they had few competitiors and, unlike Wolfram, maintained their independence in the face of crushing competition from the African Theatres and Films Trust until they could virtually dictate their own terms of capitulation.

institution in Cape Town.

At this time, other similar enterprises were being launched at the Cape. One of these was the "South African Bioscope Company" which derived from the visit of "West's Famous Pictures" (see Page 122) to Cape Town some months after its arrival in Durban in June 1909.(i)As a result of discussion, the mangger of this enterprise agreed to work in association with a Mr Bernard Brown who thought the exploitation of moving pictures in platteland dorps a likely proposition. It proved however of variable success (in some areas, the entire dorp had to be plunged in darkness to provide the "bioscope" with electric light)and eventually Bernard Brown took complete control of "West's Famous Pictures" and commenced exhibiting in the Cape Town suburbs. Towards the end of 1910, he established permanent "Electric Theatres" at Muizenberg and Kalk Bay, the latter in the Church Hall (the same films being used for both performances through the agency of a boy on a bicycle). Attempting to establish permanent cinemas elsewhere (notably at Mullers Skating Rink in Claremont in August 1910 - a venture which Wolfram also unsuccessfully tried), Brown found the bioscope business with its absurdly low prices of admission too precarious and abandonned it.

Various other such enterprises attempted to exploit the prevailing popularity of moving pictures at the Cape and though many "permanent" cinemas were opened, few survived.

In chronological sequence, the second cinema to be opened in South Africa was the "Bijou" in Johannesburg. It was promoted by two Canadians, W. Bogue and G.K. Shepherd who were shortly joined by H.V. Barnes, the well-known itinerant showman. The "Bijou" consisted of the converted premises of the Union Market at the corner of Smal and President Streets and was opened on the 2nd September 1909,proving immediately popular as a novelty.(ii) Its promoters then opened "Bijou

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(i) "West's Famous Pictures" also had a "bioscopist" named Burt Carr who filmed several South African scenes.

(ii) In lieu of a bioscope, the Bijou Theatre advertised a "Cameragraph". At the opening performance, "Madame de Groen (soprano), late of the Moody-Manners Opera Co, rendered selections from her repertoire". Admission was 1/-. "The interesting entertainment at the Bijou Theatre", said The Star (5),"has evidently become very popular here and the excellent selection of the pictures and music which constitute the programme attract quite a number of people to Johannesburg's latest hall of amusement."

No.2" ,as it was called, in the Assembly Hall, Market Square, Fordsburg on the 16th December 1909 which was managed by H.V. Barnes and constituted Johannesburg(s second permanent cinema. In February 1910, the company converted the Empress Theatre in Pretoria into another "Bijou Bioscope" and in June 1910, they commenced building a "palatial" new Bijou next to the Temple Court Building in Jeppe Stree between Eloff and Joubert Streets (the site of the present Bijou). Though its construction was impeded by numerous difficulties, it was opened on the 30th July 1910 and the original tiny "Bijou No.I" in President became the "Royalty" soon to close down.

Meanwhile the foundations of the organised South African cinema industry were being laid. During a visit to Glasgow in 1909 (6), a certain Nat Reid saw an "Electric Theatre" and impressed with the idea of starting one in South Africa, formed a company called the "Union Bioscope Company" on his return to Krugersdorp (Transvaal) consisting of himself, F.R.J.(Dick) Holmes who printed the "Weekly Standard", and Bert Walker, a plumber. The local chemist, a Mr. Thomson invested £800 in the venture whose first enterprise was the opening of the "Lyric Theatre" in Human Street, Krugersdorp, a small wood and iron building seating about 90 people. Continuous performances of an hour apiece were given and an old man named Aldred collected shillings at the door. The usual Pathé scenics, and American and French comedies and dramas were shown. Despite its very limited capacity, the "Lyric" proved so successful that its promoters extended their activities in December 1909 to include the "Vaudette Theatre and Lounge Tea Rooms" in the Royal Arcade, Pritchard Street, Johannesburg which ran a continuous bioscope programme from 2.30 to 5.30 and from 7.30 to 11, admission being 1/-.(1) By this time,"bioscope fever" had thoroughly gripped South Africa and, determined to take advantage of the public's persistent desire for moving pictures, the "Union Bioscope Company" demolished the ramshackle "Lyric" at Krugersdorp and built the "Vaudette Theatre" in its place. Similar theatres were built at Kimberley and East London and by 1910, the

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(1) The opening feature film was the spectacular "Nero, or the Burning of Rome". The following week, the Vaudette featured "The Trainer's Daughter", a race-course drama when "this very cosy little theatre was crowded to its utmost capacity".

company had a circuit of four Vaudette theatres which provided it with a sound business basis. This, with the Bijou enterprise, was the first attempt to exploit the "bioscope" in an organised manner.

Among other speculators, the situation also appealed tbm the well-known Rufe Naylor (1) who towards the end of 1909, planned to build and run a "picture palace". He unsuccessfully approached H.V. Barnes, then manager of the Fordsburg Bijou, for financial assistance and later, in association with Marks Frechner, formed the "Tivoli Theatres Company" which, on the 5th February 1910, opened the "Tivoli Picture Palace" in President Street (near Eloff Street), Johannesburg's fifth permanent cinema (the others being the Bijou, the Fordsburg Bijou, the Vaudette and the American Bioscope, an isolated enterprise at Jeppestown). The "Tivoli" seated 600 and had a few boxes "nicely fitted". Vaudeville artistes and an orchestra accompaniment were added to the films which were shown continuously ("Come when you like and leave when you like"). The charges were : Boxes for four 10/-; Orchestra Stalls 1/6d; Stalls 1/-; Children 6d. Over two thousand people attended the Tivoli's opening performance and despite the competition of the Bijou and Vaudette which were consistently well filled, the Tivoli also was continuously packed. Its sloggn became : "the select family theatre". In April 1910, Naylor opened a "Tivoli Theatre" at Boksburg and in May, another at Germiston. By this time, Johannesburg was thoroughly "movie-mad" and there were nearly twenty permanent "picture palaces" in and around the town. A further Tivoli was opened in Pretoria and in September 1910, Naylor installed an "Open Air Bioscope" at his Stadium in

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(1) Rufe Naylor was one of the most energetic and spectacular characters in the history of South African entertainment and ranks as a genuine pioneer of the local cinema industry. He was born at Redfern in Australia in 1882 (?) and from his earliest years onwards, led a most adventurous life. At the age of twelve he worked in a mine and at fifteen, he became a licenced bookmaker - the youngest in the Dominion. He came to South Africa in 1908 and shortly afterwards, opened his famous Stadium in Main Street, Johannesburg. Here he staged racing track contests (then an exceptionally popular sport and gambling pastime in Johannesburg) and in 1910, staged the famous triangular race over 100 yards for the world's championship between Jack Donaldson (the winner), Arthur Postle and Charles Holway.

Towards the end of 1909, Naylor's attention was drawn towards the speculative possibilities of the "bioscope boom" and while retaining his other interests (and indeed, adding to them) enthusiastically entered the "picture palace" business in which he figured largely for many years.

Main Street, Johannesburg,(i)an enterprise which did not however last very long. In February 1911, Naylor extended his interests by buying the "Pavilion Picture Palace" opposite the Star Printing Works in President Street and reopening it. By then, his Tivoli Company was a considerable business and well entrenched in the entertainment world.

The Bijou Company, the Union Bioscope Company with its Vaudette Theatres in Johannesburg, East London and Kimberley, and Rufe Naylor's Tivoli Company were the first attempts to exploit moving pictures on an organised basis of building up "circuits". The Bijou Company soon fell out but in the other two organisations, the foundations of the present South African cinema industry were laid. In September 1910, they were joined in competition by the "Grand Theatre" which was opened in Market Street, Johannesburg by Louis Blond and managed by Michael Chadwick. This became a very popular place of amusement despite the fact that by the time it opened,(ii)

(i)

Open Air Bioscope
Just what the public have been waiting for !
STADIUM
The "People's Playground" and "Home for Pure Sport"
Continuous Bioscope Show from 8 to 10.30

We guarantee to give you double the length of show at any Picture Palace in town.
The Reason ? Because we can accommodate 10,000 people
1910 Machine - all films shown life-like. Star Pictures specially selected. Latest Patent Screen on which pictures shown brilliantly while Grounds are illuminated.
Also Grand Sports, Running, Cycling and Whippet Racing. 30 Events
The whole show exciting and amusing from start to finish. The event of the year.
Note : These pictures are not shown between events but are going on all the time without a Minute's interval. If you don't like a particular picture, you can watch the sports without shifting your seat - or vice versa. Why be suffocated in stuffy theatres when you can see better pictures in the pure open air, cool and comfortable ?
A Revelation in Picture Shows
Seating for 3,000. Standing for 10,000 people
This is not a "trial" show but an Entertainment managed by experts who have made your wants a life-long study.
Admission to full show : 2/6d. Ladies 1/-. Children with parents 6d
To Sports Only 1/-.
Rufe Naylor - Managing Director
J.A.C. Ltd

(ii) Its opening advertisement reflected the shoddy and insanitary nature of contemporary "picture palaces" :

GRAND THEATRE
and Picturedrome
Market Street (between Eloff and von Brandis Streets)
A Theatre unsurpassed for its Magnificence
Every Modern Convenience including
CLOAKROOMS
Accommodation Unequalled
etc etc

Johannesburg owned a profusion of "picture palaces".

The aforementioned enterprises all had a direct bearing on the future history of the cinema in South Africa but there were also many others which came into being, operated for a short time and then disappeared. The institution of permanent cinemas did not immediately deter itinerant showmen from continuing to tour the large towns. Wolfram himself, even when his own permanent bioscope was operating in Cape Town, toured throughout the country and as late as June 1910, exhibited in Johannesburg when the town already owned fifteen "picture palaces". Beetar, Thornton, Pascot and one or two others continued touring but sooner or later, all were forced to exclude the large towns where "stationary bioscopes" suddenly appeared in great numbers. Like Wolfram, Thornton established his own bioscope - "Thornton's Electric Picture Palace" which began with a twelve months' lease of His Majesty's Theatre in Durban in August 1910 and ended as one of the best-known names in the South African entertainment world.(1) Beetar too established a bioscope - "The Popular Picture Palace" in West Street, Durban which was opened in November 1910 but had not similar sustained success.

Apart from the innumerable "picture palaces" which made sudden and often unsuccessful appearances in towns throughout South Africa (Johannesburg excelled all others in "bioscope fever"),moving pictures continued to be exploited by other amusement enterprises. They were used by hotels and cafes and "Jollyrinkoscopes", Urbanarascopes" and other versions of the bioscope appeared in profusion at skating rinks (where the revived craze for roller-skating again showed signs of declining)."Legitimate"entertainment too showed signs of succumbing before the popular fancy (overseas the music hall had already suffered appreciably) and in Cape Town alone, the Opera House and Tivoli had, though only temporarily, been given over to "Bioscope Displays". The Tivoli in particular soon made a speciality of moving pictures and for some time dispensed entirely with variety turns.

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(1) "Thornton's Bioscope" in Durban, "Wolfram's Bioscope" and "Fisher's Bioscope" in Cape Town became popular institutions which "trustification" took many years to obliterate.

The immediate success of permanent cinemas prompted every type of speculator to open them, frequently without capital. These "picture palaces" were of the shoddiest nature and showed films which were at best second-hand. Their incomes (from shillings and sixpences) was very small and though perhaps initially successful, competition from better-organised shows caused their patronage to decline. During 1910 an incalculable number of "picture palaces" were opened throughout South Africa but few survived six months. Some, like the Coliseum in Johannesburg (1), survived two or three years; but for the most part, the first bioscopes, riding the crest of the wave for a few weeks at best, soon disappeared. Their failure was due to the unsound basis of the early industry and unbusinesslike methods; but "bioscope fever" remained and indeed intensified.(ii) As fast as the first "picture palaces" closed, they were re-opened by more optimistic speculators or others appeared elsewhere; but in the end, only those operated by showmen such as Wolfram, Thornton and Fisher and the few solidly-founded companies with "circuits" survived.

Public appreciation of moving pictures had however advanced

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(1) The Coliseum was opened by L. Hartfeil and P. Ferrieres in May 1910 on the site of the Old Stock Exchange in Johannesburg (later occupied by the Pallacium). Its promoters were "mainly composed of American citizens".

(ii) In October 1910, at one sitting of the Magistrates Court in Johannesburg, Rufe Naylor and Marks Prechner (Tivoli) were fined £18, Michael Chadwick (Grand) £20, Max Benjamin (Star Theatre) £34 and the manager of the Gaiety Theatre £10 for over-crowding. Most prosecutions were on several counts of which allowing the audience to stand in the aisles was the principal.

(In this connection, an interesting legal point arose. Naylor and Prechner appealed against their conviction to the Transvaal Provincial Court which was unsuccessful and then sought special leave to appeal to the Appelate Division of the Supreme Court. Their counsel contended that a bioscope did not come within the scope of the Transvaal Act which had been passed fourteen years before or previous to the showing of moving pictures, and that the bioscope was not included in the term "public entertainment" as defined and illustrated in the Act. The presiding Judge, Lord de Villiers, denied the appeal in which Sir James Rose-Innes and Sir William Solomon concurred.) judgment

Such prosecutions grew increasingly frequent as "bioscope fever" increased its hold on the public. On Saturdays, it was not unusual for crowds to congregate outside "picture palaces" waiting their turn for admission. The shows which they patronised were extremely crude but the bioscope by now had assumed the fanatical attraction of a genuine popular "craze".

a trifle beyond the previous unquestioning acceptance of moving pictures. The permanent "picture palace" had an air almost of respectability and proprietors were quick to canvass, not the assured public of sensation-seeking individuals (notably children) but the wider public of the family. Efforts were made to make cinemas appear a source not only of amusement but of instructive entertainment and slogans were attached to theatres emphasising their respectability and freedom from sensationalism and vulgarity.(1)

The first "picture palaces" were very small, usually seating about a hundred. Except for a very few which were assembly halls or abandonned theatres (such as the Old Gaiety in Johannesburg which opened as a cinema in June 1910), they consisted of converted shop premises, obsolete markets, stores of warehouses. The seating often consisted merely of rough benches either nailed to the floor as closely as possible or loosely arranged and the single exit was screened by a curtain. Owing to the absence of municipal regulations there was no provision for exits. The projector was housed in a narrow cubicle like a telephone box and operators, like jockeys, were chosen for their size. (Many of them, owing to the intense heat inside the box, suffered from "Operator's Consumption" and kindred diseases.)

Any "picture palace" which showed films only (which was virtually impossible owing to the imperfections of the projector and the lack of skilled operators due to the boom) was termed an "innovation" and programmes were interspersed with at least two or three variety turns which, in the smaller cinemas, were of very poor

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(1) The Bijou adjured its public "to get the Bijou habit"; the Tivoli was "the select family theatre" and later "the Mirror of the Universe" and "the Window of the World"; the Oxford (Johannesburg) was "the Drawing Room Theatre"; the Palace "the most refined bioscope entertainment in town"; the Vaudette "the Fashionable Electric Theatre"; etc etc.
At this time, newspapers continuously referred to "the fever of the film" and "pictures palaces" were continuously packed.

quality.(i) During November 1910, the "Bioscope Artistes" as they wer called, went on strike in Johannesburg (ii); but conciliation finally being reached, their services were again betained by "picture palaces" though, as time went on and films became even more hectic and exciting, their importance progressively diminished. In addition to the periodical turns given by these artistes, a continuous musical accompaniment was indispensable to all bioscopes. The more pretentiou bioscopes maintained small orchestras(iii); but even the smallest"picture palace" had continuously to employ a pianist(iv). The highly-specialised character of "bioscope music" (special works were composed for "hair-raising scenes", sentimental passages, suspense, pathos, elation etc)

(i) Typical performers (who were often recruitied locally) were :
"Mr Willie Roberts - the well known Society entertainer"
"Miss Eddie Welsh - the Dainty Little Comedienne in Buckskins"
"Miss Stella Wilson - the Favourite Coon Artiste Impersonator and
"Miss Nellie Gover - the celebrated Ballad Vocalist" Dancer"
etc etc.
The turns frequently took the form of female impersonators, whistlers, "operatic sopranoes", banjoists, Indian club swingers, players of the comb and other unorthodox instruments, etc.
The following (8) is a typical programme of the period :

PROGRAMME
(gratis)

(I) Motion Picture - "A Good Winner" (Comic)
Drawer of winning ticket to French lottery nails ticket to door. Door must be taken to collect money. Compensation for damage done on road eats up all the prize money.

(2) Motion Picture - "Wonders of Nature"
A beautiful illustration from Nature showing the great Water-falls of Nevada U.S.A.-"The Twin Falls" - the Niagara of the West.

(3) Norman West - the original comedian in "Logic" and "Scotch Parody"

(4) "For the Fatherland" - Star Picture
Oppressed people plot for relief. Our hero is the leader. One of the party turns traitor and informs. The conspirators are arrested at a meeting. The hero's wife tries to swallow the documental evidence of husband's guilt and is too late. She however calls on the traitor and shoots him dead. It makes it appear a case of suicide. "Thus die the traitors of the Fatherland".

(5) Motion Picture - "The Lucky Number" (Comic)
Woman dreams that No.13 ticket wins the big lottery. Borrows money to purchase this ticket but spends it otherwise. It is generally thought that she has purchased the ticket 13 and whe it is the winner, she is beseiged with offers of marriage.

(6) Miss Cissie Frampton - Refined Serio

(7) Star Picture - "The Story of Treasure Island"
Plans of the hiding place of the treasure of"S.A.Walrus" are stolen from a sailor who is murdered. The thieves set sail for island but boy who knows of murder is also aboard. The boy over hears plot to murder captain and mates; he warns them and all escape in a boat to the treasure island. Thieves follow, fighting ensues. Boy is captured but rescued by wild man who knows hiding place of treasure. Thieves are shot and the others divide the spoil.

(8) Mr Randolph Epstein (Tenor) - Illustrated Songs and Selections from Grand Opera

(9) Star Picture - "The Kidnappers"
"Little Blue Cap", playing outside home, is kidnapped by two scoundrels and held for ransom. Reward of £100 is offered for her return. Her two boy playmates decided to searhh for "Blue Cap". The tassel of her cap is the clue. One of the thieves reads the reward announcement and pulls the cap from his pocket. He is tracked by the boys and while one returns for the police, the other effects a thrilling rescue. They are chased by the kidnappers and, just when recapture seems certain, the police arrive "just in time".

(10) Comic Picture - "Lively Linen"

Special Engagement
MINIATURE MARIE (from London and Paris Halls)
Actress, Mimic and Dancer
The "Star" turn of South Africa
Reappearance after her serious illness

(11) The owners of the Vaudette, Tivoli, Coliseum, Grand and Bijou in Johannesburg; the Tivoli and Vaudette at Germiston; the Tivoli at Boksburg; the Bijou, Vaudette and Tivoli at Pretoria; the Lyric at Krugersdorp; the Bijou at Fordsburg and the Palace at Potchefstroom (i.e. the Union Bioscope Co., the Bijou Co., the Grand Co., and Rufe Naylor's Tivoli Co.) had formed themselves into a "Bioscope Proprietors' Association" popularly called "The Combine" which deducted 5% from the artistes' salaries for unstated purposes. The artistes objected and, despite the fact that these four circuits represented their only chance of consistent employment, went on strike. Proprietors who were not members of the Association (some bioscopes actually advertised "A Non-Combine House") promised financial and other aid to the striking artistes and gave "benefit nights" for them which raised £300. Both parties held meetings which ended in deadlock. The matter resolved itself into the question of whether the public desired variety artistes or more films. Rufe Naylor, in a statement to the Press (9) remarked that "the bioscope proprietors maintain that the change from artistes to extra pictures will come more expensive to them as good pictures cost from £15 to £25" which the artistes committee promptly rebutted by pointing out that "whilst a good picture may cost the amount stated, Mr Rufe Naylor forgets to mention that these pictures are hired out to other bioscopex proprietors and thus speedily pay for themselves". The committee adopted a truculent attitude and announced their intention of continuing the strike, adequate funds being forthcoming from the non-combine owners who, relishing the opportunity of disconcerting their rivals, generously gave the profits of one night's performance per week or an income amounting to between £200 and £300 monthly. A compromise was however reached and the artistes returned to the picture palaces.

(iii) The Cape Town "Tivoli", though properly a music-hall, extensively advertised its large orchestra under the conductorship of the well-known Riegelhuth which played "suitable music" for its "Bioscope Displays".

(iv) These marathon musicians thumped out sentimental or rousing tunes as occasion demanded day and night. (The late Mr. J. Langle Levy wrote an excellent article in The Sunday Times dealing with their efforts (10).) "Bioscope music", a peculiar brand of cacophony, exists as a generic term in modern times. Its interpretation of "suitability" was very obvious but it undoubtedly vitalised the early silent dramas. Its performance made heroic demands in point of strength and musical memory; but in time, many (including Isidore Fisher) alleged that they developed an "instindt" for suitable music and could play the appropriate tunes without even looking at the screen or previewing the film.

In October 1910, the pianist of the Vienna Bioscope in Eloff Street sued his employers for withheld wages. He alleged that he had played with such industry and vigour that his hands had collapsed and that, rather than lose his job, he had engaged a proxy. The management dismissed both the proxy and himself and he therefore demanded £7 or two weeks wages. He lost the case

was improved by "sound effects" which now began to differentiate the superior from the ordinary "picture palace". The noises available were manifold, depending on the ingenuity of the management, and in some cases, genuinely scared the audience.(i)

The conditions under which cinema entertainment was given remained deplorable. The conversion of unsuitable premises for "picture palace" purposes meant that audiences were seated on a level with their vision of the screen frequently impeded by numerous pillars or other supports, and the cartwheel hats, monumentally piled with fruit, flowers or ostrich feathers, fashionable among women of all classes at the period.(ii) The vociferation of certain elements in bioscope audiences continued unabated, indeed aggravated by the increased excitement of films. Pronounced flicker persisted and in the vast majority of cases, films were heavily scratched, torn or blurred, break-downs in the projection being frequent. Though the institution of "circuits" had to a certain extent ensured better conditions in the "picture palaces" concerned, their subsequent sale of films to other exhibitors placed on the market a constant supply of inferior material which independent showmen were forced to buy at cheaper rates if their bioscopes were to remain open. Soon after the big bioscope boom of 1910, prices of admission were depressed by competition to sixpence in the majority of cases. While, at the time this step increased patronage, its ultimate effect was suicidal. Cheaper second-hand films became useless to sixpenny showmen whose

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(i) At first, a clang on a bell when a tram-car appeared on the screen would disconcert an audience for several seconds. The Cape Town Tivoli (as well as Wolfram) specialised in "sound effects". At the end of 1910, a reporter wrote (11) that its bioscope "still shows no sign of waning as a form of popular amusement nor is that at all likely to be the case while pictures of such a high order of merit are projected. Mr Stodel is quite right in assuming that what is good for a London audience is sufficient to please the Cape Town public. Little by little, such touches of realism as the clatter of horses' feet, the sound of firearms and the noise of falling furniture are being added by way of anticipating the time when a full oral accompaniment will be an adjunct to the bioscope."

(ii) Largely on account of their children, women were early enthusiastic patrons of the "bioscope". When Darrell and Snowball opened Durban's third permanent cinema, the Greyville Bioscope, in April 1910, "quite an innovation was made at the commencement which chiefly concerned the fair sex - for the first plate to be reproduced on the screen was a notice asking the wearers of large hats to kindly remove them. A round of applause greeted this request". (12) Unpleasant scenes frequently occurred in bioscopes between indignant men and uncooperative women, who sometimes stood their children on the seats the better to combat the unsloped floor.

patrons had once seen new films at the bigger houses and therefore refused to pay even sixpence to see old ones of inferior quality. In the end, a vicious circle was established but for some time at least audiences were prepared to pay to see scratched and flickery films virtually intolerable to the eye.

The combined effect of these features of the first "picture palaces" inevitably retarded the development of the cinema as a widely-accepted form of entertainment. It now became "the poor man's pleasure" and the children's special joy. Beyond this, it existed largely as the target for obloquy of well-intentioned social workers Apart from remonstrations concerning eye-strain due to flicker and other comparatively innocuous objections, attention came increasingl to be drawn to the actual dangers of bioscope shows. Inadequate exit were the main cause and, until municipal regulations were instituted to prohibit the exposure of a naked light in the operator's box, fires were frequent. On the whole however, fatalities were few in South Africa though the disrepute occasioned by the obviously inflammable quality of the films and the news of many disasters overseas caused a certain amount of public apprehension for many years. From 1910 onwards, the opening of new cinemas was almost invariably attended by advertisements such as "the safest bioscope in town", "several exits", "no danger to operators", etc. Other charges against the early bioscopes were on the grounds of hygiene. In some cases, lavatories adjoined the "Bioscope and Tea Lounge" and in view of the penurious circumstances of most proprietors, only energetic steps by welfare officers secured an amelioration of extremely crude conditions.

The survival of the popularity of moving pictures after the first fanatical phase which secured the institution of permanent cinemas, was almost entirely due to the quality of the films themselves. Even when the "craze" had spent itself, there remained a ver considerable public prepared to patronise "picture palaces" purely i virtue of the perennially new attractions which they offered. It is almost impossible to characterise the cinema of 1909-1910 by any one type of film though certain general tendencies in the form of moving pictures emerged at this time. A bewildering heterogeneity followed on the widespread popularity of the fiction film and the products of every European and American producer were shown in South Africa.

American production continued to be typified by the "Wild West", heavily-moral drama and sensational melodrama. The subjects for English production were frequently stage successes of every kind fro Shakespeare to melodrama. French films continued to be largely historical and many dealt with Dickens' stories. Italian films dealt increasingly with scenes of historic debauchery produced with zest and extravagance, classical history being ransacked for suitabl incidents.(i) A few Swedish and German films completed many programmes.

By the beginning of I9IO, a great diversification had begun in fiction films. Topical films appeared to have lost their importance, the documentary film was hardly ever shown and melodrama of every type occupied pride of place on all programmes. Imposing historical subjects were often hand-coloured and biblical films which now ranged throughout the Scriptures, became more blasphemous. "The Life of Moses" in 3,000 feet might be shown in the same programme as "The Rape of the Sabines", "The Fire Chief's Daughter" and "Racing for Life", together with a number of"comics" now distinguished by leading characters such as "Calino", "Tontolino", "Foolshead","Dottynob" etc.(ii) The following list of popular films of I9IO indicates the development and diversification of fiction films of the period :

(i) "One of the reasons for the great popularity of the bioscope entertainment", said the Cape Times early in I9IO (I3), "is undoubtedly the dramatic film which gives the people all the compressed drama they want. Generally the pictures deal with some famous, or infamous, historical incident...." Italian production in particular concentrated on portraying spectacular excesses in early Roman history as well as Biblical incidents such as :

SALOME
The Great Biblical Drama
Salome represented by Victoria Lepanto
Herod represented by Achille Viti
The story rendered famous by Maud Allen's Dance. A magnificant example of coloured cinematography.
(Maud Allen was then performing the "Salome Dance" overseas in South Africa)

(ii) In time, the comic characters became one of the bioscope's greatest attractions. The Italian comedian "Calino" and the French "Foolshead" made consistently regular appearances and were later joined by other such characters. Comic films of the time frequently dealt with the imperfections of the newly-invented motor-car and aeroplane. Another staple favourite was the mother-in-law theme and domestic scenes such as "Hubby cures Wife of Flirting"and "An Awkward Situation" in which latter, women surprise a man in a bath and, having no clothes, he is forced to emerge covered by the bath under which the women peer.

"The Adventures of Lieutenant Rose"
""Resurrection" (Beerbohm Tree, Lena Ashwell)
"Edwin Drood"
"The Female Spy"
"Nick Carter, Detective"
"Elektra"
"Thou Shalt Not"
"Faust"
"Macbeth" (Vitagraph)
"How Chamionships are Won and Lost" (James Corbett - Vitagraph)
"Manon Lescaut"
"Twixt Duty and Pity"
"Ma Gosse"
"Oliver Twist" (Pathe)
"Uncle Tom's Cabin" (Vitagraph)
The Passion Play

Topical : "Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition"
King Edward's Funeral.
Lion Fighting (Cherry Kearton)
From the Cape to the Zambesi(with Arnst V.Barry Boat Race)
The Cape Town Pageant

The reappearance of the Passion Play (first presented by the "French Biograph Company at the Opera House in Cape Town) resulted in packed houses wherever it was shown. "Thou Shalt Not" was one of the first propaganda Films and dealt with tuberculosis (Rufe Naylor enterprisingly gave a special preview to Johannesburg doctors). Detective dramas featuring characters such as Nick Carter became increasingly popular and opposed films such as "Ma Gosse or The Impression of the Red Hand" which featured Mistinguett and portrayed "the grim underworld of the Gay City" including "the fierce passion of the Apache". (i) One of the best-attended films of the time was that of King Edward's Funeral with its clear portrayal of European royalties. Its exhibition was repeated by popular request again and again. Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition was an exceptional documentary whose exhibition was attended by more representative audiences that had yet appeared at bioscope shows. Another remarkable documentary was Cherry Kearton's film of lions in East Africa (whose scenes of Kearton's fox

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(i) This type of "underworld" drama increased greatly in number in later years; but during 1910, more frequent films were of the following fearful type :

THE AVIATOR'S SECRET

Young inventor designs an aeroplane, cannot overcome trouble of weight and lack of power, hears of a successful rival invention, discovers a secret love affair of rival's wife, demands plane as price of silence, woman consents but alters certain of the dimensions, apparent success, flight's disaster.

terrior baiting a lion were sensational).(i) The documentary "From th
Cape to the Zambesi" was enterprisingly produced by the Coliseum,
Johannesburg and the Cape Town Pageant produced by Frank Lascelles on
a large scale to celebrate Union was also filmed.(ii) During the year (iii)

(i) A faked version of Cherry Kearton's East African film was produce
in America and South African exhibitors were forced to advertise

Tonight

presenting the most Wonderful, Thrilling, Sensational and Unique

Film ever taken

LION FIGHTING

Mr Kearton's lion fighting film about which so much has been written in the world's press, is now to be seen on our screen. Th feature of the picture is the extraordinary thrilling scenes it portrays. The subject is undoubtedly the most remarkable sensatio ever produced.

Real Lions are really speared by Natives

The Real Goods all the Way

No Padding No Swank

(ii) These films are dealt with subsequently in the chapter devoted t Film Production in South Africa.

(iii) A typical film programme of 1910 is the following :

Tivoli Theatre (Cape Town)

for 10 Nights

GRAND BIOSCOPE DISPLAY

of

the most perfect and up-to-date programme of Sensational, Historical, Educational, Dramatic, Picturesque and Hilariously Comic films yet exhibited in South Africa.

Direct from Home and produced at Enormous Expense

Grand Monster Programme

"TO SAVE HER SOUL"

During this picture, Madame Kate Midwinter will sing a hymn making it very realistic

The Trollaten Waterfalls (Sweden)

"Napolen and Countess Hartzfeldt"

"The Enterprising Florist" - an uproariously funny subject

"The Queen's Attendant" - full of brilliant and fascinating scene

"The Fence on the Bar Z Ranch" - a stirring adventure in the Far Wes

"A Champion all the Same" - delightfully comic in every way

"The Girl I left behind Me"

The Walk-Over Boot Industry

"All Night with the Comet"

"The Woman from Mellon's" - a story of Love's stratagem

"The Prisoner"

a pathetic and beautiful drama exquisitely set and delightfully enacted

"Shanghaied"

Strong situations and exciting incidents throughout gradually lea to a thrilling climax.

All Masterpieces of Cinematography

Quality of Photographic Detail Unparalleled

Full Orchestra under the baton of Mr C.A. Riegelhuth will render selections in accompaniment to the pictures.

Kinemacolor films were also shown but, lacking technical efficiency, made little impression in competition with current hand-coloured films. A further attempt at sound films in another "Chronophone" appeared but without success.

From the amazing heterogeneity of the South African cinema in 1910 emerged certain identifiable features which were later to develop into essentials . Firstly the length of films had increased to an average of 1,000 feet, a fact which was frequently advertised. Secondly the extraordinary diversity of films impelled the public to exercise a certain amount of discrimination and to declare its likes. Popular taste inevitably gravitated towards American productions with their superior technique and comparatively innocuous excitement. In consequence, the names of American production firms came to be advertised, notably Vitagraph, Edison, American Biograph and Imp.(1) Thirdly, the incipient feature film introduced the "star" film player and the public's attention began to be diverted from known"comic" favourites (whose real names were never known) to players such as Mannice Costello, Florence Lawrence ("the famous American Imp girl"), Mary Fuller and others. Fourthly, the first newsreels appeared in place of the previous separate topical films.These were the "Warwick Chronicle" produced by Charles Urban's organisation and the "Pathé Gazette" both of which were enthusiastically acclaimed and thence onwards remained one of the bioscope's most popular attractions.

By the middle of 1910, the importance of the cinema as a popular amusement was such that the Press throughout South Africa daily devoted columns to the opening of new theatres, the changing of programmes in established "picture palaces", the advent of new films, etc. An element of surprise that the "bioscope" should continue its

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(1) Newspaper comment such as the following frequently appeared : "Of late, dramatic films of American manufacture seem to have made a good deal of headway in the local bioscope world and there is hardly a programme without at least one. The reason is not far to seek because the acting is more restrained than in the case of numberless French films which flood the market, and is more natural...."(14)
""On the Borderline" is a Vitagraph film depicting a very pathetic tragedy of a husband's jealousy and subsequent return of family bliss through the instrumentality of their child.....The management make a speciality of portraying American films and as the public are aware of the excellence of the American manufactures, they are assured of first-class programmes."(15

popularity infused all such comment; but there was no gainsaying that the "bioscope" had intruded itself on the notice of a far wider public than previously. The stigma of cheapness and vulgarity was sufficient to remove the early "picture palaces" from the consideration of a considerable proportion of the public; but, on the other hand, the sudden and extraordinary popularity of moving pictures had drawn attention to their social significance, not only as a cheap means of entertainment and instruction, but also as a potential menace to public welfare. In July 1910 the cinema's social menace was well ventilated.

On the 4th July, the coloured boxer, Jack Johnson, defeated Jeffries (backed by Corbett) in the United States. Race riots ensued in which hundreds were killed and thousands injured. Prisons were filled to overflowing and troops had to be called out. A film had been taken of the fight and, fearing that its exhibition might further disturb the public peace, the mayors of many American towns prohibited its showing. On the 6th July, the "Natal Times" and "Natal Witness" urged similar and united action on the part of all South African municipalities (in which the control of public amusements was then vested). On the 7th, the "Bloemfontein Friend" endorsed this appeal which the "Sunday Times" and "Sunday Post" also supported. Meanwhile in Europe and America, controversy had broken out. The Canadian Government banned the film and movements were launched in Australia and New Zealand demanding that their governments prohibit its exhibition. On the 8th, an order was issued from the Government Offices in Pretoria instructing the police of the four provinces to prohibit exhibition of pictures of the Johnson-Jeffries fight. On the 9th, the Town Clerk of Johannesburg circularised all owners of places of entertainment warning them not to attempt to show the film or incur the expense of importing it (which had ofcourse been planned) as the Municipal Council would certainly prohibit its showing. This was the signal for the outbreak of acrimonious controversy (in which the churches actively participated) and a flood of correspondence (1) to

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(1) Recalling the immense popularity of the film of the Burns-Johnson film shown early in 1909, correspondents bitterly resented this deprivation of "a real sporting treat". Others described editors who had supported the prohibition as "made of pusillanimous and backboneless material" and "mugwumps and Stiggens whose real place was on the Manchester Watch Committee".(16)

the Press. It was pointed out that the sole menace of the film was th inculcation of racial hatred which would instantly be obviated by prohibiting its exhibition to coloured people, that the Burns-Johnson film had innocuously been shown the year before, etc etc. In time, the outcry died away but it had effectively demonstrated the social importance of the "bioscope" and, in particular, that the public actively desired to see films, that certain films were pernicious and that no machinery, except direct Central Government action, existed for their censoring other than arbitrary prohibition by each separate municipal council.

In addition, moving pictures began to have a direct influence on "legitimate" entertainment. The "Plays and Concerts" columns of the Daily Press often contained mention of neither plays nor concerts but were confined solely to bioscopes and skating rinks. The cheap rates of admission to "picture palaces" began seriously to menace the trade of theatres and music-halls and though in Johannesburg, the Empire, Standard and His Majesty's remained consistently occupied by Leonard Rayne and imported companies (1), "legitimate" entertainment elsewhere suffered appreciably. The bioscope invaded the Cape Town Opera House and Tivoli and even after the special theatrical performances staged in celebration of the Act of Union, the Tivoli "assumed the fustian of the trusty bioscope".(17)

Leonard Rayne and the Wheelers could operate successfully only in Johannesburg. Rayne's stock dramatic company occupied the Standard and he sent a comic opera company playing "La Poupée" with Freda Godfrey in the lead, "Les Cloches de Corneville", "La Cigale" etc on tour while Amy Coleridge and a dramatic company in "Henry of Navarre" and other historical pieces later followed it. Charles Howitt, one of his principal actors, also took a dramatic company on tour. The Wheelers imported only two companies - a Wheeler-Edwardes London Gaiety Company in musical pieces such as "The Arcadians" and a Walter Melville dramatic company playing "The Girl who took the Wrong Turning". Both had long seasons in Johannesburg. The Wheelers also introduced Madame Carreno and Haydyn Coffin while Arthur de Jong

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(1) At this time, Stephen Black's South African dramatic company played an exceptionally long season of his second play - "Helena's Hope" which was also toured.

presented Marie Hall with much success. Harry Friedman introduced a novelty in the Austro-Hungarian Ladies Orchestra and Fred Edwards and May Edouin toured in dramatic sketches (Cape Town's only Christmas entertainment except for "bioscopes").

The comparative paucity of "legitimate" entertainment in all the large towns was compensated in some degree by the concert party which reflected the public's demand for variety inculcated by the bioscope. Prominent among them were Adeler and Sutton's "Musical Madcaps" (later "The Merry Mascots")(1); Edwards Branscombe's "The Scarlet Troubadours" and J.& N. Tait's "The Royal Besses 'o the Barn"

The organised South African cinema industry had originated in Johannesburg where the pioneer companies - the Bijou, the Union Bioscope Co., the Grand and Rufe Naylor's Tivoli Company - had their headquarters., and where the country's maximum spending power was localised. These companies imported programmes of films to service their own circuits and also the many independent "picture palaces" which remained outside. At the Cape, the Tivoli Theatre in the charge of J.H. Stodel also began a distributing agency and shortly afterwards George Smith instituted another. A.M. Fisher had also been distributing films for some time and there were other small organisations founded to service scores of independent "bioscopes". Tens of thousands offeet of film were imported into South Africa for supply to a relatively small number of cinemas all operating at an uneconcmic rate of sixpence and a shilling. The public mania for moving pictures continued, necessitating the increased importation of film but without increasing profits, and the nascent cinema industry steadily moved towards a crisis.

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(1) "The Merry Mascots" were managed by G. Holdernesse who, on the eve of their departure for Australia, married one of them in South Africa - Gertie Lanner, previously a bioscope artiste.

References : CHAPTER V

(I) Original Correspondence - Arthur de Jong

(2) Natal Mercury - 3rd November I909

(3) Cape Times - 3rd October I909

(4) Port Elizabeth Advertiser - I6th February I9I0

(5) The Star - 24th September I909

(6) Original Correspondence - Louis M. Levin

(7) The Star - I2th December I9I8
The Star - I4th February I9I9
The Star - 25th September I939
Rand Daily Mail - 26th September I939
The Star - 3rd February I940

(8) Original Programme of the Tivoli Theatre, Johannesburg in the possession of Mr Eric Rosenthal

(9) The Star - 3rd November I9I0

(I0) "Allegro Misterioso" - J. Langley Levy:Sunday Times - 2nd June I940

(II) Cape Times - 30th December I9I0

(I2) Natal Mercury - 26th April I8I0

(I3) Cape Times - I2th May I9I0

(I4) Cape Times - 29th July I9I0

(I5) The Star - 3Ist October I9I0

(I6) The Star - 9th July I9I0

(I7) Cape Times - 24th November I9I0

CHAPTER VI

Collapse of the Music-hall and Bioscope Industry

Formation of African Theatres and Films Trusts

1910-1913

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By the end of 1910, there were scores of "bioscopes" scattered throughout all the larger towns of South Africa which, except for a few, led a precarious existence, frequently closing and reopening under different management. Their procedure at first had been the direct importation from overseas agencies of programmes of films on a weekly or other basis; but, this proving too expensive for the most remunerative "picture palace", proprietors were forced to re-sell or rent their films to owners of lesser "bioscopes" at a reduced cost. Early in 1911, organisations were established that attempted to take the distributing of films out of the hands of exhibitors. These were the "African Film Syndicate" of which A.M. Fisher was the Cape Town agent, the "Universal Film Supply"Co." and in June 1911, a Pathé Agency which gave regular weekly trade shows.in Cape Town. Commercially however, the "bioscope" business was unsound. The turn-over of the largest "picture palace", gained in shillings and sixpences, was very small and running costs (particularly the employment of variety artistes) remained high. Proprietors were never certain whether they could pay for their next week's supply of films and in many cases, owners of lesser bioscopes would, when ordering their next programme, pay off two or three pounds on previous orders dating back several weeks. Secondly, the "bioscope boom" had reached its climax during 1910 and during the first part of 1911, a comparative slump occurred, numbers of "bioscopes" being forced to close throughout the country. Thirdly, the increased length of fiction films resulted in increased costs though intense local competition prevented proprietors from raising their charges of admission.

The decline in patronage was combatted by proprietors of the larger "bioscopes" by more extensive publicity and a new glorification of Moving pictures. Films now became "Photo-plays" and energetic advertising impressed on the public that the bioscope was continuously capable of new wonders. A popular publicity measure was the extensive vaunting of "Exclusive Rights". By this time,

certain American production firms such as American Biograph, Edison, Vitagraph, Selig, Lubin and Essanay had commended themselves to the South African public and their fortunate exhibitors, instead of publishing the usual resumé of the film's contents, would merely advertise :

"SINS OF PASSION"
an A.B. Drama

Other exhibitors extensively advertised their having obtained the "Exclusive Rights" to the products of these famous firms and at one time, rival contentions between Rufe Naylor and Louis Blond of the Grand in Johannesburg were publicly ventilated.(1)

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(1) in January 1912, Naylor advertised :
"The Exclusive Rights to Kalem, Lubin and A.B. films secured by A.A.T. Ltd are now in force. After this week, no opposition theatre can show those Makers' films."

but in March 1912, Louis Blond published the following letter :

86 Wardour Street,
LONDON.
29th January 1912

Mr Nelson,
25 Twykesbury Terrace,
New Southgate, N.

Dear Sir,

Our attention has been called to an advertisement in the "Sunday Times of Johannesburg signed by Rufe Naylor, Managing Director of Africa's Amalgamated Theatres Ltd.

The advertisement states that the abovementioned limited liability company paid our firm, Messrs Markt and Co, the sum of £25,000 for the sole rights of American Biograph, Lubin and Kalem films for South Africa.

We wish to most emphatically deny this statement and we should be extremely obliged to you if you could, through your Head Office, publish this fact in South Africa.

Thanking you in anticipation
We beg to remain
Yours truly
(signed) Markt and Co.(London) Ltd

In the face of the above letter, we are willing to accept the £500 challenge issued by Africa's Amalgamated Theatres Ltd. Such sum, if awarded, we are prepared to donate to Johannesburg charities or to the Nazareth House as stipulated by Mr Rufe Naylor.

L. Blond,- Manager, Grand Theatre, Johannesburg

Nothing more was heard of this particular affair but the policy of vaunting "Exclusive Rights" remained a favourite line of publicity with proprietors throughout the country

By the end,of 1911, increasingly interesting and exciting films secured a revival in patronage of the bioscope which now appeared to be securely founded. In Johannesburg, recovery was accelerated by the importation of excellent though expensive variety artistes to vary the films. In Cape Town however, films alone were shown. Assured of the stability of public interest in moving pictures, Rufe Naylor had optimistically engaged on the construction of a "super-picture palace", the "Orpheum" on the corner of Jeppe and Joubert Streets (the present site of Anstey's Buildings). This pretentious establishment seating 1,500 was to be lavishly equipped and decorated but Naylor soon found himself in financial difficulties Unable to complete the "Orpheum" with his own resources, Naylor negotiated with the Union Bioscope Company which had successfully operated its "Vaudette" circuit for nearly two years and towards the end of 1911, the two companies were amalgamated under the name of "Africa's Amalgamated Theatres Ltd".(i) Apart from the obvious benefit of increased capital, the combining of circuits permitted considerable saving in the importation of films and variety artistes One programme would now suffice in the place of two.

The "Orpheum" ("Mammoth Theatre and Picture Palace") opened on the 1st December 1911 with much publicity.(ii) Although wanting

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(i) The terms of the amalgamation entailed that every holder of one share in the Union Bioscope Company received five in the newly-formed "Africa's Amalgamated Theatres". Mr Thomson, a holder of 300 original shares (see Page 134), therefore received 4,000 shares in the new company.
The first general manager was R. Courtney Acutt who had invested a considerable sum in the enterprise, H.S. Kingdon was circuit manager, Louis M. Levin publicity manager (in which aspect A.A.T. was singularly enterprising) and Williams secretary

(ii) It was described as :
"The Most Magnificent Bioscope Theatre in the World. 1,500 Beautiful Upholstered Arm Chairs, Spring Seats, Foot Rests, etc. Eleven Pure Marble Statues imported from Rome at a cost of £800 Magnificent Figures by the finest Italian sculptors."

Admission was 1/-, 1/6d and 2/- and "High Class Artistes from London" arrived every Thursday, being chosen by C. Holder-nesse - who subsequently joined the International Variety and Theatrical Agency which supplied African Theatres with overseas companies and artistes. The manager of the theatre was W.H. Beail who had opened the original Vaudette Theatre in Johannesburg and had later manager the Kimberley Vaudette.

many finishing touches which were later added (it was essential that the theatre should earn money as soon as possible), the "Orpheum made a most auspicious bow". In a few weeks, it became one of Johannesburg's notable institutions and with its ~~xxxxx~~ pretentious "classiness", excellent variety turns and "star" films, served to proselytise a class of patrons which had previously withold their favour from the "bioscope".(i) This theatre frequently proved the salvation of Africa's Amalgamated Theatres. The smaller cinemas on their circuit, particularly in the lesser towns, often ran at a loss. Consistent patronage of the "Orpheum" with its large seating accommodation and higher charges of admission, was the company's only hope of staving off bankruptcy and ingenious schemes were devised to maintain attendance.(ii)

The policy of extending circuits demonstrated by the formation of "Africans Amalgamated Theatres" was shortly followed by the "Grand Theatre Company". Intermeine competition between independent exhibitors had made the "bioscope" a hopeless commercial proposition but the assurance of a payable return on expensive artistes and films which a circuit of several houses promised, gave a certain financial stability. The parent "Grand Theatre" in Johannesburg managed by Louis Blond had subsidiaries in Pretoria and Germiston (the"Apollo") to which it circulated its bio-vaudeville programmes. In September 1911, it took over the "Hall-by-the-Sea" in Durban which, originally a skating rink, had later become the "Rinkoscope", an ordinary "bioscope", and then ventured on bio-vaudeville with little success. The Grand reopened the "Hall-by-the-Sea" in impressive style. By

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(i) The Orpheum was certainly the most imposing cinema of its day and is still remembered by thousands with affection (though, in virtue of its imperfect ventilation, it came to be known as the "Aw'fly Hum"). With its lavish decoration and air of superiority, it was the first super-cinema and the public reacted to its attractions with enthusiasm. On occasion, crowds would block Jeppe and Joubert Streets waiting for admission and almost always the Orpheum played to "financially comfortable" audiences.

(ii) Among the attractions of the theatre were "local scenes" taken all over the Union by the cinematographer Crellin whose services were consistently maintained. He took many historical films which have since disappeared. In this respect, Africa's Amalgamated Theatres approximated very nearly to the production of a national newsreel and the modern "African Mirror" is generically descended from their first enterprise. It made its first appearance under the aegis of A.A.T. in Johannesburg on the 5th May 1913 shortly before the absorption of the company in the African Theatres Trust. (The matter is dealt with further in the chapter on Film Production).

arrangement with the Empire Theatres Company, it presented Ellaline Terris in musical playlets (Seymour Hicks had had to return to London in company with variety artistes on the IIth September I9II. A little later, the company built and opened the Grand Theatre in Port Elizabeth and early in I9I2, it extended its circuit to Cape Town

A certain Benjamin Levine had bought a site on Exchange Place and intended erecting a bio-vaudeville theatre. Being unable to canvass sufficient capital, he eventually approached Louis Blond who welcomed the scheme. A company called "the Grand Ltd" was formed in Cape Town in which the "Grand Theatre", Johannesburg bought a large number of shares. On the 20th February I9I2, the Grand Theatre in Exchange Place, Cape Town (i) was opened with a bio-vaudeville programme. Managed by Dougherty with an orchestra of nine under Hancock, it had to face intense competition. A year previously, Fisher had opened his "Elite Bioscope" in the Metropolitan Hall; "Wolfram's Bioscope" was already an established institution; and there were numerous other permanent "picture palaces" in Cape Town and its suburbs. Ten days previously, the "S.A. Cinematograph Company" had opened a "palatial" establishment at the foot of St George's Street called the "Alhambra"(ii) which a few days later (26th March) was bought by H.J. Stodel and F. Potts who reopened it on the 2nd May as a bioscope proper. Simultaneously these same promoters continued in active opposition to the Grand with bio-vaudeville at the Tivoli, these two theatres being the only two to combine variety with films.

Competition everywhere now became acute and many well-established cinemas were forced to close, including the Coliseum in Johannesburg.(iii) Though bio-vaudeville remained very popular, the costs of its maintenance were very high and, despite the institution of circuits, the few combines barely covered expenses. Top-rank artistes were

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(i) The Grand Theatre was demolished in I939.

(ii) "The Alhambra" later became the "Royal Cinema" which continues to operate.

(iii) The management of the Coliseum, Johannesburg, used every wile to maintain patronage (including the filming, with the aid of the S.A.R. & H., of a Cape to Zambezi documentary including the Arnst and Barry Boat Race of August I9I0) but in March I9I2, went into voluntary liquidation, its equipment being bought for a new "bioscope" at Vogelfontein.

imported at excessive salaries, each concern vying with the other in presenting the public with still more expensive attractions. The films themselves represented a sizeable cost and, unlike films and artistes which served all the houses on a circuit, large orchestras had to be maintained at each theatre. Acute competition forced up the cost of producing bio-vaudeville shows while maintaining low charges of admission and slowly but surely the entertainment situation approached intolerable conditions.

In adopting "bio-vaudeville" as its best expression, the cinema had now actively intruded on the sphere of "legitimate" entertainment. It challenged the trade of the theatre proper represented by Leonard Rayne, the Wheelers and other impresarios, and the music-hall represented by the Empire Theatres Company. In an attempt to combat the damaging competition of the Orpheum and Grand in Johannesburg, the Empire imported more and more expensive artistes (1); but this internecine policy could not last and in July 1912, the Empire Theatres Company took over the Grand circuit for their mutual benefit.

"The Empire Theatres Company (South Africa) Ltd" as the new company was called, now controlled an extensive and supposedly remunerative circuit. Its managing director of Edgar Hyman and on the board of directors were Louis Blond and three of his partners in the Grand enterprise one of whom was H.J. Hill who had managed the company's interests in Durban and who now came to Johannesburg to assist in the management of the Empire, Blond retaining the management of the Grand. On the 15th July 1912, the new company began operating its chain of theatres : the Empire Palace of Varieties and the Grand in Johannesburg; Grand bio-vaudeville theatres in Pretoria and Port Elizabeth; the Hall-by-the-Sea in Durban and the Grand Theatre in Cape Town in which it had a controlling interest. It also operated agreements for the supply of films and artistes to several other "picture palaces" including the Apollo at Germiston. The company also owned the "African Film Syndicate", a distributing agency, through

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(1) Among visiting stars were Ada Reeve and Horace Goldin, the famous illusionist. Goldin had to compete with the famous conjuror Nicola who was performing at the Standard Theatre. Nicola blocked President Street with several thousand people by promising to give £5 to anyone who recognised him in the crowd before a certain performance.

which it admibistered the exclusive rights to some of the most popula films.

In August 1912, the Empire Company increased its business by entering into a contract with the Bijou Theatre (successively under the managerships of E.J. Martin and G.S. Darrell) for the supply of first class variety artistes and films; but despite this attraction, the Bijou could not survive the bitter competition which now characterised cinema entertainment and on the 17th January 1913 was sold for £800.(1)

Meanwhile Africa's Amalgamated Theatres, menaced by the new and powerful combine, was likewise extending its circuit and attempting to exploit every possible revenue-producing means for its artistes and films. In August 1912, the company leased the Port Elizabeth Opera House and converted it into a "Vaudette Theatre" and at the same time announced its purchase at considerable expense of the films of the Olympic Games.(ii) Powerful opposition continued, not only from the Empire Theatres Co. but also from independent enterprises which continued to be opened. Many soon closed but some, like the Carlton Cinema Theatre which opened in Market Street, Johannesburg in September 1912, proved a permanent success and drained patrons from the Orpheum and Tivoli. On the 1st March 1913, the Palladium (iii) in Simmonds Street opened under the managership of R.B. Young. It was a large theatre staging continuous bio-vaudeville and served to accentuate competition.

The entire "bio-vaudeville" industry was thus involved in an internecine competition which could have only one end. On the 13th March 1913, it was announced that the Empire Theatres Company had

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(1) Thereafter the Bijou continued as a bioscope under desultory lesseeship until it was incorporated in the African Theatres Trust circuit in October 1913 when the Carlton Cinema, another independent concern, was also absorbed.

(ii) The film market at this time was open and the South African companies bid against each other for popular attractions, forcing up the price of films and adding to the main cost of variety artistes.

(iii) The Palladium was built by the Johannesburg Estate Company whose directorate included J.L. Sacks and John Lawson.

gone into provisional liquidation.(1) The National Bank, having advanced £16,000, brought the order but there were also numerous other creditors and shareholders including the Hyman brothers who had advanced financial assistance. With the collapse of the Empire and Grand circuits, the very structure of South African entertainment was shaken.(ii) Suicidal competition had surfeited the public with the very best artistes and films; but if "bio-vaudeville" were to be

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(i) The liquidators' (Messrs Alexander Aiken and S.C. Carruthers) report which was published in September 1913, revealed that the National Bank had claimed £15,768 - 4 - 4d and had received £191-19-0d while sundry creditors claiming £10,629-15-10d received nothing at all. This report described the circumstances as follows :

"....About the year 1910, bioscope entertainments commenced to be given in Johannesburg. Shortly after their appearance, a further development took place through bioscopes showing turns by variety artistes in addition to cinematograph pictures. They continued to charge very moderate prices as compared with those charged by the Empire Company and gradually their opposition made itself felt increasingly by the regular music-hall entertainers. From this cause, the receipts of the Empire Theatre were materially decreased. In order to meet this opposition, the Board of the Empire Company appear to have considered that they must make some arrangement whereby they could have more frequent changes of artistes at the Empire itself, and this could only be done by affiliating in some manner with a number of other places of entertainment in South Africa which would take over portions of the engagements of the artistes who were primarily imported to appear at the Empire. Apparently with this object in view, the Empire Theatres Co. in July 1912 bought from the Grand Theatre Company all its assets and undertook to discharge all its liabilities which were represented by the Grand Theatre Company to amount to £14,500. The Grand Theatre Company was occupying under leases a theatre in Johannesburg, a theatre in Port Elizabeth, a theatre in Durban, a theatre in Pretoria and, through a subsidiary company nearly the whole of whose shares the Grand Theatre owned, a theatre in Cape Town. At the date of the purchase, the Empire Theatres Company had cash assets to the amount of £5,800.....

From the above statement, it will be seen that the causes of the failure of the company are primarily two the first being the opposition of the cheap bioscope entertainments and the second the fact that the company undertook financial obligations which they were unable to carry out. With the exception of the Grand Theatre in Johannesburg, the company owns nothing except leases some of which appear to the liquidators to be so onerous as to be actually liabilities instead of assets.

The Grand Theatre in Johannesburg is owned in free-hold but is bonded for £9,000. Over and above these, the company possesses only the furniture and fittings in the various places of entertainment and a little bar stock, together with shares in a subsidiary company called the Grand Theatre, Cape Town, of a very trifling value, and the capital of the African Film Syndicate which is an importing and distributing dealer in bioscope films. Again, its shares are of little value unless in conjunction with a circuit of theatres...."

(ii) A touching ceremony took place on the 15th May 1913 when a "Grand Farewell Performance" was given at the Empire by variety stars from the Palladium, Grand and His Majesty's Theatres (including Ada Reeve) in honour of Edgar Hyman, for 18½ years manager of the Empire, and the most popular figure in the South African entertainment world. Hence onwards he devoted his energies solely to the Stock Exchange. He died in 1936.

continued and the many empty theatres were again to prove revenue-producing instead of wasted assets, this entire aspect of entertainment would have to be reorganised and placed on an entirely different basis. Independent enterprise with the inevitable internecine competition had finally been proved impracticable and a co-operative rather than a competitive basis was therefore indicated. Furthermore the matter was one of extreme urgency for not only the artistes but revenue-producing films remained idle and a liability while there was no organisation to present them to the public.

The many individuals interested in the salvation of the "bio-vaudeville" business decided to approach Mr I.W. Schlesinger (1), a Johannesburg financier whose success in the insurance world had gained him a considerable reputation for business organisation and financial acumen. The entertainment field had not constituted one of Mr Schlesinger's commercial interests but he was prevailed upon to take the situation in hand and to reorganise it upon practicable principles. Under his direction, rapid action was taken.

It was obvious to Schlesinger that consolidation of interest was the only solution of the problem presented by the bioscope industry. All possible purveyors of "bio-vaudeville" had to be collected under one aegis, firstly to furnish a remunerative circuit and secondly to control the conditions of the industry, notably charges for admission, salaries of artistes, etc. On the 10th April 1913, Schlesinger bought the controlling interest in the Empire Building Company which, registered in the Transvaal ten years before had a fully paid-up share capital of £58,000 and a debenture issue of £50,000. This company owned the Empire Theatre in Johannesburg. Simultaneously it was openly rumoured that he had "secured a very large interest in Africa's Amalgamated Theatres Ltd" and that he intended "to use this interest in such a way as to bring about an amalgamation between the Empire Theatres and the Africa's Amalgamated

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(1) Isadore William Schlesinger was born in 1877 and at the age of seventeen sailed from the United States to South Africa travelling steerage. He arrived in 1894 practically penniless and after various difficulties, succeeded in establishing himself in the insurance business in the Transvaal. In 1904, he floated his first company, the African Life Insurance Company, and continued to increase his interests rapidly. Schlesinger's financial genius was early apparent - during the ten years subsequent to his arrival as a penniless youth, he had established himself as a commanding figure in the insurance world and in the further ten years following on the flotation of his first company, he had gained a reputation as a financier of extraordinary acumen and ability.

Theatres' houses which, if it comes off, will leave very few independent variety houses of any importance in the country." (2)

To administer his theatres, Schlesinger formed a company called the "African Theatres Trust Ltd" which was registered in Pretoria on the 16th May 1913.(1) Faced with an immense problem of reorganisation, this company manifested no activity publicly for only two weeks and then proceeded to conduct a bio-vaudeville business by re-commencing performances at the various theatres.

On the 20th May, Schlesinger bought all the assets of the liquidated Empire Theatres Company, including its subsidiary theatres and on the same day, Rufe Naylor, returning from England, was met in Cape Town by his fellow-directors in the Africa's Amalgamated Theatres Company to discuss the the amalgamation which Schlesinger had proposed.

On the 22nd May, Tivoli Theatres Ltd (Rufe Naylor's original company) applied for the liquidation of Africa's Amalgamted Theatres on the grounds that the latter could not pay for the purchase of a certain property before the 5th June. The applicants however were prepared to allow the matter to stand over until the 5th June to give the respondents an opportunity to consider their position. It was again postponed on this date but by that time, other negotiations were almost completed.

Meanwhile within a remarkably short period, the African Theatres Trust Ltd had reopened most of the bioscope and variety houses previously operated by the Empire-Grand combine. On the 29th May, beneath the name of each house was advertised :

"African Theatres Trust Ltd - Proprietors"

On the 26th May, Palladium Theatres Ltd went into provisional liquidation. With the imminent absorption of all the Africa's Amalgamated Theatres' bioscopes into the African Theatres Trust, the Palladium was the sole surviving independent bio-vaudeville theatre of any importance in Johannesburg. The company of which J.L. Sacks was managing director, had lost 75% of its paid-up capital of

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(1) The board of directorsof the African Theatres Trust Ltd consisted of I.W. Schlesinger, W.O. Bullock, I.F. Atterbury, D.H. Barnett and M. Manin.

substantial circuit throughout the country consisting of the Empire-Grand bio-vaudeville theatre circuit and the bio-vaudeville theatres and bioscopes belonging to Africa's Amalgamated Theatres. This extraordinary feat had been accomplished within a few weeks.

The consolidation of the maximum number of film-exhibiting houses under one administration solved only part of the problem. There remained the independent exhibitors outside the "Trust" and the film-supplying organisations which, operating on a basis of the keenest competition, multiplied by their number the cost of presenting programmes in South Africa. With almost all the important exhibitors under a single control, it was no longer necessary to import so many programmes.

At the time of "the crisis up north', as it was called at the Cape, there were seven film-distributing agencies servicing about 150 bioscopes in South Africa.(i) The merging of the seven firms would reduce the number of programmes necessary to five which would adequately service the newly-instituted circuit and the independent exhibitors who remained outside the control of the Theatres Trust. Accordingly Schlesinger journeyed to Cape Town to negotiate with M. H.J. Stodel and George Smith, the two largest importers. They agreed to join the proposed merger provided the remaining five firms did likewise. Returning to Johannesburg, Schlesinger successfully negotiated with the remaining firms and in due course, the "African Films Trust"(ii), a film importing and distributing agency, was formed.

Within a few weeks, the entire organisation of the variety and bioscope industry had been placed on a new basis. Co-operative exploitation of films replaced the internecine competition of independent organisations and both exhibition and distribution were controlled by solidly-founded administrations operating on an assured market. A new era in South African entertainment had started.

(i) H.J. Stodel's agency served 35 cinemas extending as far as Elizabethville in the Belgian Congo, his biggest competitor being George Smith who also owned a film-importing agency in Cape Town.

(ii) The original board of director of the African Films Trust consisted of L.A. Schlesinger as chairman, Rufe Naylor, A.George Smith, E. Bennett and H. Stodel, Smith acting as the first managing director of the business.

£7,300 and was unable to discharge its debts which amounted to £8,568, the working capital of £2,400 being entirely exhausted.(i)

The liquidation of the Palladium Company was soon followed by the news that it had been taken over by the African Theatres Trust. A few days later (17th June 1913), it was authoritatively announced that the Trust had absorbed Africa's Amalgamated Theatres, the agreement having been signed a day or two previously.(ii) Rufe Naylor, founder of A.A.T., became overseas manager of the Trust's interests and remained in London for four years.(iii) The Trust therefore controlled almost every cinema of importance in Johannesburg and a

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(i) The failure of the Palladium permitted the public an interesting insight into the enormous salaries paid to variety artistes of the time. The Palladium artistes, without premonition, were stranded in Johannesburg and therefore decided themselves to lease the theatre for a week to raise sufficient money to enable them to return to England. Unfortunately for the success of this enterprise, complete unanimity was not established among them and on the opening night, there was disagreement as to whom should be manager, the liquidator summarily closing the theatre for fear of damage to its immovable property. It transpired during these proceedings that the salaries of these artistes prior to liquidation had amounted to £550 per week made up as follows :

Miss Daisy Wood (Marie Lloyd's sister) -	£150
Miss Daisy Taylor	75
Leonardo and Peart	56
Sam Stern (famous Jewish comedian)	85
Miss Olive Lenton	42
Miss Gertrude Lester	35
Williams and Segal	60
Les Mais	50
Miss B. Milly	35

This amount had not been paid the week previous to the liquidation and for the special "benefit" performances, Miss Daisy Wood offered to reduce her salary to £100 a week. Finally the Empire, already operated by the African Theatres Trust, gave a "Grand Benefit Performance" for the purpose of paying the fares of the artistes back to England.

(ii) The terms of the agreement entailed that every holder of one share in Africa's Amalgamated Theatres received five shares in the African Theatres Trust. Mr Thomson (see Pages I34 & I54(i)), an original holder of 800 shares in the Union Bioscope Company and 4,000 shares in Africa's Amalgamated Theatres, now held 20,000 in the African Theatres Trust.

(iii) He returned to South Africa during the Great War and engaged in a number of different enterprises, one of which terminated in his prosecution for bribery and corruption. Then only 36 years old, he was committed for trial and largely through his frankness and impressive bearing, was acquitted by a jury in defiance of the instructions of the presiding judge. Naylor was also elected a member of the Johannesburg Town Council on which he served for several months. Subsequently he was associated with the conducting of a lottery and left for Australia where he once more entered the entertainment business and the racing world. He built two large cinema theatres, conducted a large Stadium, ran a racing paper and was interested in broadcasting. He died on the 24th September 1939 the obituary notices in Union newspapers failing to pay tribute to his pioneering endeavours in the South African cinema industry.

References : CHAPTER VI

(1) [illegible] Star - 26th May 1977

(2) [illegible]

CHAPTER VII

The Conditions of the Reorganised "Bioscope" Industry

1910-1913

CHAPTER VII

The Conditions of the Reorganised "Bioscope" Industry

I9IO-I9I3

The development of the cinema in South Africa between the years I9IO and I9I3 when reorganisation took place (i) was very pronounced in several aspects. The epidemic of "picture palaces" in almost every town and village which had characterised the I909-I9IO period receded as enthusiasm for moving pictures waned and during I9II when there was a comparative slump and many of these slipshod establishments closed, there arose in their place larger "bioscope theatres"(ii) whose proprietors sincerely endeavoured to establish sound reputations and a constant clientele. The year I9II may be regarded as one in which the cinema finally defined its place in public entertainment and its own nature. The conduct of "bioscopes" was outwardly much improved and they gradually assumed a semi-respectable air as a family amusement. Their films continued to be

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(i) The institution of bio-vaudeville circuits in the Transvaal by the first companies was followed in I9I2 by the opening of the first permanent "bio-cafes" in Johannesburg (several had made abortive appearances during the boom of I909-I9IO) which, in a few years increased in number until ultimately they were one by one absorbed into African Caterers Ltd, a company associated with the African Theatres and Films Trusts.

(ii) One of the most enterprising of these early owners was A.M. Fisher who opened his Elite Bioscope in the Metropolitan Hall, Burg Street, Cape Town (demolished in I939) in I9II. His advertisements frequently reflected current defects, viz :

Please note, we show
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Fisher also widely advertised the fact that his bioscope, as distinct from others, was equipped with exits, that the operator's box was enclosed, etc etc. He also projected slides detailing safety measures for the benefit of his audiences. This public display of solicitude was shortly followed by an outbreak of fire in his bioscope; but the audience had been so well instructed in their proper conduct that they remained quietly in their seats until it was extinguished. The event however caused much jubilation among rival bioscope-owners.

emotionally stimulating (i) and attempts to enhance them with "sound effects" likewise continued.(ii)

One of the important developments of this period was the lengthening of fiction films to 3,000 feet and more. The process was gradual but from 1911 onwards, the imminence of the "feature film" was evident. The frenzied action and continuous excitement of the first fiction films tended to cloak their gradual lengthening; but as soon as it became the rule for such films to approximate to 1,000 feet or more, abuses crept into production. One of the most bitterly resented was that of "padding". By 1913 when cinemas changed their programmes every few days and an enormous supply of fiction films was necessary (at least five or six figured on every programme), this abuse reached its climax.(iii) Though some bioscopes actually advertised "NO LONG FILMS", production continued along lengthy lines (iv) and was finally stabilised at about 6,000 feet.

(i) Not infrequently, even the "High-Class Picture Palades" allowed the non-fiction films to be rushed through the projector the sooner to get to the more exciting items.

(ii) A popular film of 1911 was the spectacular "Battle of Trafalgar". When shown at the Bijou in Johannesburg, "at a certain part of the film, Mr H.J. Hamlin, the well-known tenor, commences "The Death of Nelson and finishes the number exactly as the picture terminates. This brought forth tremendous applause and the audience called for an encore - a very unusual procedure for a picture - this naturally could not be done."(1)

(iii) "There is no doubt" wrote the Cape Times in 1913 (2), "that the present tendency is to make dramatic films too long and to include incidents which cannot but cause a feeling of boredom... However the public is said to want drama but there are signs that certain types of American photo-plays are losing favour which is not to be wondered at when the tremendous output and lack of fresh ideas are taken into account...."

(iv) The movement in this direction was inspired by competition among production firms and the resultant stimulus to produce "prestige pictures". A firm would put all its resources into one film to thwart its rivals and, thus prodigally produced, it would frequently prove a great popular success. This was particularly the case with Continental producers who, from 1911 onwards, made some exceptional films, mostly of an historical nature. The apogee was reached in 1912 when Pathé Freres produced "Les Miserables" in 12,000 feet which were shown separately in four "epochs" in South Africa early in 1913 by Africa's Amalgamated Theatres, and finally as a whole. Produced on an unprecedented scale with the best French acting talent available (including Henri Kraus), it had phenomenal success in South Africa and is invariably remembered as "the first feature film".

Concomitant with the lengthening of fiction films went the publicising of "stars". Heretofore the public had paid attention only to the comic artistes whose weekly adventures commanded the highest popularity on any bioscope programme. By 1911, these were Wiffles, Foolishhead (M. André Deed), and Max Linder (French); Polidor Calino and Tontolini (Italian); and Bumptious (John R. Compson), Pimple and later John Bunny (English and American). The regular appearances of these film-actors made them known to thousands whereas the players of the first dramatic films were usualy drawn from the cast of the play then running and filmed during its season. The "movie-madness" of 1908-09 and the sudden enormous demand for films caused the early producers to collect a little band of actors and actresses to turn out scores of fiction films as fast as possibl Soon the public began to recognise favourites and by the end of 1911, South African exhibitors began to realise the benefits of advertising their names. This caused considerable surprise at first but soon became an established institution.(1)

By the time the "star" system was introduced, American production stood unrivalled in the field of dramatic - as against historical and literary - films. Consequently the first South Africa "stars" were Mary Fuller, Maurice Costello (to whose popularity the others only approximated) and Marc Macdermott. Subsequently these were added Florence Lawrence, "Broncho Billy" (G.M. Anderson), Helen Gardner, Alice Joyce, Carlyle Blackwell, Hobart Bosworth, Julia

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(1) "One of the most astonishing aspects of bioscope shows in these days", it was said (3), "is the distinct class of actors and actresses it is creating and the employment of brains and ingenuity in the production of plays. So important are these that now complete casts of characters are frequently printed. Thus one reads in the cast of the film of "The Three Musketeers" that Dartagnan is impersonated by Sydney Both, Cardinal Richelieu by Marc Macdermott and so on. And not only this - the portraits of the various actors and actresses are placed in the entrance hall."

Swayne and others too numerous to mention.(1)

A feature of films of the time was the child heroine who wrought prodigies of reconciliation in difficult domestic scenes but never became a screen personality in the same sense as the late "Baby Peggy", Jackie Coogan and, more recently, Shirley Temple. On the other hand, animals were early South African stars, dating possibly from the epic "Rescue by Rover" and "Dumb Sagacity". "Bunkie", the Selig horse and "Shep", the Thanhouser collie dog, were famous many years before "Rin-tin-tin" and figured in countless films from about 1911 onwards.

While the lengthening of fiction films and the popularity of "stars" were two stable features of the cinema between about 1910 and the year of amalgamation, there was nothing stable about the contents of the films themselves. They continued to display a bewildering heterogeneity which showed no definite tendency in any direction though for certain stretches of time, certain types were shown in greater profusion than others.

During the first part of 1911, pathos was the obvious theme of all film-dramas. Action remained a sine qua non but, according to current production theory, heart-wringing was the public's ideal in entertainment. This inevitably involved the introduction of scenes of a morbid and ultra-sensational character including death-bed scenes which were exploited to the fullest with a wealth of detail. This particularly obtained in Continental productions which tended towards the sensationalism of forbidden themes, "Night Life"

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(1) When Continental producers commenced dramatic films, Sarah Bernhardt appeared in two much-publicised films - "La Dame aux Camelias" and "Queen Elizabeth" - but she never became a star. When "Queen Elizabeth" was shown in South Africa towards the end of 1912, it was remarked that the film "will probably not impress the Britisher born as in accordance with the imagined figure created by history and fiction. The nationality of the great French actress and her company is too pronounced for such an illusion....According to the play, Elizabeth never recovered from the shock which she sustained on discovering that Essex did not send her the ring whcih might have saved his life, and the piece ends with her death which takes place in a suitably dramatic manner."(4) (A copy of Bernhardt's "La Dame aux Camelias" which was made in 1910, is in the National Film Library of the British Film Institute.)

Despite Mistinguett's frequent appearances in very melodramatic films (notably the notorious "Black Hand" with its shocking "underworld" scenes), she too never became a South African star. Asta Nielsen, "the German Bernhardt" on the other hand became very well known in South Africa at this time through the frequent showing of Deutsche Bioskop films.

and "the Underworld" being favourite subjects. This tendency was countered by the emphatic popularity of the Wild West "epics" and "powerful" society or domestic dramas made by Biograph, Essanay, Vitagraph, Edison and other Americans firms. Cowboy films such as "Ranch Life in the Great South West" which featured professional rodeo stars, "The Boss of the Lucky Ranch", "The Sheriff's Chum", "Trailed by an Indian", etc were the mainstay of most programmes and some bioscopes even advertised "COWBOYS A SPECIALITY".

Though the general tendency was towards melodrama and sensationalism with the "Wild West" film easily the most popular, fiction films of this period were distinguished by some remarkable productions from France and Italy, almost all on literary or historical subjects and produced on an extremely lavish scale. By sheer impressiveness they commanded attention during 1911 but, unable to compete with current American sensationalism, less and less were shown and those of a similar melodramatic order.

By 1912, the number and variety of film-production firms whose products were screened in South Africa were almost innumerable.(i) The best known American firms were American Biograph, Vitagraph, Edison, Selig, Essanay, Kalem, Lubin, Flying A, Imp and Lux; the best known English were Barker, Butcher, Clarendon, Cricks & Martin, Hepworth, Urbanora, Williamson and Warwick; French - Pathé, Eclair and Gaumont; and Italian - Cines, Ambrosio and Pasquali. Pathé, Cines and Ambrosio were in a class by themselves, their production of historical films being exceptional in every way. Their technique however did not appeal to phlegmatic audiences and the "passionate" nature of their acting more frequently inspired ribald laughter than the desired emotion. Attempts were even made

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(i) The Tivoli Film Agency alone advertised the following list of production firms whose films it supplied (though it by no means exhausts the number of firms whose films were shown in South Africa at this period) :
Nordisk, American Biograph, Kalem, Lubin, Wald West, Ambrosio, Atlas, Barker, B.& C., Brooklyn, Butcher, Champion, Cines, Clarendon, Cosmopolitan, Cricks & Martin, Danube, Eclair, Film d'Art, Flying A, Gaumont, Hispano, Hepworth, Imp, Itala, Kineto, Lux, Majestic, Milano, Mono, Nestor, Powers, Pharos, Precision, Pathé, Reliance, Rep, Tyler, Savoy, Germania, Nizza (Pathé's Italian Company), Modern Pictures, Thanhouser, Hollandsche, American Kinema, Comica, Imperium, Urbanora, Brittania, Walturdaw, Welt, Star Film, Chicago, Japanese Film, Pasquali, Williamson, European, Warwick, and others.

by exhibitors to excuse the fact.(i) British production on the other hand developed a reputation for shoddiness and lack of interest. The technical proficiency and excitement of American films coupled with the ambitiousness and magnificence of Italian and French, crowded the British film off the South African market and it hardly held public attention.(ii)

Chronologically the following lists give some indication of the outstanding (though not necessarily the most popular)films of the years I9II, I9I2 and I9I3 :

I9II : "East Lynne" (Pathé)
"Anna Karenina" (Pathé)
"Henry VIIIth" (with Beerbohm Tree and all-star theatrical cas
"The Pirates of I920"-a fanciful forecast of the future
"Julius Caesar" (Cines)
"Macbeth" (Cines)
"The Fall of Troy" (Cines) an exceptional film - very popular
"The Strike at the Mines" (Edison)
"The Cardinal's Edict" (Edison)
"Faust" (Pathé)
"The Crusaders" (Edison)
"The Crusaders" (Cines)
"L'Assamoir"
"The History of the Duke of Guise"
"Zigomar"
"Oliver Twist" (Pathé)
"Clios and Phyletes" (Cines)
"Notre Dame de Paris"
"Salambo"
"Lost in the Jungle" (Kathleen Williams - Selig)
"Colleen Bawn" (Kalem - a special expedition sent to Ireland)
"The Great Kimberley Diamond Robbery" or "The Star of the Sou

Very few subsequent films have eclipsed "Zigomar" in popularity. It was typical of the fiction film of the period but transcended them all in its hold on the public. Revived again and again, it was followed by "Zigomar and Nick Carter" and other sequels but none approximated to the phenomenal popularity of the original. Bioscope owners even advertised "NO EXTRA CHARGE" when

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(i) A typical such advertisement was :
ROMEO AND JULIET
(length 2,342 feet)
The story of this tragedy from the pen of Shakespeare is too well known to be repeated here. Suffice it to say that the scenes were made in Verona while the actors were Italian, eminently suited for such an impulsive play. (The film was shown in I9II)
(See also Page I68 (i))

(ii) Occasionally a good film appeared such as "Lorna Doone" made by British Clarendon of which a critic wrote - "One is all the more glad to see that a British firm can produce work equal to the best of other countries for what has sometimes been said to the disadvantage of British films - that they were unsteady, that the acting was poor beyond description, that the scenes were too "canvassy", and the like - was not without foundation. There is no prejudice against British work ofcourse and it is equal to the best American or Italian work."(5) But on the whole, British films were not up to competition with American and Continental films for several years at least.

showing it.(i) During 1911, Continental productions attained their highest popularity. Thousands of actors were employed and South African audiences were amazed at the hitherto unimagined possibilities of the cinema; but as this feeling wore off, Continental films declined in popularity. The first South African film apparently taken locally and entitled either "The Great Kimberley Diamond Robbery or "The Star of the South" was also shown but inauspiciously.(ii)

(i) The advertisement of the original film was as follows :

"ZIGOMAR"
The Chief of Cracksmen
(after the celebrated romance by Leon Sasie)

Pronounced by the English Press to be the greatest Detective Story ever produced and to eclipse all records in sensationalism.
Introducing the famous "Will 'o the Wisp" Dance by M'lle Esme of the Moulin Rouge
Depicting the fierce struggle between the celebrated Detective, Paulin Broquet, and his arch enemy, Zigomar, the King of Cracksmen.
The following are but a few of the many sensational incidents included in this picture :
The carrying-off of the girl Riri in a trunk to the robbers' den
The imprisoning of the detective in an iron cask and removing him in a van which collides with another van.
Zigomar jumping into a train in motion, stunning the detective to prevent him following, robbing the passengers and jumping off the train whilst going at full speed.
The arrest of Zigomar on the edge of a precipice, Zigomar throwing the detectives into an abyss and escaping.
Zigomar sets fire to the ball-room of the Moulin Rouge and robbing those that become unconscious.
The capture of Zigomar and the blowing-up by him of the crypt of the church of St Magloire to effect his final escape.
The film consists of three parts and is 3,120 feet long

(It is remembered affectionately to this day)

(ii) It was shown by Africa's Amalgamated Theatres and by Wolfram and was advertised as follows :

The First South African Drama
produced entirely in South Africa by the Springbok Film Co
"THE STAR OF THE SOUTH"
The Story of a Big Diamond

Synopsis

On the banks of the Vaal River, a Hottentot discovers a big diamond.
Two diggers down on their luck buy it for four shillings.
They entrust it to Dick Grangeway for delivery to the Standard Bank of South Africa in London.
The arrangement is overheard by Elias Wolaston and Big Macduff two desperate characters who determine to obtain possession of the diamond.
Dick and his wife Kate, and other successful diggers, leave for the coast by ox-wagon.
Elias and Macduff arrive at Abrahamson's store in advance and interview Lokoko, chief of a marauding tribe of Kaffirs, who agrees to assist for one third of the loot.
They outspan at sunrise.
Surprise by the Kaffirs.
Kate escapes, taking the diamond with her and runs in search of assistance.
The Mounted Police to the rescue.

Retribution

Conceived in the spirit of the current cinema, the film does not not appear to have made much impression, possibly through amateurish production. According to The Star (6), it was "the

Though actuality films continued to be shown (1), the preponderance of fiction films tended to minmise their importance. An outstanding exception was the film of King George's Coronation which was acclaimed throughout the country and shown to packed houses.

During I9I2, American sensationalism expressed in grotesquely exaggerated acting began to characterise moving pictures as a whole and to neutralise the values of other types of films examples of which continued to be shown as follows :

I9I2 : "Madame sans Gene" (Rejane - 3,000 feet)
"Trilby" (3,000 feet)
"Little Em'ly"(2,254 feet)
"The Lady of the Camelias" (Sarah Bernhardt - 2,500 feet)
"Queen Elizabeth" (Sarah Bernhardt - 3,700 feet)
"A Live Man's Tomb"
"Under Two Flags" (2,200 feet)
"The Massacre" (2,000 feet)
"The Iron Hand" or "The White Glove Gang"

Apart from the manifest development of fiction films and the growing popularity of sordid and sensational themes exemplified in American

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first attempt to bring South African drama acted on the veld within the range of the bioscope and the attempt has proved more than successful. The acting of all concerned in the production is almost flawless, the scenery and local touches undeniably excellent. Part of the plot is founded on fact, the necessary dramatic brush being applied to make a coherent story. Briefly the play shows the finding of a big diamond - "The Star of the South" by a native and its purchase by two prespectors who in turn dispose of it for £I,000. The final purchaser decides to trek for the Cape but he is soon pursued by a couple of desperadoes who get wind of the big stone and decide to get it. They inspan a small patrol of native warriors to assist them in an attack on the owner of "The Star" whose outspan is overwhelmed after a fight. Failure to locate the diamond (which has been hidden on her person by the owner's wife) rouses the anger of the would-be robbers and their decision to torture the woman is frustrated by the native chief. A band of mounted police arrive on the scene and after a stiff fight, the biters are bitten and are hauled off to the Kimberley gaol."

(1) Actuality films of I9II included newsreels of the war in Morocco and the Turkish war. There also continued to be shown the film of the Cape Town Pageant. The cameramen employed by Africa's Amalgamated Theatres also took many local films of agricultural shows and other subjects.

and French crime dramas (in which felony was always glorified and the law outwitted)(i), the outstanding event of the year was the exhibition of Kinemacolor films.(ii) The Empire in Johannesburg had featured Kinemacolor films as an item in its variety programmes as early as the end of 1909 but proving unsuccessful, they were soon abandonned. In May 1912, the South African Kinemacolor Company leased the Standard Theatre in Johannesburg from Leonard Rayne and gave a long but poorly-attended season of coloured films. This enterprise toured the country with indifferent success and for some time, Bisher incorporated Kinemacolor films in his regular programme in Cape Town; but the deficiencies of the apparatus were too apparent to merit its constant

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(i) A "hit" of 1912 was

"A LIVE MAN'S TOMB"

This subject is distinguished by the rich staging, passionate and vivid acting and novelty of plot. The heroine, thinking her lover dead, marries a wealthy lord. The lover returns, there is a wonderful scene between them which results in his falling in a swoon which she mistakes for death. What happens then provides matter for some remarkable episodes leading to a brilliant conclusion.

Another success during the year was "The Iron Hand or the White Glove Gang"which was described in a review (7) as "an exciting detective story in pictures in which Nina, a pretty woman, is used as a decoy for intended victims. Detective Nicker, disguised as a rich Egyptian, arrives in Paris and is introduced to Nina who makes passionate love to him and invites him to her flat in the evening when the gang arrive to rob him. Nina, not wishing to give the Bey away, sends a message to the Chief that the Bey is unable to call; but the chief, not being satisfied with the message, decides to investigate and arrives with his accomplices to find the supposed Bey hidden in Nina's rooms. They set on him and after securely binding him, take him to the headquarters of the gang where Nina arrives a little later to release the Bey and assist him to escape through a secret passage. The gang then try to reach the frontier but Nicker, with the aid of the police, arrests the whole of the members."

This French production was in the "Zigomar" tradition except that, unusually, in this case the law prevailed; but there were also others which revolved round more original themes such as :

"THE FEMALE SPY"

(length of picture 2,085 feet)

This Powerful Dramatic Story shows the extremes to which a woman will go in her desire for money and power. The concluding part of the film illustrates a wonderful explosion. The whole laboratory is blown to atoms, the Countess, Marco and the inventor's secret perishing in the flames. A Thrilling End to an Engrossing Story.

By now the "bioscope" had developed its own jargon of "woman", "villain", "heroine", "gang", "the underworld", "cracksman", etc etc; and the minds of bioscope-goers began to be peopled with an entirely fictitious and ridiculous collection of characters.

(ii) These colour films were projected according to a patented invention of G. Albert Smith which had been sponsored by Charles Urban and shown throughout the world. The invention involved the rotation of discs coloured in green and red and blue and yellow respectively and though the effects were frequently striking, they were marred by"fringing", that is, the edges of the objects appeared unclear and blurred. Furthermore there was a tendency for the red and green to prodominate at the expense of the other colours. Kinemacolor's finest achievement was the films of the Delhi Durbar which created a considerable sensation when shown in South Africa though the enterprise as a whole lacked public support

use though as a novelty, it attracted considerable attention. Another outstanding film was "With Captain Scott to the South Pole" whose South African rights were bought by H.J. Stodel who gave special showings in Town Halls etc throughout the country. Various topical films such as those of the Olympic Games in which several South Africans figured meritoriously, were popular items on bioscope programmes during the year.

The pervasion of sensationalism and sordidness developed greater proportions during 1913 though the types of films shown continued to be very heterogeneous :

1913 : "Les Miserables" (Pathé - 12,000 feet)
"As You Like It" (Vitagraph)
"From Manger to Cross" (Kalem)
"Father" (Zacconi - Italian - 3,500 feet)
"The Mysteries of Paris" (Pathé - 5,000 feet)
"Tigris"
"Quo Vadis"
"Lorna Doone" (Clarendon - 4,000 feet)
"Anthony and Cleopatra" (Helen Gardner - 6,000 feet)
"Carmen" (Marion Leonard)
"East Lynne" (6,500 feet)
"The Brand of Cain" (4,600 feet)
"The Curse" (3,600 feet)
"Pickwick Papers" (John Bunny - 4,000feet)
"Richard Wagner" (6,000 feet)
"The Fool" (Godfrey Tearle - 3,500 feet)
"The Miracle"
"Alone in the Jungle" (Kathlyn Williams - Selig)
"The Prisoner of Zenda" (5,000 feet)
"His Neighbour's Wife"(Lily Langtry - 4,000 feet)
"Mary Stuart" (Edison - 3,500 feet)
"The Scarlet Letter" (Kinemacolor - 4,500 feet)
"Hamlet" (Forbes Robertson - British - 4,000 feet)

The most popular fiction film was probably "Tigris", another detective drama. "The Miracle", Max Reinhardt's nativity play, was banned by the Administrator at the Cape where there had been intense agitation against religious films owing to the showing of "From Manger to Cross", (1) but was shown elsewhere in South Africa. Anninnovation was the "Kinetophone" which, appearing as an independent enterprise in specially-leased halls, once again attempted to present "talkies", its novelty attracting fairly large audiences. Many films of the period were in colour and though melodrama prevailed to the exclusion of almost everything else, emphasis had moved from the theme of pathos to high ideal such as honour, devotion, self-sacrifice, redemption etc. By the end of 1912, the "Wild West" film had lost its hold, its pride of place on programmes having been taken by "powerful" dramas which increasingly

(1) The banning of "From Manger to Cross" is dealt with in detail in the chapter on Film Censorship. It was a cause celebre of the time.

tended towards sordidness and depravity.(i) The "realism" of these films exceeded the bounds of taste and restraint in a growing number of cases and before long, indignant letters to the Press appeared, deploring the shocking sights which were now passing for entertainment (ii). Apart from the gross improbabilities of plot which began to irritate even the least susceptible members of audiences, some of the scenes which the "bioscope" portrayed could no longer be ignored. "Night Life" and "the Underworld" provided the excuse for exhibitions which surpassed vulgarity to the point of lechery and letters to the Press began to multiply until they became an almost daily occurrence throughout South Africa. So far from improving, the quality of films deteriorated more and more until every type of person implored the(iii authorities to take action. The "bioscope" was now the recognised amusement of the young but its evil effects were even more extensive.

The perniciously sensational character of the cinema of this period was aggravated by the persistence of religious films. Improvement in production technique had done nothing to counteract their inherently blasphemous nature and they were the more disreputable through being shown in a programme of "cowboys", "comics" and "powerful dramas".(iv)

(i) On the whole, the following representative advertisements give an indication of the type of film that figured most frequently in bioscope programmes and attained the greatest popularity at this time :

"THE WRONG MAN"
Selig's Military Drama
A thrilling story of a man who, jilted by the woman he loves, enlists in the Army and amid scenes of strife and daring, repays with nobel sacrifice his loved one's scorn.

Vitagraph's Latest Dramatic Masterpiece Production
"SAVING THE SPECIAL"
Thrilling and strong in every scene, it fairly throbs with melodramatic intensity, Miss Adele de Garde and Julia Swayne in the leading roles.

"THE PATCHWORK QUILT"
A powerful gripping drama teeming with live thrills and an undercurrent of pathos that moistens the eye and causes a lump to stick persistently in one's throat.

"LOVE'S REVENGE"
This subject is of just the sort the public likes best to see. Its plot is of the sensational character that holds and it contains a number of scenes which introduce novel and extremely striking effects. 2,500 feet

"THE FORGER'S DOOM"
A startling production of exciting incidents culminating in the sensational. Half a mile in length.

A beautifully coloured Artistic Film by Pathé Freres
"THE GOD OF THE SUN"
Discriminating knowledge is revealed in every one of its scenes and the daring which brings into the cast an untrammelled Leopard and an Indian Elephant besides Snakes, Crocodiles and other Reptiles surely indicates a keen sense of what is necessary to put film plays upon a plane never before dreamt as possible for any kind of theatrical production.
(This film involved "an officer who fell in love with a "vestal virgin" of a mystic Indian religion, the old priest's revenge on the subsequent offspring', etc etc)

(ii) Typical letters are the following :
To The Editor,
The Cape Times

Sir - "....it is undoubtedly necessary in the interests of our young men and women (and of the whole populace) that almost nude representations of the immoral French dancing saloons and other principally nude bioscopic French dramas, should not be produced in South Africa.

At a recent bioscopic entertainment in Johannesburg, the dancer portrayed by the bioscope appeared to be absolutely nude during most of her poses. There were certain cunningly contrived shadow effects which made it difficult to be sure of this but it certainly was an entertainment that one would have felt obliged to bring one's daughter or fiancee away from immediately.

Many bioscopic entertainments are amusing, instructive and quite harmless but it is a crying shame and a disgrace to our country that here, where so many are away from home influence, such exhibitions should be allowed and evil passions aroused nightly by such degrading and semi-nude (to put the matter in a mild way) exhibitions.

Let an inspector be appointed and do his work thoroughly here and elsewhere.

An Anxious Father"(8)

To The Editor,
The Cape Times.

Sir - ".....I took my wife to one of our premier bioscope shows and of all the exhibitions I have seen here and in other parts of the world, this was the worst....What happened during the first half of the programme, I don't know but I felt it was high time t take my charges out of so poisonous a moral atmosphere. This I do know however - that I left the building indignant that, in this country with its much-advertised "black peril" and "white peril" too, our rulers should be so utterly dead to the true welfare of the community as to allow such disgraceful exhibitions to continu To any thinking man, to any that realise the tremendous power of suggestion, the showing of these filthy pictures must appeal as constituting a very grave danger to the public morals. Where are our Police ? Where are our legislators, our editors of the daily papers ? And last, but by no means least, where are our ministers of religion, those professed guardians of the public's morals ? (Further emotional condemnation).

F.Cornickson (9)

This letter was capped by the following :
Sir - "Your correspondent puts his finger on a very sore spot in connection with the above (Bioscope Censorship). I seldom take my family for the same reason but on Empire Day, thought I'd risk it at one of the latest and very best in the city. It was the afternoon show, the place was crowded, the large majority of the audience consisting of young people under 18 years old. The principal piece shown was a gruesome story of a miner who, obsessed by the idea that his employer's son had seduced his daughter, dreamed that he had thrown him over a railway cutting but awoke to find them "happily married". Now I am not one who believes in "not telling the children" but as the wording descriptive of the above was put upon the screen, it was awful to hear young girls asking as they spelled out the words "What is B-E-T-R-A-Y-A-L, daddy ?" I say our indifference to this is criminal and unless we soon take steps to stop it, we deserve all we get.

A Father

The film referred to in this latter was very probably "A Girl and her Trust" - a sensational railroad drama made by the A.B. Co." and shown at the newly opened Alhambra, Cape Town on Empire Day 1912.

(iii) Inspired by "cowboy" and gangster feats in which culprits were by no means always punished, little boys sent blackmailing letters to eminent commercial firms and even preachers inveighed from their pulpits against the dangers of the film. Every type of organisation registered protests and pleas for the institution of an adequate censorship - the National Council of Women, the South African Teachers Association, the Diocesan Synod, the United Municipal Association (as well as separate Municipal Councils), and the South African Reform Association being especially active. Through the agency of the last9named, a voluntary censorship committee was eventually formed in Cape Town in 1913 and within a few months, was recognised as the semi-official censor for the whole Union. Its decisions had no sanction however.
This matter is dealt with fully in the chapter on Censorship.

(iv) In 1911, the Tivoli showed a biblical film entitled "The Deluge" of which it was stated (10) : "it showed the building of the Ark. Noah - not alone working himself - wielded his hammer with a will besides his sons while the scoffers stand round and laugh. Noah's hair and beard don't look as though they belonged to the parent tree and the wickedness of the world which preceded the deluge has a velvet covering; but, barring these little trifles, "The Deluge" is very good indeed and well worth seeing if only for the dramatic effect of the sending out of the dove and its return with the olive branch, and the grand opening of the doors of the Ark when the waters have abated and Noah stands with his family looking out on the uninhabited world."

The matter of such religious films was discussed largely at the meeting of the Diocesan Synod in Cape Town in October 1912. It was then rumoured that a film called "From Manger to Cross" was to be publicly shown and the Rector of Observatory (the Reverent Gresley) moved "that this Synod hereby utters its emphatic protest against the contemplated public exhibition in Cape Town of scenes presenting the Passion and Death of our Divine Lord." The matter did not however figure on the official agenda and the Synod dismissed it as temporarily irrelevant. When the news of the showing of "From Manger to Cross" was definitely released, popular feeling was again aroused and the showing of biblical films became a cause celebre which resulted in legislative measures.
This matter is dealt with fully in the chapter on Censorship.

The odium which increasingly surrounded the bioscope from 1911 onwards and which in 1913, compelled legislative action, was not founded only in the objectionable type of film which then characterise its programmes. It was founded too in the buildings themselves and in the conditions under which bioscope exhibitions were given.

Foremost among the causes for apprehension was the danger of fire, concerning which few municipal councils had had the foresight to frame special regulations. The vast majority of the first bioscopes consisted of converted halls or shop premises which had only one entrance (often serving also as an exit), no ventilation of any efficacy, no fire-fighting appliances, benches or chairs which were often not battened to the floor, frequently numerous death-traps in the shape of curved unlit staircases debouching into the entrance, and several other types of evils.(1) The need for safety regulations was frequently emphasised. In February 1911, a fire broke out in the operator's box of the Electric Theatre in Port Elizabeth (only one film was destroyed) and several members of the audience were slightly injured in the rush for the exits. In July 1912, there was a bioscope fire at Lindley near Bloemfontein and in October another in the Jagersfontein Town Hall. Various municipalities framed and enforced regulations but numerous such calamities continued to occur though never with fatal consequences. Simultaneously the Press published accounts of numerous tragedies through fires in cinemas overseas. In September 1912, the fear and suspicion thus engendered in the public mind in South Africa was justified by fatal accident at the City Bioscope at the corner of Rutgers Street and Sir Lowry Road, Cape Town Consisting largely of coloured people and easily-impressionable

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(1) As early as the 25th October 1911, the Chief Officer of the Cape Town Fire Brigade reported as follows (11) :
"I have the honour to report on the very unsatisfactory way at present in use in this City of protecting the public in case of fire in all our places of amusement. I consider it of the utmost necessity that a fireman should be present at all these places during the time the public are admitted and this fireman should be a member of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and under the direct charge of the Chief Officer. The system at present in use is that moreorless all these places employ a private fireman and some places none at all and I am afraid that under present conditions, it will lead some day to a very serious calamity and the public will cry out why better conditions were not enforced by the Council. The private fireman is under the supervision of the management and is in most cases not used as a fireman but as a doorkeeper or checker and is entirely drawn away from his most important duty : that of fireman....."

elements, a crowded audience was panicked by a cry of "Fire !" and fought for the exits, two being killed and several injured.(i) The immediate reaction was a spate of letters to the Press demanding that steps be taken to widen exits, enforce the equipment of fire-fighting appliances, etc etc (ii). The news of this fatal calamity was published throughout the country and despite energetic advertising by alarmed bioscope owners that their theatres were perfectly safe and adequately equipped, the odium which had begun to surround the "bioscope" was inveitably intensified.

This publicity drew attention to other of the bioscope's evils. For years, the Social Reform Association (iii) had occupied itself wit the removal of many unsavoury features of bioscopes in Cape Town. The "absolute gross darkness" which had been thought essential for "Animated Photograph Exhibitions" of the nineties and had been unfavourably commented on then, persisted in many of the"picture palaces" which opened in 1909 and later. It encouraged flagrant instances of indecent behaviour and the attendance of characters of a specially low type at bioscopes began to make it unsafe for women to patronise them unaccompanied.(iv) Women were molested in the best bioscopes and in the more impoverished districts, women themselves brought their babies and attended to their comfort under most unhygienic circumstances. Unaccompanied children screamed, quarrelled and fought, running about as they pleased and coloured people frequently mingled with white. In an unventilated hall frequently packed with vociferous humanity, the fetid atmosphere was often almost unbearable.

(i) In point of fact, there was no fire, the "terrible stampede" being caused by a child upsetting a fire extinguisher which hissed in an alarming manner.

(ii) It was at this stage that Fisher advertised his special precautions and almost immediately suffered an outbreak of fire - see Page 165 (ii).

(iii) The Social Reform Association investigated the question of film censorship only as a secondary consideration.

(iv) This abuse grew to such proportions that the Social Reform Association actually circularised bioscope proprietors with a Black List of disreputable characters who were to be refused admission.

Even the best type of "bioscope" was prone to a number of evils which continued to exclude it from the patronage of a considerable proportion of the public. The intense emotional stimulation of current films reacted on the youthful members of audiences and induced an atmosphere of feverish excitement in which shouts, screams, clapping and stamping were sometimes continuous. The increased length of films entailed a new procedure : "the changing of the reel" (the appearance of the appropriate caption was usually treated with groans and boos), an operation which was only effected after an appreciable interval to the mounting annoyance of the audience.(i) Failure of the electric light was a frequent source of irritation to audiences and the behaviour of the gallery which, apart from vociferation, often entertained itself by dropping orange skins, pea nuts etc on those beneath, further served to dissuade more sober citizens from patronising the bioscope. It may safely be said that at no time in its history did the South African cinema reach a lower standard or suffer a more opprobrious reputation than the year in which the African Theatres and Films Trusts came into operation.

Almost immediately following their foundation, a further difficulty arose in the entertainment field which had suffered and continued to suffer severe internal changes. The "bioscope" had directly caused the collapse of the Empire Theatres Company and its large circuit of music-halls at the beginning of 1913. It was also the direct cause of the comparative disappearance of the circus whose shows became progressively fewer.(ii) The theatre appeared to prosper. During 1911 a number of enterprises were active in South Africa. Leonard Rayne's dramatic companies occupied the Standard in Johannesburg and occasionally toured; Leonard Rayne himself presented Ada Reeve and a London Vaudeville company and, in association with Frederick Mouillot, another vaudeville company starring Wee Georgie Wood and a dramatic company led by Alfred Paumier who later became Rayne's leading

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(i) Prior to the enforcement of municipal regulations which insisted on the enclosure of each film in a fire-proof box after projection Wolfram used to wind his entire programme on one enormous reel so that there should be no interval between films.

(ii) Frank Fillis had left South Africa finally and the remaining organisations such as Pagel's Circus (which took the place of a pantomime in Cape Town at the end of 1913) presented performances in no way similar to Fillis' lavish displays.

man and a South African stage favourite. The Wheelers had a Wheeler-Edwardes Gaiety company playing "The Balkan Princess" and other musical pieces and towards the end of the year, they presented Matheson Lang, his wife Miss Hutin Britton and a London dramatic company in "The Taming of the Shrew" and modern plays. Arthur de Jon presented the Sheffield Choir and, after much contrived publicity relating to the "unseemly" nature of her performances, Maud Allen whose"Salome" dance was one of the sensations of the overseas entertainment world. J.& N.Tait sponsored the well-known concert party "The Royal Bessee 'o the Barn" and also presented Clara Butt (i) and her husband Kennerley Rumford. LeQuesne and Hooten Smith presented the famous contralto Ada Crossley and Edwarde Branscombe staged Henr Herbert and London dramatic company in Shakespearean plays. The Empire Theatres, in an attempt to maintain patronage, imported many famous artistes including Marie Lloyd (for the second time), R.G. Knowles, Seymour Hicks and Ellaline Terriss, and others. Sousa and his Band also gave concerts. Other enterprises were Fred Edwards and May Edouin presenting dramatic sketches, and Charles Howitt (ii) and A. Phillips leading a touring dramatic company.

The quality and variety of these theatrical entertainments indicate the efforts that were made to combat the growing popularity of the"bioscope". They do not imply that a high standard of entertainment was consistently maintained in the large towns. Fairly long intervals still separated the appearances of these companies and, apart from Johannesburg, theatres were frequently closed. Audiences were becoming increasingly spare and during 1912, exceptional effort were necessary to induce them to patronise the theatre.

During this year, Leonard Rayne persevered with his stock companies and launched a special effort in Charles Pearce, Amy Coleridge and dramatic company playing "The Breed of the Treshams" and other popular pieces. The Wheelers continued with their musical presentations and their Matheson Lang company. Arthur de Jong

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(i) The "Orpheum" cinematographer made a film of Clara Butt attendi a native war dance in Johannesburg.

(ii) Charles Howitt died in November 1920.

presented Paderewski and the "Royal Welsh Ladies' Choir", and Stephen Black toured a batch of his plays (i). Antonia Dolores paid another visit; Nicola, the conjuror; Henry Dallas' Pellissier's Follies;Percy Hutchison and dramatic company in "Brewster's Millions" etc; May Congdon, A.B. Imeson and melodramatic company in "Held by the Enemy" etc; and numerous variety artistes combined to maintain entertainment but of sometimes inconsistent quality. The outstanding visit of the year was the visit of the Quinlan Opera Company whose appearance had been sponsored courageously by Leonard Rayne.

By the beginning of 1913, the encroaching competition of the "bioscope" was making itself severely felt and if the music-hall proved unequal to the strain, the theatre was little better. Renewed efforts were made to encourage public patronage and several outstanding companies appeared. The Quinland Opera Company continued its tour under depressing conditions, the Wheelers toured their Gaiety companies and presented as well H.B. Irving and imported dramatic company in "The Lyon's Mail" and other plays, and W.S. Holloway leading another dramatic company in "Milestones" and other proved stage successes. Arthur de Jong presented almost the only unqualified theatrical success - Jacques Jacobs' London Trocadero Orchestra which brought "ragtime" to South Africa and introduced such famous numbers as "The Gaby Glide", "Oh, You Beautiful Doll" and "Alexander's Ragtime Band"(ii).

Though outwardly entertainment was maintained at a high level (several further companies succeeded the above, notably Oscar Asche, his wife Lily Brayton and a lavish equipment for the staging of "Kismet", etc), its character, so far from reflecting the theatre's current popularity, was designed to restore it. As in the case of the music-hall which had bought the best and most expensive artistes to sustain patronage, so the theatre now imported excellent and costly companies.

At this moment - when all forms of entertainment were struggling

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(i) These plays included "The Flapper" which aroused considerable controversy owing to Stephen Black's confession that he had pirated it from the French original.

(ii) Shortly afterwards, the Tango craze swept through South Africa and "Tango Teas" were organised in hotels in all the big towns. Enthusiasmm was in no way dampened by the widely-published news that the Kaiser had forbidden his officers to dance it.

to resist the opposition of the "bioscope" and the music-hall had already succumbed - the Cape Provincial Council published a draft Entertainments Ordinance which proposed taxing all amusements to the extent of 10% of the gross takings. Amidst "a chorus of denunciation" from everyone connected with the theatre and cinema, the draft ordinance was discussed throughout the Union in bitterly resentful terms. Editors supported the entertainment industry and the proposed measure was subjected to annihilating criticism in the leader columns of almost every Cape paper.(1) In Johannesburg, there was a similar "storm of protests" and under the chairmanship of the Mayor, a protest meeting of the leaders of the industry was held.(ii) It was evident that if the tax were instituted, it would become practically impossible to import expensive companies to South Africa and many alleged that the "bioscope industry" itself would collapse.(iii) At the Cape, feeling ran to remarkable heights and on the 29th May 1913, the House of Assembly discussed the draft ordinance in virtue of the public out

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(1) Leaders of the bioscope industry were outspoken in their comment. Stodel pointed out that the music-hall business was already in a bad way and that if the tax were instituted, variety would be killed outright. Fisher saw the extinction of cheap bioscopes and with them, "the poor man's pleasure". Henry Irving, playing his last night at the Cape Town Opera House, made an impassioned speech before the footlights in which he characterised the proposed measure as "unjustified, unjustifiable and unpopular". On the 26th May, a meeting of bioscope owners organised by the Western Province Cinematograph Association was held in the Alhambra, Cape Town and the utmost indignation and anger expressed. It was emphasised that the Administrator (Sir Frederic de Waal) could not know the true state of the bioscope business which was "not in such a flourishing state as five years ago" and that the facts should be put before him. Meanwhile petitions emanating from George, Beaufort West and Mossel Bay against the proposed institution of the tax were laid on the table of the Provincial Council. Voluminous correspondence disapproving of the draft ordinance was published as well as protests from Port Elizabeth, East London, Oudtshoorn and other entertainment centres.

(ii) Among those present were Leonard Rayne, Frank Wheeler, W.E. Holloway (whose company was playing at His Majesty's), L. Hyman, Rufe Naylor, Grant Fallowes (Rayne's manager), Nelson Barry, A.F. Ross (general manager of the African Theatres Trust), Bloomfield, H. Rosenberg, Jackson, J. Langley Levy (Schlesinger's alternate on the directorate of African Theatres Trust), Alfred Foster (representing Quinlan who was already negotiating for a return visit to South Africa), Clark, A. Brough Pearce, Holder Nesse, Pickering (manager of the Empire), F. Green, J.L. Sacke (promoter of the Palladium Theatre shortly to be taken over by the Trust), Malcolm Tearle, F.W. Carter, and David James. An emphatic protest was lodged.

(iii) Quinlan in particular inveighed against the proposed measure. In association with Leonard Rayne, he was planning a return visit with a new repertoire but as his then tour was proving financially practicable on the barest margin, a future enterprise would be impossible if a tax were imposed on tickets of admission.

cry it had raised. Provincial administration had recently been instituted and this evidence of alleged high-handedness on the part o. the Administrator led to recrimination of the system and insinuation that it was not equal to its responsibilities.(i) Finally the ordinance was withdrawn for re-drafting and when presented again to the Provincial Council, took the form of a scheme to levy a tax on places of amusement which the Council, in committee, discussed in detail for several days.(ii) In the meantime, the issue had been controverted to appear as an attack on the liberty of the subject and when, oh the I7th June, the "Entertainments Licensing Ordinance" was read for a third time and later gazetted, it provided only for the imposition of a licensing fee on all places of amusement and discarded the principle of a stamp tax on tickets of admission. Sir Frederic de Waal remained adamant in his attitude that the entertainment industry could and should withstand taxation for the benefit of the public at large; but (iii) even the mollified measure which finally resulted provided the newly-formed African Films and Theatres Trusts with unexpected complications

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(i) The discussion was acrimonious, the principal participants being Mr Jagger and Mr Merriman who hardly veiled their disapproval of the Administrator's action in dictatorially initiating unjustified legislation. At a meeting of the Provincial Council on the 30th May, members expressed great indignation at the opprobrium cast at the Council in the House of Assembly and at Mr Merriman's attack on the Administrator. At the conclusion of a long discussion involving the Council's right to conduct its own affairs without outside interference however high its quarter, the Administrator announced that the draft ordinance (which had not yet been laid before the Council) would be re-modelled.

(ii) In Cape Town, the issue had been complicated by the furious feeling that had arisen. At a meeting of citizens held in the City Hall on the 29th May at which the Mayor, Councillor H. Hands, presided and many distinguished personages including Senator Schreiner, Mr Jagger, Sir William Thorne, Mr William Duncan Baxter Dr Bennie Hewat, etc etc sat on the platform, indignation reached its highest expression. The importance of the proposed measure had now transcended the future suffering of the music-hall and bioscope trade and had come to involve the liberty of the subject. The Administrator's power to institute unjust taxation on "defehceless"citizens was challenged in bitterly resentful speeches. The following morning, the Cape Times carried a four-column report on the cable page headed :

AMUSEMENTS TAX
Citizens' Meeting
A Vigorous Protest
An Attack on Public Liberty
Trenchant Speeches

(iii) Subsequently similar outcries were raised by the actual institution of an "Amusement Tax" as it came to be called, in Natal and the Orange Free State; but none exceeded that which met the Cape's abortive step in I913. An "Amusements Tax" was finally instituted in the Cape Province in I9I8 with comparatively little demur; but the outcry of I913 was founded more in the difficult circumstances of the entertainment industry of the time the Administrator's lack of understanding and apparent high-handedness being particularly resented

Apart from the odium attaching to the "bioscope" on moral ground the financial adjustment necessitated by the Cape's institution of an entertainments licensing tax, and the general problems of reorganising a national industry, both the Theatres and Films Trusts had to combat a growing volume of suspicion and distrust. It was essential for their organisation to institute contracts of supply and regulations for the exhibition of films by all exhibitors, many of whom had previously struggled on paying what they could when they could and sometimes not at all to distributors who were equally accommodating and careless in their methods. The immediate adoption of business methods aroused the suspicion and ire of these showmen whose first reaction of obstructive criticism and later encouragement of rival organisations (i) quickly communicated to the public a disquieting impression of a pernicious "monopoly". The fostering of this feeling (which was supported by certain sections of the Press) encouraged a number of independent firms to try to secure the custom of disaffected exhibitors. On the I7th June I9I3, the "International Film Supply Co." (a new distributing agency which eventually reopened the offices of the Universal Film Supply Co. in Cape Town and also had a branch in Johannesburg) advertised as follows :

We are the Only Independent Film Hirers in South Africa
Don't be Bluffed into Signing Contracts
We are a Going Concern
We are Here to Stay
and will not bind you down in any case whatever

Other such advertisements (ii) later appeared but the organisations which attempted to compete with the Trust in the distribution of films were all of short existence.

The aggressive disapproval and apprehensions of independent concerns was inevitable since, to secure their modus operandi, it was essential that both the Theatres and Films Trusts control the maximum

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(i) On the I7th June I9I3, The Star reprinted from the Cape Argus the following letter(I2) - "At the present time, there are seven film agencies who are negotiating in Johannesburg with a view to forming a Film Trust and thus trying to compel bioscope proprietors to sign with them for two years to hire films solely from them, putting the Trust on a firm basis so as to avoid any possible chance of an independent party opening and getting proprietors' support. It is therefore my intention in writing this letter to warn any intending persons to refrain from signing in favour of such a trust. Once the Trust is an accomplished fact, it means that the Trust will not only be the film hirers but the bosses of the whole bioscope trade in South Africa which means that whatever films are imported, good or bad, will have to be accepted by the proprietors of bioscopes as there will be no other alternative. The public in general will be well advised to take this matter up

number of exhibitors; but, despite the obvious public benefit from consolidation of resources in an industry which had already collapsed when "independently" exploited, an atmosphere of suspicion was easily engendered and the "monopolistic activities" of Mr Schlesinger's entertainment companies became the favourite hobby-horse of certain newspapers, their comments increasing in acrimony as time went on and the Trusts inevitably increased their sphere of operation. While this unhappy atmosphere can hardly be said to have impeded the development of both the Trusts, it was nonetheless an unfortunate feature of thei initial operations and constituted one of the first difficulties with which they had to contend.

In addition to the difficult circumstances of the entertainment world at the time of their foundation, the Trusts had also to contend with extraordinary national events having a direct bearing on their enterprises. At the time that Mr Schlesinger was negotiating with the Empire Theatres Co., Africa's Amalgamated Theatres and the seven film distributing firms, a miners' strike began at Kleinfontein on the Ran Within two or three days, it assumed serious proportions and threaten ed to involve other areas. About a month later, the situation had become acute, many more mines being involved and frequent outbreaks o violence occurring. The first week in July was marked by scenes of great violence in Johannesburg itself, the offices of The Star being gutted and a great deal of damage being done. Though large reinforce-ments of police succeeded in restoring the position to normal within a few days, these disturbances had, and continued to have, a very adverse effect on entertainment in the area which produced most revenue.(1)

Worse disturbances occurred some months later. Industrial unrest continued on the Rand and early in January 1914, the Rand railwaymen went on strike. Simultaneously sympathetic action was taken by railwaymen throughout the Union and in Cape Town, the "Great Railway Strike" as it was called, resulted in so menacing a situation that th Defence Force was mobilised. At the Cape however, the situation was

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(1) Quinlan alone - his Opera Company was then performing at the Standard Theatre in Johannesburg - estimated his losses to be £1,500 a week.

soon under control but in the Transvaal, Free State and Natal, martial law had to be proclaimed. On the Rand itself, conditions daily grew worse and instances of violence progressively increased.(i) No trams ran after six o'clock and the audiences of theatres and bioscopes were reduced to the pedestrian public almost alone, few being inclined to patronise amusement. By the 13th January 1914, His Majesty's closed owing to the disorganised transport services. By the 15th January, every place of amusement was closed and Martial Law was enforced. Burgher Commandoes were brought in from the country to help the police control the violently belligerent strikers.(ii) On the 22nd January, restrictions were relaxed and the theatres and bioscopes were allowed to open, their performances beginning at 6.30 and ending at 9.30, curfew being rung at 10. The Empire, Palladium, Orpheum, Carlton,(iii) Jeppes and Standard reopened and were followed on the 24th by His Majesty's. The crisis was over but the entertainment industry through-

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(i) On the 10th January 1914, the Johannesburg Star carried the following headlines :

WAR AGAINST THE PUBLIC
Today's Occurrences in the Railway Strike
Preservation of Law and Order
Citizen Force's Prompt Response to the Call of Arms
Scenes in Town, on the Reef and in Pretoria
Position on the Mines
Reports from Other South African Centres

(ii) The Star published a daily column in Afrikaans for the benefit of the Burgher Commandoes.

(iii) By a curious coincidence, prior to the outbreak of the strike, the African Theatres Trust had largely advertised "Germinal", the film of Zola's famous novel which was to have been shown at the Orpheum on the 19th January. Made by Pathé in 12,000 feet with Henri Krauss and M'lle Sylvia, it was shown at the Alhambra in Cape Town on the 6th January and, owing to its great topicality, was immediately successful. On the 13th January, the African Films Trust enterprisingly advertised in Johannesburg :

Alhambra, Cape Town wires :
"Germinal" opened last night to record house, hundreds turned away. Approval being expressed by audience and press in enthusiastic terms as the greatest dramatic treat Cape Town has witnessed.
African Films Trust Ltd

Everybody agrees that the
STRIKE IN GERMINAL
is a Masterpiece
African Films Trust Ltd

The strike intervening, it was not shown in Johannesburg until the 26th January when this "thrilling story of the Struggle between Capital and Labour showing realistic Mining Scenes with Women as Miners" aroused only a fair amount of interest.

out the Union had been thoroughly dislocated for over three weeks and even when order was restored, the public was not inclined towards amusement.

Finally, having survived these difficulties, both Trusts were forced to contend with the extraordinary problems presented by the outbreak of the Great War. Less than a year in existence, they had had on the one hand to face the chaotic state of vaudeville and bioscope entertainment the ordering of which inevitably arousing ill-feeling and mistrust and, on the other, most disturbing conditions in the history of South Africa and the world at large.(i) The adoption of a positive policy contributed to ensuring their survival. Subsequent to the institution of a properly-organised system of film-supply and exhibition, one of the first steps taken by the new organisation was the closing of a number of theatres. The rush to capitalise on the public's interest in moving pictures had resulted in the opportunist opening of a large number of "picture palaces" far in excess of the stable demand. Many were closed and only those retained open that showed a profitable return. The African Theatres Trust was designed purely as an administrative organisation. Its policy never included the actual owning of cinemas and it attempted merely to obtain leases of the establishments it desired to control.(ii) The Films Trust, assured of this constant and coördinated circuit, was therefore enabled to import good and expensive film programmes; but the development of both organisations depended on extension of control and their policy was adapted to that end. By the end of 1915, the African Theatres Trust controlled about 50 cinemas in South Africa and the Films Trust supplied programmes to the majority of the remainder.

(i) It was symptomatic of current conditions that during 1913, the Wheelers - longest established impresarios in South Africa - sold their theatrical interests in South Africa to the Australian firm J.C. Williamson Ltd, the new organisation operating from the 1st January 1914.

(ii) The modern big cinema theatres are owned by independent companies For instance, the Colosseum, Empire and His Majesty's in Johannesburg are owned by Colosseum Buildings Ltd, Empire Buildings Ltd and Goldreich Buildings Ltd, African Theatres paying a rental for the showing of films. In this way, an immediate return on the capital cost of such buildings is made possible.

References : CHAPTER VII

(I) The Star - 20th October I9II

(2) Cape Times - 6th February I9I3

(3) Cape Times - 3rd November I9II

(4) Cape Times - 4th December I9I2

(5) Cape Times - I6th April I9I3

(6) The Star - I2th December I9II

(7) The Star - 3rd December I9I2

(8) Cape Times - 4th December I9II

(9) Cape Times - Ist June I9I2

(I0) Cape Times - 3rd June I9I2

(II) Proceedings of the Cape Town Municipal Council

(I2) The Star - I7th June I9I3

CHAPTER VIII

The Great War Period

1914-1918

(At the conclusion of this chapter, there is an appendix detailing the outstanding films of each year and chronicling the progressive development of various types such as the war documentarie Charlie Chaplin films, "moral dramas", etc.)

The general character of moving pictures in South Africa durin the years of the Great War developed along the lines which had alread been indicated. After considerable public opposition engendered more by the prevalent abuse of "padding" than any inherent objection, the "feature film" finally emerged as the central item in cinema programmes.(i) The final emergence of "stars" as an established cinem institution accompanied it and by 1917, the South African public acknowledged special favourites in Mary Pickford, Margarita Fischer, Anita Stewart (ii), Julia Swayne, Dorothy Gish, Bessie Barriscale, Douglas Fairbanks (iii), Mary Miles Minter, Robert Warwick, Matheson Lang, W.S. Hart (famous in Wild West films), Henry B. Walthall, Lillia Gish, Roscoe(Fatty)Arbuckle and Mabel Normand, John Bunny, Alma Taylor, Viola Dana, Baby Marie Osborne, Nicholet Hopson, Henry Vibar, Norman Talmadge, Denis Eadie, Frank Keenan and Ethel Clayton.(iv) Not one of these stars could compete with the perennial attraction of Charli

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(i) As late as 1915, critics would write of a cinema programme - "One feature of it which will make appeal to many picture patrons is that there are no long films to eat up and practically monopolise the evening."(I) and bioscopes themselves would advertise :

If you want a night of real excitement
see the Superb 4 Part Drama
"WOMAN"
A Great Cines Production
Notwithstanding its length of 4,000 feet, it is pronounced the best subject shown in Johannesburg for weeks.

(ii) Anita Stewart was so popular that enterprising managers purposel ommitted the name of the film and merely advertised the fact that she took the leading part.

(iii) Douglas Fairbanks, previously unknown in South Africa, suddenly rose to immediate popularity in a number of films in 1917.

(iv) Lesser favourites were the Italian Francesca Bertini and Lydia Borelli, Billie Burke, Ina Claire, H.B. Warner, Valli Valli, Antonio Moreno, Lionel Barrymore (John Barrymore appeared less in films), and Cecil Hepworth's English stars Chrissie White, Bessie Love, Edna Flugrath (who featured in a number of films shown in South Africa in 1916 and was specially publicised owing to her starring in "Die Voortrekkers"), Montagu Love, Olga Petrova, Elizabeth Risdon and Alice Brady.

Chaplin whose films first appeared in South Africa during the first war years. His appearance in "Screaming Keystone Comedies", "Keystone Yells" and other comic one-reelers started "the Chaplin craze" which was a feature of 1915 and continued thereafter as fast as his films could be shown in the Union.(i) Chaplin was the most significant single feature in the cinema during the war years and the heartening effect of his films exercised a profound effect on public morale. He brought amusement to thousands of cinema patrons and the innocuous humour of his films induced a considerable proportion of the unconverted public to patronise the "bioscope".(ii)

The self-assertion of the cinema began tox reach its fullest expression during this period and features other than stars and films began to be publicised. The impressive qualities of the two monumental epics "Cabiria"(1916) and "Intolerance"(1918) imposed the cinema o the attention of every class of the public and gave it the opportunit

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(i) The absurd pantomime of this international comedian was precisely what the war situation demanded and his popularity attained unprecedented heights. His box-office value reached such dimensions that attempts to imitate him were made by several Continental firms. These delusions were immediately detected by the public and proved a failure. The initial one-reelers proving so successful, Chaplin produced longer films which met with equal success. Sometimes partnered by Mabel Normand, Marie Dressler, the cross-eyed Ben Turpin, or one or two others, Chaplin's popularity reached the height of a veritable "craze" not only wit children but with adults. Inspired advertising maintained it at this high level viz :

Bijou
CHARLIE CHAPLIN
in
The Great Essanay 2,000 feet Comedy
"CHARLIE AT WORK"
for the first time in Africa

Child (to mother) : Mother, will I go to Heaven when I die ?
Mother : Yes, my child, if you are good.
Child : Will Charlie Chaplin go to Heaven ?
Mother : Yes, my love, if he is good like you.
Child : Mother, won't God laugh if he sees him !

The Press continuously published details of the enormous fees paid to Chaplin, examples of popular adulation etc etc and the fact that his hold on the public declined at all was owing to his inability to produce more films.

(ii) The point was made in an issue of "Punch" of the period :
Son : Mother, can I go to see Charlie Chaplin ?
Mother : Let me see, do we know his people ?

Though in later years, several stars attempted to dislodge Chaplin from his unique prominence in the public's affection (notably Douglas Fairbanks who advertised as much in 1917, Mary Miles Minter, Mary Pickford and other popular favourites), none approached the adulation he enjoyed.

to extol its worthy exponents. Outstanding among all competitors was the producer D.W. Griffith whose reputation approached that of fetichism.(i) By similar merit, the London Film Company attained public prominence particularly in I9I5, and later the Triangle Compan (an American concern), and several other companies and producers, notably Marshal Neilan and Maurice Tourneur.

While the whole tendency of the cinema during the war years was to focus attention on its stature and to invest itself with dignity and respect, it was also distinguished by other less ingratiating features. Among these was the appearance of sensational serials which, appearing in South Africa about I9I6, appealed as a novelty and soon became an institution. These films, which ran into many thousand of feet, were of ridiculous sensationalism, the most popular being "The Exploits of Elaine"(ii). In the first instalment of "The Black Box", there were six murders and in I9I5, "The Master Key" began unravelling an endless plot (iii). Helen Holmes, "the Railroad Queen" was the star of another interminable serial patterned on "The Exploits of Elaine" and other many-part films of the period were "Peg 'o the Ring" and "The Trey of Hearts". In I9I7, a superior type of serial appeared in a series of criminal dramas starring "Ultus" played by Aurele Sydney, a French actor.

The dominating desire to stimulate the public by excitement inevitably exhausted the range of feasible plots and from I9I5 onward protests were consistently registered against the ludicrous improbabilities of current films. "The long arm of coincidence" was stretched

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(i) In I9I6, D.W. Griffith's films were sometimes advertised in South Africa in the following manner :

"Man's Prerogative"
by
D.
W.
GRIFFITH

Query : Why have we billed Griffith's name in huge type and the title of the film in very small ?
Answer : Because any one can invent a title but there is only one Griffith.

(ii) According to one reviewer, "Elaine" was severely exploited, being tied to rails before oncoming trains, bludgeoned to the point of death, flung from moving cars, etc etc.

(iii) "The Master Key" irritated many people because, no matter how narrow the escapes of the young couple in one instalment, they failed to prosper by experience and involved themselves in equally perilous situations in the next.

to a point where even the most undiscriminating gallery audience hoote with derision and the more intelligent bioscope patrons began to avoid moving pictures with disgust. It was not unusual for motor cars and telephones to appear in period dramas but, while the public would usually ignore these anachronisms, they resented the affront to their intelligence embodied in plots involving more than supernatural agency

Apart from one or two outstanding films such as "Cabiria" and "Intolerance", films from 1915 continued to be almost entirely melodramatic. Frenzied action to sustain sensational themes and adventure for adventure's sake characterised most productions and resulted in very mediocre entertainment. The tremendous demand for films resulting from war conditions inevitably resulted in shoddy production, American firms being the worst culprits and permitting releases which offended the most accommodating public and caused the most docile critics to protest. With the gradual disappearance of Continental and British films (by 1918, hardly any were left), American films soon dominated the South African cinema and audiences were forced to endure not only shoddy methods but an unscrupulous choice of theme.

The depravity and lechery into which American and Continental production had sunk before the war (see Page 175 et seq.) had aroused worldwide indignation (1); but, by the subterfuge of a pseudo-philanthropic air, American producers continued to release films of this type. Suggestiveness and indecency now masqueraded as meritorious exposures of the "White Slave Traffic", as warnings to young girls of the dangers of city life, as anti-drink campaigns, as birth-control propaganda, etc etc, the slighest pretext being used for the portrayal of scenes which were designed, in contemporary parlance, to "stir the baser passions". The movement began innocuously and the South African public was at best bored by the heavily moral dramas that began to

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(1) In America itself, the film industry had been fundamentally threatened by action taken by social-welfare organisations.(2) Though there was then no doubt that the sensational-cum-suggestive film was the most successful in the cinema and that no other type could rival it in "box-office appeal", it was obvious that a production policy determined by this type only was highly inadvisable. The disrepute into which the cinema had already fallen was seriously jeopardising its prospects for the future. So far from abandonning this policy, American producers resorted to the chicanery of the "moral drama" which hypocritically produced even better effects of suggestiveness and indecency.

pervade bioscope programmes;(1)but when the progress of the war presented the American industry with a practically clear field (Cines an Italian firm, was the last Continental production firm to have films shown in South Africa), "moral dramas" were shown with increasing frequency and wider interpretation of "sociological problems". Within a few months, it was possible to characterise the South African cinema as "blatant drama with a pornographic embroidery".(3) Initial public ridicule soon turned to disgust but no measure seemed capable of stopping the import of these films. During 1917, a large number of sordid sexual films were shown and despite the current disrepute of the "bioscope", the strenuous agitation for national censorship and general public outcry, they continued to be shown with growing ostentation and frequency. Only in 1921 was any diminution perceptible. The masquerading of pornography as philanthropy was made worse not only by the wording of advertisements (ii) and the subject-matter of posters but by the fact that, in 1918 particularly, profit was made of the banning of certain films by the newly instituted Cape Provincial Censor Board which could nonetheless be shown in the Transvaal, Natal and Free State. The insinuation of indecency which banning at the Cape involved was exploited to the full.(iii)

A typical film was "Where are my Children ?" shown in South Africa in 1918. It was issued with the publicity of a propaganda film though shown as entertainment. Tyrone Power took the leading role in a drama which was designed to portray the evils of birth-control.Shown In England under the aegis of the National Council of Public Morals, certain distinguished personages such as the Bishop of Birmingham gave it their approbation. Its story, according to a contemporary account, dealt "with an American attorney passionately fond of children whose

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(i) A typical comment is the following (4) which appeared in 1915 : "Apparently a wave of moral earnestness is passing through the United States just now and bioscope manufacturing companies are being enlisted in the cause as a sort of visible justification of their existence ! It is a matter of regret that all is forgotten in the desire for the cause advocated and the methods shown by many of the companies are crude to a degree. The moral is not allowed to speak for itself but is obtruded at every turn."

(ii) A typical example of the more innocuous type of advertisement is the following which was published widespread in South Africa during 1917 :

THE WOMAN WHO SINNED

FEATURING
Norma Talmadge
as a
Reformed Bohemian
4 Part Triangle Drama
1 - Tells of an Infamous Plot against an Innocent Woman
2 - Hawaiian Costume Dance
3 - Salome Pose
4 - Maternal Love endangering Matrimonial Happiness

Early in 1918, when the wave of "moral dramas" was at its height and competition made advertising more energetic, the following (emanating from reputable cinemas) were typical :

The Sensation of the Year
The Censored Film
"THOSE WHO PAY"
Thomas Ince's Scathing Indictment of our present-day social morality. Each act a condemnation of our present system.
featuring
Bessie Barriscale
The World's Greatest Emotional Actress
Undoubtedly there is a fascination in playing with fire. But it is dangerous, so full of disaster to the guilty and innocent alike that its sinister reckoning should repel rather than attract
Note : Young persons of irresponsible years will not be admitted to the Palladium (Johannesburg - A.T.) unless accompanied by their Elders.

A previous advertisement of this film contained the following
"Why have the phrases "Vampire Woman", "Scarlet Sister" and "Broken Homes" come to be household expressions of everyday life ?
Why should a woman always pay ?
Dorothy Warner's struggle to retain her fair reputation is based on fact and strikes home with an irresistible force."

A further typical case was the film "Pay Me" whose initial advertisement was :

PAY ME
presents in the most vivid and realistic manner the souls of men and women in mighty conflict
PAY ME
is a mighty creation exhibiting in a lurid light the bartering of women's souls. etc etc
Don't miss this stormy fight of primitive passions and lust

Later publicity took the form of :

PAY ME
acclaimed by the world's greatest dramatic critics as the most vivid drama of red-blooded Men and Women ever placed on the screen
PAY ME
The Fight for a Woman's Honour between the Boss of the Lumber Camps and the White Slave Trafficker of the Ranges is a fight the like of which has never been submitted to any audience.
PAY ME
Having seen this staggering life-like Portrayal of Human Passions, let no man or woman say that they know not the meaning of the word Remorse.

(iii) The influence of the influx of "moral dramas" in instituting a National Censorship is fully dealt with in the chapter on the subject.

wife belongs to a little group of rich selfish women who determine not to have children lest they interfere with their amusements. Her brother comes on a visit and ruins the daughter of the housekeeper. Desiring to prevent the consequences, he sends her to a bogus doctor patronised by his sister and her friends. The young girlx dies as a result and, before her death, tells her mother her secret. The attorney prosecutes the doctor and the man is sentenced to I5 years penal servitude. During the trial, the attorney finds his wife's name and those of her friends in the "doctor's" books. He returns home and drives them out of the house. His wife repents too late and finds that her malpractices prevent her from ever having children. The pair are shown growing old together, he always imagining the children he might have had, she grieving for his loneliness."

The public was by no means inarticulate and a large number of letters were published in the daily Press (i). African Theatres attempted to counteract the manifestly evil influence of the "bioscope on the child mind by organising "Educational Matinees" but they proved a failure. Whatever one section of the public thought of "moral dramas a preponderating proportion continued to patronise them and they continued to be shown in increasing numbers. Their influence pronouncedly tainted the ordinary "drama" which, appearing "tame" by comparison, was now enhanced by uninhibited publicity.(ii).

The anomaly of a situation by which public protest throughout South Africa could obtain no redress was fully exposed by the Fisher family who had re-entered the entertainment field as independent exhibitors.(iii) The Fishers imported a film entitled "Enlighten Thy Daughter" which, preceded by impressive publicity of its moral worth, was first shown at the Railway Institute, Cape Town on the 28th July I9I7. The film had been seen by the Bioscope Advisory Committee whose

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(1) Much of the correspondence hearkened back to the days of Wolfram's travelling shows when audiences were sure of instructive as well as entertaining programmes. A typical letter is the following(5)

Sir -".....The chief picture followed the old lines. A young artistx becomes enamoured of his model but cannot marry her until later owing to unreasonable parents. He deserts her and marries according to orders. The deserted on, in her rage and despair, throws all restraint to the winds, becomes reckless and goes the pace in the drinking halls where she poses before men in various attitudes with very little on. Some men throw the dice to decide which is to enjoy her favours and the lucky one follows her home. She indignantly refuses the money he offers her whereupon he says "You are mighty particular for a woman of your sort" and departs with a flea in his ear. Stung by her taunt that he should find

something better to do with his money, he next day sends her a very large sum (being a rich man) and requests her to spend it for him. She starts a home for destitute babies. Meanwhile the artist turns out badly and is presently discovered ill-treating his wife and threatening her with worse treatment if she does not procure more money from her parents. And so on. There is a murder, a trial, the wrong man is condemned and is at the last moment saved by the heroine in the most approved dramatic fashion. Another picture introduces us to "devil-worshippers" and a girl is stolen to sacrifice to an idol but is ofcourse rescued in the nick of time. The whole atmosphere of this picture was weird and dreadful in the extreme. Some little time ago, a picture was shown of a childless wife who obtained the assistance of a doctor and nurse in a scheme to foist the infant of another woman on her husband as her own and the working-out of her deception was done with startling attention to detail.

Now sir, this sort of mental pabulum is dished out, not only to grown-ups to whom it would be sufficiently strong meat, but to children of all ages ranging from mites wno have just left the bottle to young girls just merging on womanhood and ofcourse their contemporaries of the opposite sex...Parents are conspicuous by their absence.

Speaking generally, it would appear that the "movies" are not improving...One misses, for instance, the educational films wherei were depicted the vicissitudes of animal life, the growth and development of flowers, the habits of insects, the denizens of the deep, etc, all tending to the uplift of the masses and their menta development and improvement.

The "Wild West" pictures too were a source of joy to the young and, although far-fetched and sensational, they were harmless. Thi cannot be said for the kind of picture now being exhibited to the rising generation - D.M."

(ii) So debased had the inclinations of the cinema public become that in 1918, a film of "Carmen" with Geraldine Farrar was advertised a

"The World's Most Interesting Love Story
Throbbing with Rich, Ripe, Red Passion, Love and Intrigue

and to compete with the success of the "moral dramas", questionable films of the following type were shown :

A Great Dramatic Sensation
The Picture that was prohibited in Two Hemispheres
THE CHEAT
One of the most remarkable pictures ever submitted to the public
The Jap and the Woman in
THE CHEAT
present a vivid and sensational exposure of Oriental Ideas as applied to women of the west
THE CHEAT
The most daring subject ever embodied in pictures
THE CHEAT
is a Tremendous Life Episode of Illicit Relations
THE CHEAT
featuring the famous
Fanny Ward
and
Sessue Hakawaka
the Brilliant Japanese Artist

(iii) Early in 1917, A.H. Fisher who had for several years successfull operated the Elite Bioscope in the Metropolitan Hall, Cape Town, left this theatre and moved his enterprise to the Railway Institut Hall (subsequently the Apollo Cinema). This venture lasted for about a month and thenceforward, the Fishers engaged in free-lance enterprises, importing special films from overseas and showing them in Town Halls throughout the country. This activity greatly embarrassed African Theatres and particularly in the case of "Enlighten Thy Daughter". This and other films had been bought in America by Joe Fisher, the eldest son who, on returning to South Africa, was aboard the "City of Athens" when she was blown up by a mine off Dassen Island on the 10th August 1917. Though the firm lost several valuable films which were subsequently replaced from America, Joe Fisher made use of the experience (and the limp whic it had given him) by giving an address at several showings of

decisions had no sanction and were not always enforced.(i) Despite the fact that the Committee had decided against the showing by 13 votes to 2, Fisher showed "Enlighten Thy Daughter" to packed audiences at the Railway Institute for more than a week, concurrently at the Wynberg Town Hall and for one night at the City Hall. One of his main publicity lines was that the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Colonel Gray, had praised the film, a point which Fisher used to emphasise its "moral" worth. Though the Cape Press reviewed the film rather unfavourably, critics refrained from downright condemnation (ii); but the Bioscope Advisory Committee continued its agitation with immediate results.(iii) On the 31st August 1917, the Fishers presented the film at the Johannesburg Town Hall (iv) where it ran for two weeks, 25,000 people having been alleged to have seen it.(v). In Durban, a further public sensation was caused but the Fishers succeeded in showing the film at the Durban Town Hall in February 1918.(vi) The phenomenal success of the "road-showing" of this film both indicated the trend of public taste and the need for official regulation.(vii) Though African Theatres made palpable efforts to interest audiences in "refined" films, the prevailing attraction of "moral dramas" remained and they were shown wholesale

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"Enlighten Thy Daughter" and including in it "sales-talk" concernin "Fisher's Bioscope", its independence and its development in the future with the help of the public.

(i) The Bioscope Advisory Committee reviewed the film in force, inviting the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Colonel Gray, and other non-members to attend the preview. Its official report was as follows : "The film is well produced but there are a number of objections to the subject of the film, the majority of the Committee members being totally against the bioscope being used as a medium of educating the young and inexperienced in the matter of sex, especially at a public entertainment."

(ii) The sole exception was "The Cape" whose editor A.D. Donovan wrote an unqualified attack on the entire enterprise and all concerned, including the Mayor of Cape Town, Councillor Hands, for having let the City Hall for such a purpose. The gravamen of his accusation was two-fold : that the objectionable scenes in the film made its banning by an authoritative organisation imperative, and that the "bioscope" was totally unsuited as a medium of sex-instruction. "Are we to understand", wrote Donovan (6), "that young girls over the age of 16 cannot be effectively warned of danger without introducing them, as the film does, to a knowledge of a horrible abuse of medical science of which they were hitherto entirely ignorant ? Since Colonel Gray has recommended this film as a great power for good in warning girls against the pitfalls that beset their ways, I would like to ask him what purpose is served by the introduction in the photo-play of a long drawn out incident in which an unscrupulou medical man attempts to induce a married lady, the mother of two children, to take advantage of his improper and illegal services. In what way can this possibly enlighten daughters of the dangers that lie in their way ? The whole film reeks from first to last of this nasty business. If the real purpose of the creators of the film was to enlighten mothers and daughters of the perils that lie in the way of young girls as a result of making promiscuous

acquaintances, that purpose could have been very well served without the introduction of this revolting surgery. But it is next to impossible to resist the conclusion that the unscrupulous medical practitioner has been introduced into the story for purely sensational purposes. Even apart from this, the circumstances against which the film purports to warn daughters have little or no relation to the actual facts of life. The film story is wildly, impossibly melodramatic. The girl in the film comes to grief because she happens to have a mother who is a gambler, a drinker and a wanton and who, besides, has an understanding with a blackguard of a doctor who arranges to share with her the profits from illegal operations. If there are any mothers in Cape Town thus situated, then I have no doubt the film will prove a most effective warning to them; but I think that it is nothing short of a calamity that this kind of stuff should be offered to every-day mothers and daughters as a sample of ordinary life and that the minds of young girls should be filled with nauseating details of a traffic in unborn lives of which they have hitherto been wholly and fortunately ignorant. Surely it is possible to point out to girls the moral dangers that beset their lives in cities without introducing them to the procedure of a filthy abuse of medical science? At the performance on Monday afternoon, you witnessed the spectacle of young girls, some of whom could not be many months or days over sixteen, gazing open-mouthed at the story unfolded on the screen with its disgusting pictures of consultations in doctors' rooms and its revolting indecency of the procuring of married women as clients for an unscrupulous surgeon.... I do not think that a pure-minded person could possibly sit through 140 minutes of this film and come out of the hall with his or her mind untainted by undesirable knowledge of things that are wholly unnecessary for the protection of his or her virtue....."

(iii) The anomaly by which the decision of the Bioscope Advisory Committee had been flagrantly disregarded by the Fishers and the film itself thus given added lustre, exposed once again the urgent need for the institution of an authoritative censorship. Steps were immediately taken by the Cape Provincial Council and on the 22nd August 1917, an ordinance was promulgated by which an official board of censors was instituted. (This matter is dealt with fully in the chapter on Censorship.)

(iv) The Johannesburg season was heralded by the following advertisement

Fisher's
will present
the Greatest of all Dramatic Morality Plays
"ENLIGHTEN THY DAUGHTER"
The 7 Acts Magnificent Cinema Wonder
39,217

people saw this great film during its first week's run at the Park Theatre, New York whilst at Cape Town, hundreds were turned away during the fortnight's season..

Lieutenant-Colonel G.D. Gray, Chief Commissioner, City Police, Cape Town, says - "After seeing "'Enlighten Thy Daughter" this morning, I can most strongly commend it. It is a magnificent moral play and is a tremendous power for good. Every woman should see it as it shows up very plainly one of our greatest modern evils in its true light and does this in a delicate way. It has my entire and unqualified approval and you will do the community a great service by showing it often."

Rev. Thomas B.Gregory, the noted American author and minister says- "After seeing "Enlighten Thy Daughter", I have concluded that it should be called the greatest moral force the screen has ever shown,,..The picture will do almost as much good as the Bible. It is immense and will meet with the success it so richly deserves."

The Outstanding Dramatic Sensation of the Season

Special Notice : Children Under 16 will not be admitted.

Manager - Harry Fisher

This advertisement concluded the following day with "Take no Notice of Other Silly Misleading Advertisements"

which referred to African Theatres' advertising at the Orpheum as follows :

E.T.S.
Enlighten Thy Son !
Let him see
"WOMEN AND WINE"
a picturisation of the famous stage play of the same name by
Arthur Shirley
The Eminent English Dramatist
"Women and Wine"
has an abundance of sensation and is one of the
Greatest Moral Lessons
ever depicted on the screen

(v) The Star's well-known critic, R.A. Nelson, wrote disparagingly about the sensation caused by the film : "It is a biting commentary on the taste and credulity of the community that the suspicion of forbidden fruit can be trusted to make an appeal and obtain a response that neither art nor patriotism can elicit. There is nothing in the film they crowded to see to differentiate it from a score of others which have been shown here save the absurd publicity attached to it, a certain stressing of the unnecessarily vulgar and allusion to the uselessly indelicate. Books, plays and pictures which proclaim their intention of pulpiteering are generally rank failures from the moral as well as the artistic standpoint. As if the quintessence of melodramatic heart-wringing in the pulling back by the father on two distinct occasions of the sheet covering the face of his dead daughter is passed without protest by municipalities, then lovers of the greatest of all qualities in art - restraint - may well hold that such Town Councillors are straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel (?)..... The deplorable thing is that the film has secured a metetricious value owing to injudicious opposition....."(7)

(vi) Subsequent to Fisher's extensively advertising the film, the Durban Town Council banned its exhibition arbitrarily without havir
xx seen it, a fact which Fisher did not neglect to publicise at considerable length. The decision of the Council was divulged at the last moment by which time Fisher had already spent a considerable amount on advertising and general publicity. The position was further rendered illogical by the showing of the film at Pietermaritzburg where the Town Council were less discriminating. In Durban itself, public feeling ran high against the dilatory methods of the Council and the lack of a competent censorship. The Council discussion had been "amusing" rather than relevant to public responsibility and the public resented such levity. In February 1918, the restriction was withdrawn and Fisher showed the film at the Durban Town Hall. The Natal Mercury gave the film an excellent review and the occasion was used again to execrate the dilatory methods of the City Council. No move towards instituting a censorship resulted in Natal as it had at the Cape.

(vii) Curious instances of inspired publicity occurred at this time. For instance, when the Fishers showed the moral drama "Parentage"at the Johannesburg Town Hall,early in 1918, African Theatres advertised the film "The Love Hermit" as follows :

"THE LOVE HERMIT"
This is not a Sex Problem or a Sob Story but a Powerful Drama of Love and High Finance

whereas in Durban, it was advertised as :

THE UNCENSORED FILM
As it was doubtful of the Cape Censor Board passing 'The Love Hermi it was not submitted to them
"THE LOVE HERMIT"
Love : Devoted attachment to or tender affection for one of the opposite sex.
Hermit : A person who retires from society and lives in solitude, a recluse

The very adverse effect which this preponderating type of film exercised on the cinema's general position in society was compensated by a number of features which tended not only to entrench its popularity but to recruit still further classes to its audiences. The fascination of moving pictures as distraction and relaxation, their cheapness and immediate availability extended its popularity to include even those who had regarded it merely as a vulgar amusement. The innocuous humour of Charlie Chaplin had considerable influence in breaking down the cinema's disrepute and the famous and much-lauded epics "Cabiria" and "Intolerance", through magnitude and lavishness, impressed the public at large with the cinema's prestige. Finally there were the films of the war itself which, issued with the sanction and sometimes the active coöperation of the belligerent governments, were of unsurpassed interest. Topical newsreels had always dignified the cinema's status and the war editions continued their effect of proselytising the non-bioscope-going public. The war documentaries intensified it.

As far as the South African audiences were concerned, the immediate reaction to the outbreak of war was the showing of a number of British patriotic dramas such as "England Expects", "England's Menace", "V.C.", etc in which spies were foiled and enemies routed. As soon as the official cinematographers could go into action, remarkable documentaries of the fighting forces appeared and drew large audiences. The British, French, and Italian Governments published official war films (some of considerable length) which were shown in South Africa. Among the first was "Britain Prepared", a mammoth documentary made by Charles Urban showing every phase of army, navy and air-force activity which was shown in 1916 by African Theatres in conjunction with the Imperial Government.(1)

Though at first the purpose of patriotic films was purely for war propaganda purposes, the British War Office subsequently realised the information value of such films and released for public exhibition appalling documentaries of actual warfare such as "The Battle of the Somme", "The Defence of Verdun", "The Battle of the Ancre and the Advance of the Tanks", "The Tanks in Action" and other such films whose

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(1) Running for an hour and a half, "Britain Prepared" attained extraordinary success and was said to be more popular than the record-breaking "Cabiria".

realism both shocked and stimulated South African audiences.(i) Other such films were "The King visiting his Armies in France", "Sons of Our Empire", etc. Organisations such as the Navy League promoted the exhibition of films such as "It is for England" and numerous "shorts" dealing with war activities.(ii)

The popularity of propaganda pictures was exploited by the American production industry which made many films dealing with spies and thrilling episodes in fictional hostilities. Topical events were exploited by both British and American firms and "The Martyrdom of Nurse Cavell" (an English production starring Vera Pearce), "Rasputin" "Cardinal Mercier" and other biographical films dealing with events which had barely occurred were shown in South Africa in 1917 and 1918. During 1918, three outstanding productions testified to American patriotic fervour - "Lest we Forget" which dealt with the Lusitania outrage and starred Rita Jolivet, an actress who had been on board; "My Four Years in Germany" which purported to illustrate the experiences of James W. Gerrard, the American ambassador; and "An American Home" which was first shown in 1916 and which imaginatively depicted the invasion of the United States by the Germans amid scenes of great suffering and destruction. Subsequently a large number of American propaganda fiction films were shown in South Africa even after the end of the war.(iii) Occasionally Continental examples of this type of film appeared such as the French "Mothers of France" starring the aged Sarah Bernhardt and "Flanders, My Country" with Henri Krauss.

(i) The effect of these films was undoubted. It had been found that th most inspiring propaganda was unable to rival the influence of scenes of actual battle, no matter how gruesome or horrifying. Forthright documentaries such as the Somme film which showed the Tommies being mown down by machine-gun fire as they leapt over the parapets of their trenches, sent recruiting figures in South Afric to new heights.

Apart from this, recruiting found a valuable ally in the "bioscope". An item on many programmes was a recruiting speech by some official. Current terms of obloquy were "Bioscope Boy" or one who frequented the cinema instead of enlisting; and "Pritchard Street Percy" or one who frequented the bio-cafés in Johannesburg. The enormous crowds that flocked to see "Enlighten Thy Daughter" at the Johannesburg Town Hall were also used as recruiting propaganda - the thousands of men among them should have enlisted.

(ii) It was subsequently revealed that the British War Office made a profit of £72,000 on the exhibition of its war films of which £50,000 was distributed among Home and Overseas War Charities, £5,000 being apportioned to South Africa.(?)

(iii) On America's entry into the Great War, the film industry was early asked for assistance by the official Propaganda Bureau and the results of its enthusiastic coöperation were evident for some time after their inspiration had ceased - to the annoyance of South African audiences.

The Great War films (and particularly those dealing with tank warfare)[1] not only finally established the value of the information film to the South African public (whose morale and war effort were correspondingly stimulated), they established too the prestige and importance of the cinema when it most needed it. During this period, the character of cinema entertainment had considerably changed. Previously bio-vaudeville had been the cinema's highest expression but the impossibility of obtaining talented artistes from overseas during the war made it increasingly difficult and eventually not only bio-vaudeville disappeared but the music-hall itself, a new form of entertainment, the revue, taking its place. The institution of the "feature film" with its "supporting programme" during this period established a form which, with the exception of sound, maintained thereafter . The conditions of the war itself served to popularise the cinema among every stratum of the public and if it retained its appeal for the masses by the unscrupulous exploitation of objectionable films, it also converted the reticent by monumental productions, occasional fine feature films and the topical documentary.

The war period is characterised too by the efforts of African Theatres to gain complete control of the entertainment industry. The administrative Trust was faced not only with extraordinary difficulties imposed by the war but also exceptional opportunities to consolidate its position and to embark on theatrical presentation. The importation of companies and artistes was almost impossible but as much as the Trust had to rely on local theatrical talent, it could also count on an almost clear field by the enforced withdrawal of competitive enterprises. In 1914, theatrical entertainment in South Africa was sustained largely by Leonard Rayne and J.C. Williamson Ltd Rayne's stock dramatic companies appeared regularly in the big towns and were often led by Alfred Paumier playing thread-bare favourites such as "The Story of the Rosary", "East Lynne" etc. Rayne also imported a John Tiller company playing "From Monte Carlo to Japan" an

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(1) The value of the actuality films of the Great War shown in South Africa was not confined to their stimulation of recruiting and the war effort generally. The official war films imparted information which was otherwise impossible. This was most notable in the case of the tanks of whose shape, size and purpose, the South African public was completely ignorant. Films of tanks in action came as a complete revelation even to the best-informed and made a greater sensation than those showing Wilbur Wright's "flying machine" in 1909.

other musical revues. J.C. Williamson, inheriting the musical mantle of the Wheelers, imported a very successful Gilbert and Sullivan company and presented the pantomime "Puss in Boots", the first for many years. A new comedy company playing "The Seven Keys to Baldpate" was also imported as well as the well-known Australian actress Madge Fabian,(i)Stephen Ewart and dramatic company playing "Under Cover" an other popular plays. Williamson's biggest theatrical enterprise was the presentation of Lewis Waller, Madge Titheradge and London company in South African favourites such as "Henry of Navarre". African Theatres, preoccupied by the reorganisation of the cinema and music-hall business, confined their importations to films and variety artistes (ii). Towards the end of 1914 however, the Trust essayed dramatic presentation and launched two enterprises of mediocre quality, both playing melodrama - one company was led by Arnold Bell and played "The Idol of Paris", the other led by George A. Street and Madge Clifton played "The Cattle Thief". On the whole, entertainment was unevenly sustained owing to the crisis of the previous year, the persistence of difficulties and the reorganisation necessitated by the outbreak of war.

Adjustment to war conditions was necessarily slow and 1915 saw little improvement in theatrical entertainment while the cinema continued to prosper. Rayne continued with his dramatic companies and coöperated with African Theatres in the presentation of a London dramatic company in "Hindle Wakes" etc. Williamson succeeded in importing only two companies - John Webster, Beatrice Helloway and dramatic company in "The Fortune Hunter" etc and a new London musical comedy company playing"The Cinema Star" and other musical revues. Apart from its collaboration with Leonard Rayne, African Theatres essayed no more dramatic enterprises, confining itself to the problem

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(i) Madge Fabian remained in South Africa, subsequently playing many leading parts in fiction films made by African Film Productions Ltd. Apart from occasional re-appearances on the Johannesburg amateur stage, she retired to her farm on which she conducted a well-known riding school.

(ii) One of the variety artistes appearing in 1914 was W.C. Fields who was paying his second visit to South Africa. He was billed as a "silent conjuror" and subsequently became a famous film star in comedy parts, a notable performance being "Mr Micawber".

of obtaining overseas variety stars for its music halls, now including the Tivoli and Alhambra in Cape Town.(i) Arthur de Jong presented "The Royal Welsh Choir" and the well-known concert party "The Masqueraders" toured the larger towns, The barrenness of theatrical entertainment favoured the cinema and as the progress of the war disposed the public still more towards unthinking amusement, dramatic companies progressively declined in number and other forms of amusement began to take their place.

The need for frivolous distraction rather than drama was appreciated and exploited by the African Theatres Trust in their first big theatrical enterprises in 1916. Not only were several musical and dramatic companies imported but the Trust also undertook the production and staging of revues. While maintaining vaudeville in its music-halls (ii), the Trust embarked on a policy of purveying light amusement. Percy Marmont and a comedy company in "A Little Bit of Fluff", "The Boomerang", "Fair and Warmer" and other light plays; "Potash and Perlmutter (which had originally been imported by the Williamson concern) playing to record seasons; Gladys Moncrieff and a comic opera company in "Betty" etc; and a London Gaiety company in "Mr Manhattan" were presented while, as vaudeville declined owing to the difficulty of obtaining artistes and the competition of the "bioscope", the latest form of theatrical amusement, the revue, was exploited with all available local resources. "Step this Way", "Peaches", "Venus Ltd" and "The Million Dollar Girl" were produced in South Africa with considerable success in 1916 and in addition, the Theatres Trust imported two noteworthy dramatic companies - Ethel Irving, Frank Cellier and London company playing "Dame Nature" etc and A.E. Anson and Mary Malleson in "The Barton Mystery" and other plays.

(i) African Theatres purchased the Tivoli and the Alhambra in Cape Town from H.J. Stodel and George Potts, Stodel being made the Trust's manager for the Cape area. The Trust now controlled the whole music-hall business in South Africa.

(ii) Among the variety artistes appearing in South Africa during 1916 was the famous Wish Wynne who was already a South African favourite.

Through this policy of providing light amusement, the Theatre Trust survived the severe strain which both the war and the encroachment of the cinema was making on theatrical entertainment. Leonard Rayne, persevering with his dramatic companies, was forced to relinquish his lease of the Standard Theatre in Johannesburg (which was taken up by African Theatres) and to confine his activities to the Opera House in Cape Town (i) and an occasional tour of the country. He too attempted to provide light entertainment in staging the revue "Get Busy" and the pantomime "Dick Whittington". J.C. Williamson Ltd, having presented Eithnee Magee, Stephen Ewart and a comedy-drama company in "Peg 'o My Heart" and other light plays, the highly-successful "Potash and Perlmutter" and a comic-opera company in revues such as the popular "High Jinks", surrendered their interests to the African Theatres Trust in July 1916 and concentrated on the Australian terrain though maintaining a coöperative connection with the Trust. Apart from Leonard Rayne and the enterprises of impresarios such as Arthur de Jong the Theatres Trust controlled the whole South African entertainment field.(ii) During 1916, it maintained a steady supply of somewhat frivolous amusement but if serious drama declined, at least the theatres remained open and purveyed the type of entertainment the war situation demanded.

During 1917, when the war news was almost consistently depressing the theatre suffered further eclipse. Leonard Rayne did little more than mark time with his dramatic companies and African Theatres, under increasingly difficult circumstances, persisted in their policy of providing light entertainment. The music-halls remained open, variety (iii) alternating with revues such as "Have a Guess" and "S'Nice" and, in the absence of imported musical and dramatic companies, local talent was employed. A South African Gaiety Company played "Theodore & Co." and

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(i) Faced with many war time difficulties, Rayne was forced to present established favourites such as "East Lynne", "The Story of the Rosary", "Under Two Flags" etc in which he played opposite Freda Godfrey.

(ii) During 1916, there were also one or two isolated enterprises such as Stephen Black touring his own company in his own plays, notably "Van Kalabas does his Bit" which did not repeat the success of "Love and the Hyphen" and "Helena's Hope".

(iii) The famous magician, Horace Goldin, paid another visit to South Africa at this time.

other musical pieces and a dramatic company led by Stephen Black the controversial "Damaged Goods" which was well in tune with film "moral dramas" then being shown. The sole overseas talent obtainable by the Trust was Louise Holden and an American dramatic company playing "Kick Off" etc and the Dampier-Bishop Variety Company (i). Despite the paucity of theatrical talent, entertainment was well maintained by both Leonard Rayne and the African Theatres Trust.

This condition was maintained during 1918. Rayne's dramatic companies continued with their activities and, apart from sponsoring an abortive dramatic enterprise by Harold Shaw and Edna Flugrath (ii) in "The Wasters", Rayne also presented "The Steel Payne Bell-Ringers" who were always popular in South Africa, and Ada Reeve and a full vaudeville company. African Theatres produced only one revue "Time Please" and managed to maintain vaudeville. Claude Dampier, Irene Vere and a comedy company toured under their aegis and a South African Gaiety company played "The Maid of the Mountains" and other popular favourites. The dramatic event of the year was the Trust's presentation of Marie Tempest, Grahmm Browne and company in "Good Gracious Annabelle", "Mr Pim Passes By" and other comedies.(iii)The Trust also imported an American dramatic company playing "Nothing but the Truth" and Theo Leonard, Ruth Lincoln and a gaiety company in "The Pink Lady" etc.

By the end of the war, Leonard Rayne was the Theatres Trust's sole competitior in the theatrical field. Establishing his headquarter at the Cape and concentratingon drama, he came into little collision with the Trust whose policy, under war-time conditions, had been the presentation of light musical and comedy entertainment. Both enterprises had shown effort and initiative in keeping theatres open durin the war period. Administering theatres, music-halls and bioscopes, the Trust was obliged to strike a balance between its interests. The

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(i) Claude Dampier subsequently became one of the most popular players to visit South Africa.

(ii) Harold Shaw and the well-known film star, Edna Flugrath, has bee employed by African Film Productions Ltd for some time in the production of a number of South African fiction films.

(iii) The company was at the conclusion of a world tour which had lasted several years. It gave a special gala performance in Johannesburg on Armistice Night which was attended by the Governor General Lord Buxton. Marie Tempest made an inspiring speech at the conclusion appealing for public gratitude to the soldiers as well as rejoicing.

"bioscope" was easily the most popular war-time amusement and without careful administration, would probably have extinguished both theatre and music-hall far sooner than it did. At the outset, both the Trusts had adopted a policy of bringing all cinema enterprises under their control - the Theatres Trust by leasing "bioscopes, the Films Trust by contracting with independent proprietors. Any enterprise outside this control represented a menace to the success of the whole organisation and both Trusts continued unrelentingly to extend it, their methods of "freezing out" independent opposition being subject to popular obloquy and ill-feeling.(i) Though the Theatres Trust controlled a comparatively small proportion of the total number of bioscopes in South Africa at the end of the war, almost every one of that total drew its supplies from the Films Trust. Until 1917, there remained a few outstanding independent enterprises but they were then absorbed.(ii)

The "monopolistic activities" of the Trusts were opposed by a number of factors that invalidated this current description of their policy, notably a number of independent exhibitors who operated erratically, and drew their supplies from overseas or bought a few films outright on the open market. When the "bioscope" attained greatly increased popularity during the war (both through the psychological situation and the extraordinary appeal of "moral dramas") a few independent enterprises were launched to take advantage of the prevailing boom.(iii) Towards the end of 1916, the Fishers, while continuing to run the Elite Bioscope in Cape Town, "road-showed" "She" starring Alice Delysia and "The Martyrdom of Nurse Cavell" throughout the Union. From December 1916, they organised active resistance to the Trust by staging independent film shows wherever they could. Their

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(i) At a meeting of independent bioscope proprietors held in Cape Town early in 1919, mention was made of "the holy abject fear they had of being victimised by the Trust" though, paradoxically, reference was repeatedly made to its unfailing courtesy.(9)

(ii) In 1917, Thornton's Bioscope in His Majesty's Theatre, Durban and Wolfram's Bioscope in Cape Town were taken over by the Trust. Late in 1916, the Fishers engaged in litigation with the Films Trust over their supply of films and early in 1917, the Elite Bioscope in the Metropolitan Hall, Burg Street, Cape Town ceased operating, the Fishers advertising subsequent enterprises as "the only independent bioscope in South Africa".

(iii) There were only one or two isolated ventures such as S.H. Marks' showing of the patriotic drama "Jack Tar" at the beginning of 1916.

advertisements were almost always headed :

FISHER'S
South Africa's Only Independent Bioscope
No Connection with Any Trust

and within a short time, the activities of this enterprise which was supplied with films through the agency of the eldest son Joe operating in America and which to a certain extent captured popular support, represented a considerable menace to the existing structure, and was accordingly opposed by the Trusts.(i) Touring under the title of "Fisher's Independent Bioscope", it made hundreds of pounds with "Enlighten Thy Daughter" alone and also attained considerable success with "The Submarine Eye", a unique under-sea film made by Williamsons.

Meanwhile a small company had imported a number of Charlie Chaplin comedies and feature films from America and, having no organisation for their exhibition, entered into an agreement with the Fishers. The "Charlie Chaplin (S.A.) Film Co" as it was called, soon became almost an institution. Its Chaplin comedies were enormously popular and no matter how poor the feature film, audiences would flock to see them when they were "road-shown" in all the big towns of the Union. Among its feature films were "The Miracle of Life"(ii), "The Sorrows of Satan"(iii), "My Old Dutch", "A Pit Boy's Romance", "The Country that God Forgot"(iv), and one or two others. Subsequently this enterprise was bought out at a very low figure by the "African Film Syndicate" but not before it had made considerable sums.(v)

(i) The Fishers always made much capital of their "independence" and appealed to the public to support them on that account. The popular apprehension which had inevitably accompanied the activities of Mr Schlesinger's entertainment companies was exploited to the full and fearless advertising engaged the sympathies of the public still further. (In Johannesburg particularly, the African Theatres Trust rose to this challenge and attempted to distract attention from Fisher's advertisements by publishing unduly large advertisements of the attractions of their own cinemas.) During 1917, when the Fishers abandonned the Elite Bioscope and temporarily established "Fisher's Bioscope" in the Railway Institute Hall in Cape Town, this independent enterprise flourished in the face of strenuous opposition from African Theatres. The eldest son Joe Fisher went to America and bought a large number of films which were exhibited throughout the Union by members of the family, notably Harry assisted by Isidore who played the piano or conducted orchestras, Lottie who provided piano accompaniment and other of the sister.

(ii) "The Miracle of Life" was a "moral drama" starring Margarita Fisher and involving a woman who refused to have a baby.

(iii) "The Sorrows of Satan" was a decided commercial failure and was subsequently described by Harry Fisher as "a real piece of cheese"

(iv) "The Country that God Forgot" was advertised simply as "The Girl - The Serpent - The Man".

(v) A subsidiary company called "The Walker-Mutual Chaplin Film Co" operated in Durban with disused films from the parent organisation but was short-lived.

The policy of the African Theatres Trust to all such enterprises was one of aggressive opposition (i); but though in 1917,(ii) Fisher's and its allied "Charlie Chaplin Film Co" were the sole consistently active independent exhibitors, during 1918 their success and, inspired a number of individuals to form "companies" possessed of only one or two films, to show them in Town Halls throughout the Union. (iii) During this year, the Fishers provided the Trust with great opposition and difficulty, no opportunity being lost by either side to take advantage of the other, the Fishers openly alleging that on sundry occasions they met with singular accidents such as inexplicable damage to films. "Fisher(s Bioscope " (iv) showed many remarkable

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(i) African Theatres made energetic attempts to discount these enterprises by counter-advertising of a singularly forthright nature. The independents however turn it to account by publicity of the following kind :
"Note : The pictures shown by this company (Charlie Chaplin S.A. Film Co) will positively never be screened again in Johannesburg owing to the monopoly at present existing in the show business throughout South Africa which prevents local showmen from hiring outside their contracts."

(ii) During 1917, the only independent shows outside Fisher's and the Charlie Chaplin Film Co were Kinemacolor's exhibition of "With the Fighting Forces in Europe" and the "Independent Film Company's" French Official War Films including "With the Allies in the Balkans".

(iii) The formation of a "company" obviated individuals being liable when it failed financially."IndependentFilm Companies" became quite frequent and either proved failures or were taken over by the Trust. One of the latter was the "Apex Film Co." managed by R.B. Young which showed "The Manxman", "The Whip", "Milestones", and "The Dumb Girl of Portici" (featuring Anna Pavlova). In an effort to drive it off the market, African Theatres spent large sums in newspaper advertisements of its own cinemas whenever the Apex Company advertised. This type of "shut-out" publicity became the recognised method of combatting independent enterprise and though Fisher withstood it for many months, the Apex Company soon capitulated, R.B. Young being given a manager's position in the African Theatres Trust.
Another such enterprise of 1918 was the "Super-Films Syndicate" which inevitably failed owing to the mediocrity of its one film "Civilisation", a muddle-minded allegorical film.

(iv) When Fisher's advertised the showing of the "moral drama" "Parentage", African Theatres immediately exhibited the "moral "drama" "Maternity". When African Theatres raised their prices of admission to defray the Cape Provincial Entertainments Tax, Fishers advertised :

I BELIEVE

Is the title of the great photo-play to be presented at the City Hall on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday next by Fisher's who have no connection with any

TRUST

The mere fact that the London Film Company are responsible for the production of this masterpiece

SHOULD

be sufficient guarantee of its excellence. An important feature of the admission charges is that Fisher's

PAY THE TAX

((African Theatres' prices had gone up from 6d and I/- to 7d and I/2d whereas Fisher's remained at 6d and I/- including tax.)

films including "Rasputin" with Montagu Love, "Raffles" with John Barrymore, "Mother", "Cardinal Mercier (also with Love), "Lest We Forget" with Rita Jolivet, etc; but the height of their conflict with African Theatres was reached when both firms simultaneously showed two film versions of "Romeo and Juliet" in 1918.(1) At the time, it was common knowledge that "Fisher's Bioscope" was actively disconcerting the African Theatres-Films Trusts organisation and though numerous rumours of their "amalgamation" had been strenuously denied in print, negotiations took place. On the 25th July, it was announced in Durban

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(1) This extraordinary episode in the history of the South Africa cinema marked the last spectacular gesture made by the Fisher family. "Fisher's Bioscope" had advertised to show "Romeo and Juliet" made by Metro with Hobart Bosworth and Beverly Bayne in the Johannesburg Town Hall on the 15th June 1918. As soon as this advertisement appeared, the Carlton Cinema controlled by African Theatres advertised to show "Romeo and Juliet" made by Fox with Theda Bara and Harry Milland on the 14th June (a day sooner). On the 14th June, the following two advertisements appeared in Johannesburg papers :

THERE IS NO BLUFF
about
"ROMEO AND JULIET"
at the
Carlton
Tonight

Because :
It is produced by the Fox Film Corporation, the leading film company of the Universe.
It is the most expensive Shakespearean film made.
2,500 persons were included in the cast.
It features the world-famous Theda Bara, a magnificent actress and a beautiful woman.
And because the African Theatres can't afford to bluff
They leave it to the public to judge the merits of the Fox and Metro productions. Satisfied that the results will be the same as in America. Fox First, the Rest Nowhere.

DON'T BE BLUFFED
The Only Genuine Copy of
METRO'S
250,000 dollar production of
"ROMEO AND JULIET"
in eight tremendous acts
will be screened at the
TOWN HALL
tomorrow at 3 and 8.15
by
FISHER'S
Many productions of "Romeo and Juliet" have been made by various companies but there is only
One Metro "Romeo and Juliet"
The Production that took Eighteen Months to Produce
Note
The Place : Town Hall
The Day : Saturday 15th
The Time : 3 and 8.15
The Firm : Fisher's
who have absolutely no connection with the Theatres Trust, Films Trust or any other Trust except the Public Trust which, through their merit, they have achieved.

On the 15th June, both sides carried the feud further, the Carlton including in its advertisement the following :

newspapers that Mr Schlesinger, while transacting various business in Durban in connection with theatre sites etc (i) had acquired the firm of Fisher's and that it would cease operating as an independent.(ii)

The "trustification" of the bioscope industry and its absorption of small independent proprietors, however necessary for the solid founding of the industry, aroused profound suspicion at the time.(iii)

"We are agreed - there is NO ARGUMENT because the New York buyer of the African Theatres had the option of purchasing either the Metro or the Fox production of "Romeo and Juliet" and bought THE BEST."
while "Fisher's Bioscope" announced :
NO SWANK
NO Bluff
NO Building of Theatres
NO Millions of Feet Arriving
Just Fisher's
The Independent Bio
Absolutely no connection with the Trust or any other combine in South Africa.

Provoked by the Carlton's advertisement of the 15th June, the Fishers replied on the 17th June with :
"We remind the Johannesburg public that the African Theatres Trust cannot afford to bluff.
Therefore we challenge them to prove that they had the Option of Purchase of our Metro production as our Mr Joe Fisher, over twelve months ago, secured the Option for African Rights."

The public treated the matter with comparative indifference but film critics, considerably entertained by the simultaneous showing of two versions of the same story, were careful to be non-commital in their views. Both films were guardedly commended though reading between the lines, it was obvious that the Metro versions shown by Fisher was thought to be the better. The feud was carried to Cape Town a month later when African Theatres showed their film at the Majestic and the Globe and Fisher at the Railway Institute Hall.

(i) At this early stage - prior to the end of the Great War - Mr Schlesinger had embarked on grandiose schemes of developing the entertainment industry by the building of large cinema theatres throughout the Union.

(ii) A.M. Fisher, the father, retired on a pension (alleged to be £50 a month) while Harry and Joe were given cinema-manager's positions, and Isidore a musical appointment in the Trust. Joe subsequently went to Singapore and ran a cinema palace there, escaped on the Japanese entry into the Second World War and lecture-toured in the United States showing films on South Africa Harry remained a cinema manager with African Theatres. Isidore, disappointed in his expectation of being made Musical Director of the Trust, finally severed his connection, formed his own orchestra and operated it in Southern Rhodesia. The sisters who had provided the musical accompaniment to countless "bioscope shows", subsequently married and retired from the entertainment world.

(iii) The Natal Mercury in particular, commented most adversely on the Trusts's attempts to absorb all other enterprises into its own organisation and its well known dramatic critic "Baton"(C.H. Parsons) used little reticence on the subject, referring on occasion to "the tentacles of Mr Schlesinger's organisation". Such journalistic instances and the efforts of the independent showmen themselves combined to maintain public suspicion and resentment.

It is doubtful whether this feeling which was sedulously cultivated in some quarters and particularly by the independent showmen themselves, affected public patronage appreciably but it militated in favour of the few independent exhibitions which were subsequently given and which steadily mounted in number. In proportion to the measures that the Trusts took to consolidate their position in South Africa, public suspicion and apprehension was stimulated. This was particularly the case during 1917 when, apart from the strident activities of the Fishers, the Theatres Trust, in an attempt to safeguard its interests from apparent encroachment by the Union Government acting as an independent film exhibitor, circularised the bioscopes it controlled threatening cessation of supplies if they assisted by showing a film whose proceeds were intended for charitable purposes. The Trust itself had made "a generous offer" to arrange the exhibition of the film which had been refused; but their attitude in the matter was neither appreciated nor condoned by a Press and public to which A.M. Fisher divulged the whole affair. A porular outcry was raised which the Trust made no attempt to combat but a very unpleasant impression had undoubtedly been created.(1)

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(1) Early in 1917, the Imperial Government approached the Union Government with a view to arranging the exhibition in South Africa of a number of War Office films (notably "The Battle of the Ancre and the Advance of the Tanks" for propaganda purposes, the proceeds to be given to the Governor-General's Fund. The Union Government negotiated with the African Films Trust but, failing a satisfactory financial basis, entrusted the exhibition of the films to the Union Defence Force Institute (more particularly, to its general manager Mr T. Sleith).

On the 10th April 1917, the films were shown at the City Hall in Cape Town to a packed audience including the Governor-General Lord Buxton. For several nights, there were "great" audiences and the films were subsequently shown at the Wynberg Town Hall and elsewhere in the Peninsula. On the 24th April, further copies were shown (after considerable preliminary publicity) at the Johannesburg Town Hall where they achieved the same extraordinary success. Subsequently exhibitions were arranged throughout the Union and, owing to the public's complete ignorance of tanks, the topical interest of the films, their official significance and the worthy object of their showing, they were everywhere attended by large audiences.

On the 21st May, the Cape Times published the following letter: "Sir - Enclosed, please find, a copy of a circular now being sent by the African Films Trust to every bioscope proprietor in the Union. I think it would be well to publish same so as to let the public see what the Trust are doing to help the Governor-General's fund." I am etc - A.M. Fisher :

"You have probably already been approached by the Government through the Garrison Institute, Cape Town, with a request to be allowed to show the above-described film ("The Battle of the Ancre and the Advance of the Tanks") and we are therefore obliged to express our views on the matter. For reasons best known to themselves, the Government have recently gone into the "show business" in a manner which is likely not only to affect your interests seriously but also our's. This company pays a huge amount annually in Customs dues on films, posters and other items

incidental to the business we are controlling and it is an extremely difficult matter for us to understand why they should wish to exploit this particular trade especially as we made a generous offer to handle "The Battle of the Ancre and the Advance of the Tanks" for them.

We need not point out that the showman's interests as well as our own are bound to be seriously effected if this practice is continued as it is impossible to say where the Government will stop and we have to give you notice that in the event of your assisting the Government in any manner whatsoever in regard to the running of this or any other film, we shall at once cut off your supplies and cancel your contract in terms of clauses 7 and 9 thereof.

It is ofcourse possible, if the Government is successful on their present tour, that it will lead them to import a number of films in the future which will only result in seriously jeopardising your interests as well as our's.

We shall be interested to learn from you whether the Government has yet approached you on the subject and what arrangements, if any, have been made by them at your point."

This revelation created a countrywide sensation. On the 22nd May, the Cape Times published a sub-leader with the following comments - "..... Whatever the terms of those contracts may be, the general public will ask for and will have the right to ask for an explanation of the methods which, on the face of the circular, have all the appearance of those monopolistic practices which once were associated with the name of the Standard Oil Company... The peculiar circumstances under which the bludgeon is being applied are such as to justify a call for public action, failing a satisfactory explanation from the Trust. The War films, as we understand the matter, were obtained by the Union Government by special arrangement with the Imperial authorities. They were obtained with the express purpose of being shown in this country partly to assist recruiting and partly for the benefit of war funds. The character of the films in itself repelled the idea of private profits being made out of their exhibition and there has never ofcourse been any idea whatever, as the circular would suggest, of the Government "exploiting this particular trade". We hope that the Trust will be able to place its position in the matter in a less unfavourable light than the terms of its circular suggest and that it will take the earliest possible opportunity of withdrawing a document which, if it is to be accepted at its face value, certainly requires a great deal of explanation."

The Cape Argus joined issue on the same lines and public resentment mounted. On the 5th June, the Cape Town Recruiting Committee met and Mr Morrison moved the following motion - "That this committee views with strong disapproval the letter purporting to have been sent to bioscope proprietors throughout the country by the African Films Trust in connection with the display of the Battle of the Ancre and Tanks films and looks upon it as opposed not only to the interests of recruiting but to the fund for which the film was exhibited." After considerable discussion, the matter was adjourned, it being felt that the Trust had not had a chance to defend itself and, by some members, that it was really no business of the Recruiting Committee.

Meanwhile Fisher's exposure of the Films Trust's circular had been taken up by other newspapers. The Natal Mercury threw itself wholeheartedly into the general recrimination and "Baton" castigated the Trust forthrightly. His attack was answered by W.E. Simons, then manager of the Durban Empire which had been opened by African Theatres, who mentioned inter alia that Mr Schlesinger had been a consistent contributor to war funds by buying Government bonds and that his millionaire brother in New York had done likewise to the extent of an astonishing amount. These observations failed to impress "Baton" and it was obvious that thenceforward the activities of the Trusts would be regarded with suspicion. For many months, the Natal Mercury remained an unrelenting adversary of "monopolistic activities".

On the other hand, with one exception, the matter was completely disregarded by the Press in Johannesburg where the inculcation of hostile feeling would seriously have menaced the Trusts' interests. This exception was the "Transvaal Critic" whose first editor, Gustave Hellé, had instituted a policy of forthright criticism with the foundation of the paper in 1895.(10) The Critic

Despite the popularity of the cinema during the war years economic conditions, the competition of independent enterprises and their own unfortunate reputation combined to complicate the Trusts' conduct of the bioscope industry. Their difficulties were increased in 1918 by the epidemic of Spanish Influenza which swept through the Union, reaching its worst heights at the Cape. The epidemic began early in October and bioscope audiences throughout the Union immediately diminished to the point of extinction. Despite the grave danger of infection, the Trusts kept their cinemas and theatres open in the face of protesting letters to the Press and other representations. Finally, in the worst-afflicted towns, Municipal Councils ordered their closing. For three weeks, the Trusts suffered an almost complete lack of revenue and thereafter, owing to the public's disinclination for amusement owing to widespread bereavement, the turn-over of the entertainment was but a fraction of that of previous months.

In addition, the situation at the Cape resulted in a further

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issue of the Ist June contained a fierce attack on the African Films Trust headed :

"A PATRIOTIC TRUST"

and concluding with the following quotation from a leading article in the Cape Argus :

" 'As a matter of fact, the Trust has no right whatever to be protected against competition. The law never has recognised their monopoly and, we believe, never will. The taxes which they pay on their raw material give them no claim to special consideration for they are simply passed on to the public. Under these circumstances, when we find the Films Trust with fine unbridled insolence, threatening refusal to supply bioscope proprietors with films if they "assist the Government" - i.e. the Governor-General's fund - it is time to consider whether the methods of business adopted by this particular Trust do not constitute a public danger. Most assuredly, it is not a healthy or desirable state of things that a few men, obviously lacking in a proper sense of public spirit, should have it in their power to dragoon and boycott the small bioscope proprietors of the whole country, more particularly when their object is the utterly ignoble one of seeking to enrich themselves at the expense of a great patriotic fund for which the people of South Africa have made substantial sacrifices.'

Since the Cape Town and Durban press have taken up this subject in no uncertain manner, we have failed to notice any expression of opinion of the Films Trust business methods and patriotism in the local papers. As a matter of fact, the Trust Whizz-Bang has caused Jo'burg scribes to retire to the safety and seclusion of their editorial dug-outs where they no doubt intend to remain until the affair has blown over; but it devolves on the Recruiting Committee and the Committee of the Governor-General's Fund to see that the attitude of the Films Trust is not allowed to pass out of view without a protest of some sort. If the local press does its duty, it will join in the outcry; if not, one can only come to the conclusion that for some reason or other, it is scared that the Trust may retaliate. So much for the "free and independent press"of the Rand !"

None of these journalistic attacks goaded the Trust into making an official reply and the public was left to draw its own conclusions. Subsequent War Office films including "Sons of Our Empire" were administered by the Union Defence Force Institute which, unable to undertake the enormous amount of clerical and other work entailed by organising their exhibition, put them out to tender

embarrassment. Attentions was first attracted to the incipient epidemic on the 4th October when only the postal delivery service was seriously affected. By the 7th October, the disease had attained such proportions that hardly a single public service was in operation and the death-roll was rapidly mounting. On that day, eight bioscopes in District Six (where the risk of infection was ofcourse greater than elsewhere) advertised their closing. By the 8th, the epidemic had attained shocking proportions (1), the Opera House, Tivoli, Alhambra, Wolfram's Bioscope and the Grand closing, leaving the Majestic in Plein Street and the Regal in Wynberg both of which closed the following day. Not until the 30th October did any of these theatres and bioscopes re-open and then to such poor audiences that it hardly seemed worthwhile. Not one had its palatial orchestra.(11) The most that could be mustered for any theatre or bioscope was a pianist owing to the musicians having refused to return to work under the conditions imposed on them by the Theatres Trust. Their main objection was the Trust's refusal to pay them wages for the two weeks during which they had been prevented from working by the epidemic. They also demanded an increase in wages and the employment of Union men only. On the 31st October, the following advertisement appeared in the amusement columns of Cape papers and was published daily for nearly two weeks :

APOLOGY

The Federation of Trades apologises to the public for inconvenience caused through the withdrawal of Musicians and other employees from places of amusement pending settlement of differences with the African Theatres Trust and other managements.

R. Stuart - secretary

and on the 2nd November, it was suggested by :

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(1) At the peak of the epidemic, the death-roll reached 600 a day in Cape Town.

(11) The situation in the theatres was particularly ludicrous, especially at the Opera house where African Theatres had presented a Gaiety Company led by Theo Leonard and Ruth Lincoln in "The Girl in the Taxi". Without an orchestra and almost completely deprived of public patronage, this enterprise lasted only a week.

Members of the National Union of Railway and Harbour Services (S.A.), all other Railway and Harbour servants, their families and friends ar respectfully requested to refrain from attending places of amusement whilst the Musicians' dispute continues.

E.H.Jones - secretary (i)

Meanwhile a sympathetic strike of musicians in Johannesburg was feare- but failed to materialise. About a hundred in number, the Cape musicians decided on energetic action to enlist public sympathy and organised a committee. On the night of the Ist November, they paraded the streets of Cape Town playing popular tunes and on the 4th, they organised a bioscope show at the City Hall.(ii) Negotiations between the Trust and the strikers proved continuously ineffective, the Trust having to close the Opera House on the 6th November and also consider ing cancelling the season of the American dramatic company due to open on the I8th. It also threatened to close all its Peninsula theatres for a month or six weeks at least.(iii) Over and above the loss of patronage occasioned by the musicians' strike, the entertainment industry was suffering heavily owing to the public's disinclinat ion for amusement due to the epidemic.(iv) Negotiations continually

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(i) On the 4th November, the following addition to the advertisement was made :

Cabinet Workers Union

Members of the above Union, families and friends are requested to refrain from attending places of amusement while the Musicians ar in dispute with the exception of the abovementioned bioscopes. They have complied with the Federation's demands. The employees have been authorised to resume work and the public are asked to accord them their patronage.

(The "abovementioned bioscopes" were six bioscopes in the suburbs

(ii) It was advertised as follows :

Musicians v. Trust Bioscope Entertainment
City Hall
commencing tonight at 8 o'clock
"THE ADMIRABLE CRICHTON"
also
Charlie Chaplin in "The Adventurer"
An Orchestra
of 50 musicians on strike will perform under the conductorship of Mr Riegelhuth and leave the public to decide whether music is essential to the success of the show.
Support the Musicians and Bioscope Employees in their
Fight for Right
We Pay the Tax
Proprietors & Cape Musicians Association & Bioscope Employees Union

According to a notice, "the public demonstrated its sympathy by packing the building in every part" which must have been over 2,000. Films were shown at the City Hall for three consecutive nights and thereafter the Adderley Street Pier was leased.

(iii) The Tivoli, Alhambra, Grand, Wolfram's, Majestic, American Bioscope (Plein Street) and the Globe (Woodstock).

(iv) Mr R.J. Stodel, Cape manager for the Trust, revealed that the Tivoli was losing £73 a night and that the Opera House whose rental was £600 a week, was suffering even more severely. Some of the independently-owned suburban bioscopes which had composed their differences with the musicians were taking 25/- to 30/- a

broke down (i); but on the 9th November, the Trust succeeded in reopening the Grand as a bioscope with a "Full Grand Orchestra" under the direction of Isidore Fisher (ii) and subsequently re-opened several of its theatres including the Tivoli and Opera House. It was not until the 26th November that the news of an agreement with the striking musicians was published. The negotiations which had lasted fo some days and were sometimes acrimoniously conducted, revolved chiefly round the Federation of Trades insisting on the Trust's employing only Union men. The musicians won a moral victory in that the Trust agreed to pay their employees for the non-working period of the epidemic, or one and a half weeks, and to reinstate all strikers. On the 27th

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night and had even asked the Films Trust to reduce its charges for the hire of films.

(i) Stodel offered the musicians the proposition of re-engaging them and running the theatres and bioscopes for a week to see if patronage would return. This they refused and on the 5th November, he made a further offer embodying the following four points - (1) to pay all the musicians the equivalent of one week's full wages but only as an ex gratia payment; (2) with regard to the six travelling musicians who came down with the Gaiety company, to pay half wages for all the time they had been idle, this also to be an ex gratia payment; (3) to consider any case of hardship to individual musicians and to make ex gratia payments to cover whatever loss or expense they might have incurred; and (4) the Trust would take back all the men and there would be no question o victimisation on the part of the Trust.

On the 6th November, the Secretary of the Trades Federation sent the following letter to Mr Stodel : "I have been instructed by the various unions affected in the present dispute to advise you that the terms of settlement offered to us were submitted to a special general meeting held last night and, after careful consid-eration, the following resolution was unanimously approved :'That this meeting of musicians and bioscope employees cannot agree to the terms offered by the African Theatres Trust'."

The Trust expressed itself as very pained at both the tone and contents of this communication, and particularly regretted the fact that it made no alternative suggestions, even publishing a letter to this effect on the 8th November. The strikers however continued their resistance.

(ii) The Musicians Committee was then showing films at the City Hall and on the IIth November, under the heading "MUSICIANS VERSUS TRUST", advertised the showing for three nights of "The Lust of the Ages", a typical contemporary film starring Lillian Walker, accompanied by the Amalgamated Orchestra under the baton of the well-known conductor (of the Tivoli's orchestra) Riegelhuth. The advertisement concluded with

Why is the Trust "trussed" ?
Because of the "banned" band.

November, every African Theatres' advertisement in the Amusements Columns was headed :

The Strike is now Amicably Settled
Our Orchestra will play here Tonight

This event, apart from adding to the organisation's many current embarrassments, had been fully reported throughout the country and had done nothing to improve the unfortunate impression already created.

Finally the organisation of the South African cinema industry was confronted with adjustment to the "Amusement Tax", a form of raising revenue which was adopted by all four provinces. Its incidence varied and with it, the manner of its reception. In the Transvaal mild protest was raised by the institution of the tax in 1917; in the Free State and Natal, there was little comment; but at the Cape, when the Administrator, Sir Frederic de Waal, proposed to raise about £75,000 by its institution early in 1918, a storm of protests once more arose.(i) Prolonged debate in the Provincial Council ensued, members objecting to the heavy incidence of the tax on the cheaper prices. Finally the Ordinance was promulgated (ii) and, despite the action of Fisher's Bioscope, the "Musicians Bioscope" and other independent exhibitions which publicised that they "paid the tax", African Theatres raised their charges for admission to 7d and 1/-, the

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(i) On the 13th March 1918, a meeting of theatre and bioscope proprietors was held in the Cape Town Alhambra and the proposed tax roundly condemned. H.J. Stodel summarised the financial difficulties of the trade at the Cape - it contributed between £6,000 and £8,000 to the maintenance of the Censor Board; it paid £3,000 in licences for its theatres and about £8,000 on duty on films at the rate of 5/- per 100 feet. Furthermore Mr Stodel made reference to "The Battle of the Ancre and Advance of the Tanks" affair by remarking that the Union Government was importing films in competition with the trade. The tax had proved practicable overseas only through Sunday trading which was impossible in South Africa. Finally the proposed incidence fell most heavily on the cheaper seats and robbed the poor man of his pleasure. Its institution would constitute an unfair and an unjust burden on the theatrical and bioscope industries and would make their successful prosecution virtually impossible.

A similar outcry was raised in Natal when an Entertainments Tax was levied in 1921 - a year of slump and depression. Its institution gave rise to much bitter feeling and it was thought irreparably to have damaged entertainment.

When the Transvaal Provincial Council raised the Entertainments Tax in July 1940, there was little comment from the public or the trade.

(ii) The proposed incidence was as follows :

On an admission fee of not more than 6d.....1d
More than 6d but not more than 1/6d.....2d
" " 1/6d " " " " 3/- 3d
" " 3/- " " " " 5/- 6d
" " 5/- " " " " 7/6d..... 9d
" " 7/6d " " " " 10/-.....1/-
" "10/-, for every succeeding 10/- or part...1/-.

being
expectations of the Administrator ~~xxxx~~ to a certain extent realised. (i)

Despite the manifold difficulties of the war years, they constituted a period of prosperity for the African Theatres Trust, which, controlling both "bioscope" and theatrical entertainment, was able to profit by the demand for entertainment which, though at first variable, progressively increased as the period of hostilities appeared to continue indefinitely. At the end of the war, this demand had reached its highest point in the history of South African entertainment and, with an enterprising policy of meeting it with all available resources (including the use of local talent, the staging of a new form of amusement, the revue, and the production of South African fiction films(ii), the business became one of the most prosperous of the times.(iii) Apart from Leonard Rayne and a few independent cinema enterprises, the two Trusts controlled the cinema and theatre fields.

(i) Sir Frederic de Waal's observation in 1918 that he had looked in vain for other constructive schemes of taxation and that the bioscope industry showed sufficient profits to withstand the burden was justified by the revenue raised though it fell short of the anticipated £75,000. At the Cape, the twelve months from April 1918 to March 1919 produced £40,000, including the period of the Spanish Flu. Cape Town produced the bulk of the revenue, followed by Port Elizabeth. The following table indicates the revenue of the first six months of 1919 :

Tickets liable to	1d tax	- 2,073,800	(Cape Town - 1,165,000)
" " "	2d "	- 1,142,300	(" " - 460,000)
" " "	3d "	- 203,300	(" " - 100,000)
" " "	6d "	- 82,400	(" " - 40,000)
" " "	9d "	- 55,700	(" " - 35,000)
" " "	1/6d "	- 8,600	(" " - 8,000)

(It will be seen from this table that the popular habit of "going to the seven-pennies" had already been deeply inculated.)

(ii) This matter is fully dealt with in the chapter on Film Production

(iii) The profits shown by the African Theatres Trust during the war years and thereafter were as follows :

19th May 1913 - 28th February 1914 (9 months 13 days)	- £6,490
1st March 1914 - 28th February 1915 (one year)	26,454
1st March 1915 - 28th February 1916 (one year)	35,431
1st March 1916 - 28th February 1917 (one year)	27,340
1st March 1917 - 28th February 1918 (one year)	77,282
1st March 1918 - 28th February 1919 (one year)	76,401
1st March 1919 - 31st December 1919 (ten months)	89,260
1st January 1920 - 31st December 1920 (one year)	136,766

Appendix to Chapter VIII

The following represent the outstanding films of each year :

1914 : "Germinal" (Henri Krauss - Pathé)
"The Rise of Officer 174" (King Baggott)
"The Girl at the Lunch Counter" (Flora Finch, John Bunny)
"The Daughter of the Hills"
"Under Sealed Orders"
"Caprice" (Mary Pickford)
"Judith of Bethulia" (Blanche Sweet : D.W. Griffith - Biograph)
"In the Bishop's Carriage" (Mary Pickford)
"A Robust Romeo" (Keystone)
"Absinthe" (King Baggott, Leah Baird - Imp)
"Kronstadt"
"Spartacus" (Pasquali)
"Bootle's Baby" (London Films)
"On His Majesty's Service" (Jane Gail - London Films)
"War and Woman" (Cines)
"Through the Valley of the Shadows" (Florence Turner)
"The King's Minister"(Charles Rock, Edna Flugrath - London Films
Chaplin shorts, "Keystone Yells" and Ford Sterling and Max Linder in comics
"England's Menace" (London Films)
"England Expects" (London Films)
The Carnegie Alaska-Siberia Expedition
The Battle of Louvain
"African Mirror" coverage of the Johannesburg Strike, the Funeral of Baron de Villiers, the Foster Gang. etc.

1915 : "The Battle of the Sexes" (D.W. Griffith)
"The Naked Truth" (Lydia Borelli)
"An American Citizen" (John Barrymore, Mary Fuller)
"A Patriot of France"
"Ambushed" (Francis X. Bushman)
"Woman" (Cines)
"Called Back" (Henry Ainley, Charles Rock, Jane Gail - London Films)
"The Trey of Hearts"
"1914" (Jane Gail - London Films)
"Two Women" (Anita Stewart, Julia Swayne)
"Give us this Day" (Swedish Poor Law Film)
"The Incomparable Bellairs" (London Films)
"Vendetta" (Hecla, Rome)
"The Middleman" (Albert Chevalier, Jane Gail - London Films)
"How Heroes are Made" (Cines)
"The Evil Men Do" (Vitagraph)
"Corsair" (Pathé)
"Trilby" (Sir Herbert Tree)
"Jane Shore" (London Films)
"Brother Officers" (Henry Ainley, Charles Rock, Gerald Ames)
"The Prisoner of Zenda"(Henry Ainley, Charles Rock, Gerald Ames
"Rupert of Hentzau" (Henry Ainley, Charles Rock, Gerald Ames - London Films)
"The Master Key" (Transatlantic)
"The Man who stayed at Home" (Henis Eadie - English)
"Julius Caesar" (Cines)
"The Country Mouse" (Hobart Bosworth)
"Alias Jimmy Valentine" (Robert Warwick)

With the Fighting Forces of Europe (Kinemacolor) (1)
Sixty Years a Queen
South African Films of the Lusitania Riots
South African Films of the Campaign in German South West Africa

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(1) The Kinemacolor films were sponsored by J.C. Williamson Ltd and were very successful in 1915. They re-appeared during 1917 but without much success.

I916 :"By the Shortest of Heads" (George Formby) (i)
"Three Weeks"
"The Avenging Conscience"(Henry B. Walthall, Blanche Sweet - D. Griffit
"CABIRIA" (Gabriel d'Annunzio - Cines)
"Brigadier Gerrard" (Lewis Waller, Madge Titheradge - Barker)
"Lola" (Clara Kimball Young - Clarion)
"The Circus of Death" (Cines)
"The Girl of the Golden West" (Mabel van Buren - Lasky)
"The Rosary" (Selig)
"Iris" (Henry Ainley, Alma Taylor - Hepworth)
"The Black Box"
"Flanders, My Country" (Henri Krauss - Pathé)
"Tillie's Punctured Romance" (Charlie Chaplin, Marie Dressler, Mabel Normand,
"Neptune's Daughter" (Annette Kellerman)
"The Sins of the Mothers" (Anita Stewart, Earle Williams)(ii)
"The Tailor of Bond Street" (Augustus York, Robert Leonard - Gerard)
"Hearts Adrift" (Mary Pickford)
"Tess of the Storm Country" (Mary Pickford)
"Me and Me Moke" (Edna Flugrath, Gerald Ames : Harold Shaw - London Films)
"She" (Alice Delysia)
"The Christian" (Elizabeth Risdon, Gerald Ames - London Films)
"The Martyrdom of Nurse Cavell"(Vera Pearce)
"The Voortrekkers" (African Film Productions Ltd)
Many Charlie Chaplin films and other comics starring Sydney Drew and occasionally Wiffles
"Jack Tar"
"Britain Prepared"
The King Visits his Armies in France
The Battle of the Somme
The Campaign in German South West Africa ("African Mirror")

I917 :"A Submarine Pirate" (Syd Chaplin - Triangle)
"The Sorrows of Satan" (Gladys Cooper, Owen Nares)
"Disraeli" (Denis Eadie)
"Masks and Faces" (all-star caste - Ideal)
"Mothers of France" (Sarah Bernhardt)
"The Lyon's Mail" (H.B. Irving)
"The Vicar of Wakefield" (Sir John Hare - Ideal)
"The Pearl of Paradise" (Margarita Fischer - Mutual)
"Peg 'o the Ring" (32,000 foot serial)
"The Old Folks at Home" (Herbert Tree)
"The Second Mrs Tanqueray" (Sir George Alexander)
"Robespierre" (Lydia Borelli - Cines)
"The Submarine Eye" (Williamson)
Charlie Chaplin Films

French Official War Films
Italian Official War Films
Films of the Russian Revolution
The Defence of Verdun (British War Office)
The Battle of the Ancre and Advance of the Tanks (British War Office)
It is for England
Sons of Our Empire (British War Office)
The Tanks in Action (British War Office)

"The Miracle of Life" or "The Divinity of Motherhood" (Margarit Fischer)
"Should a Baby Die"
"Enlighten Thy Daughter"
"Motherhood" (Mrs Henry Wood - Baby Week Film)
"The Innocence of Lizette" (Mary Miles Minter)

(i) The films made by George Formby's son by the same name were conspicuous morale-builders during the Second World War.

(ii) During I916, the "moral dramas" began their insistent intrusion which, with the withdrawal of most Continental and English films during I917, they easily accomplished.

I918 : "Rasputin" (Montagu Love)
"The Fall of a Nation"
"Jeanne Dore" (Sarah Bernhardt)
"The Manxman" (Elizabeth Risdon)
"Odette" (Francesca Bertini)
"Periwinkle" (Mary Miles Minter)
"Milestones" (all-star caste)
"The Dumb Girl of Portici" (Anna Pavlova)
"The Barrier"
"My Lady's Dress" (Gladys Cooper)
"INTOLERANCE" (Mae Marsh - D.W. Griffith)
"Romeo and Juliet" (Theda Bara, Harry Milland - Fox)
"Romeo and Juliet" (Beverly Bayne, Francis X. Bushman - Metro)
""Lest we Forget" (Rita Jolivet)
"My Four Years in Germany"
"Sunshine Alley" (Mae Marsh)
"Raffles" (John Barrymore)
""The Cheat" (Fanny Ward, Sessue Hakawaka)
"Carmen" (Geraldine Farrar)
"Hulda from Holland" (Mary Pickford)
Many American fiction films of fervent war propaganda
Charlie Chaplin Films

"Parentage"
"Maternity" (Alice Brady)
"The Children Pay" or "Divorce from the Children's Point of View"
"The Social Leper"
"The Despoiler"
"Life"
"Those who Pay"
"Where are my Children ?"
"The Doctor and the Woman"
"The Price of a Good Time"
"The Temptress"
"The Scarlet Woman"
"Pay Me"
and other "moral dramas"

References : CHAPTER VIII

(I) The Star - 5th February I9I5

(2) Page I5 et seq. "Hollywood's Movie Commandments" - Olga Martin

(3) The Star - I2th April I9I9

(4) The Star - 8th June I9I5

(5) Cape Times - I8th January I9I7

(6) The Cape - 3rd August I9I7

(7) The Star - 3rd September I9I7

(8) The Star - 25th August I9I9

(9) Cape Times - 23rd January I9I9

(I0) "From Mayfair to Maritzburg" - Gustave Hallé

CHAPTER IX

The Last Years of the Silent Cinema

Emergence of a National Entertainment Industry

1919-1927

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The Last Years of the Silent Cinema

Emergence of a National Entertainment Industry

1919-1927

The public exuberance which greeted the signing of the Armistice was of short duration. Within a few weeks, the effects of the war became apparent to every class of person and as the momentum inspired by loyalty, patriotic feeling and the war effort in general gradually diminished, the public was confronted with a demand for new and greater energy to cope with the problems of peace. In an attempt both to escape from realities and to evade by diversion the efforts they involved, public taste readily welcomed "escapist" methods and the release provided by depravity. This situation provided the cinema with the opportunity to improve on its already extensive popularity and, by the continuous provision of vicarious excitement and absorption in unreality, to increase its public to include every element of society. Its dramas of "vamps", "sirens", "White-slave traffickers", "lounge lizards", "kings of the underworld" and other fantastic creatures provided an exceptionally popular release from trying conditions; but the cinema was no novelty and in time, other forms of distraction appeared.

One of the most conspicuous of these was "Jazz"(i). During the war, the popularity of light music expressed in musical comedies and revues had greatly increased and "Jazz" with its comparative abandonment of restraint both in performance and in execution on the dance-floor(ii), its stimulating tempo and vivacity and its raucous lack of finesse, conformed with current popular taste with conspicuous success

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(i) The advent of jazz had been presaged in 1913 by the popularity of "Ragtime" brought to South Africa by Jacques Jacob's London Trocadero Band imported by Arthur de Jong (see Page 182); but by the end of the war, this type of music was ready for further development and exploitation.

(ii) Jazz in South Africa was regarded with suspicion by the more serious-minded and thoughtful articles under headings such as :

Dancing Degradation
Ballroom Buffoonery
The "Jazz" Epidemic

appeared in the daily papers. They were often characterised by puritanic invective against its sensual nature and its inevitable effect on war-weary soldiers; but there was no gainsaying its foundation in contemporary circumstances and its worldwide popularity. Originally an "escapist" medium, jazz became a universal institution which has developed through various stages of "syncopation", "crooning", "swing", "boogie-woogie", "jive", etc.

Symptomatic too of the public's craving for novelty was the popularity of "Crazes". Fashion in women's clothes (such as the "Cloche" hat, the fish-tail dress, the hip-line "waist", etc) with its quick changes and frequently outré modes, testified to the need for constant titillation (and the stimulation of industry); but at longer intervals, "crazes" appeared which, in their prompt popular adherence, manifested the persistent demand for novelty and distraction. In 1923, the South African public was singing "Yes, we have no Bananas", "Horsey, keep your tail up" and other songs and in 1925, they were wearing "Oxford bags" and "Shingling", "Eton cropping", "bobbing" and "bingling", doing cross-word puzzles and beginning to dance the "Charleston".(1) By 1926 Russian boots had appeared and despite the incongruity of the "Cossack boot craze" in "Sunny South Africa", it attained considerable popularity. The continuous emergence of these forms of distraction during the ten years succeeding the Great War were minor manifestations of that state of public consciousness that was to make the cinema an indispensable social institution. These years provided an unbroken buffeting of public peace of mind and continuous lack of equanimity argued constantly in favour of the cinema.

Immediately after the Armistice, tension was to a certain extent maintained by discussion of events such as the proposed peace terms (which reached their height in May 1919), the Scuttling of the German Fleet in Scapa Flow in June 1919, and other stimulating occurrences; but soon afterwards, the political and economic repercussions of the war began to have effect and feelings of disillusionment and despair began to supervene. During 1919, the equanimity of the South African public was disturbed not only by the return of thousands of demobilised men and the economic stress resultant on the sudden cessation of the war effort but also by employment and industrial difficulti especially among railwaymen. The triumphal return of Generals Smuts and Botha in August 1919 from the Peace Conference (when streets were lavishly decorated and there were large demonstrations) occurred

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(1) During 1926, the "Charleston craze" had attained such proportions that Johannesburg business men alone were forced to put up notices in their offices prohibiting their employees from practicing this grotesque dance on the premises.

simultaneously with the holding of anti-pogrom, mourning and protest meetings in connection with the massacre of Jews in Europe and with much public discussion of the news of fighting in Russia and in the Balkans, and of great political ferment in Ireland. There was also considerable public alarm at the activity of war profiteers and the cost of living remained dangerously high.(i) The situation in South Africa soon became one of chronic unrest, public peace of mind being constantly disturbed not only by mounting domestic difficulties but also by persistently confusing intelligence from overseas, notably indefinite news of the progress of affairs in Russia (where the new bogey of "Bolshevism" had arisen) which filled the daily press.

Politically the South African public was involved in renewed racial animosity which the conclusion of the war had released. The death of General Botha in August 1919 removed the most powerful factor in race-coöperation and, despite his prestige and popularity, General Smuts was unable to prevent a recrudescence of racial and political strife. Foremost among his antagonists was General Hertzog whose Nationalist Party staged an immense rally at the Wanderers Grounds in Johannesburg in November 1919 where he was received with overwhelming enthusiasm.(ii) Together with violent political animosity went economic

(i) In September 1919, a gigantic strike of a million railwaymen in England (described as "a situation of unparalleled gravity") communicated some of its apprehension to South Africa and though soon settled, accentuated the unhappy and disquieted atmosphere which had begun to characterise the post-war period.

(ii) This step was considered provocative by the predominantly S.A.P. Rand and fostered bitter racial feeling resulting in riots, window-smashing, etc. An unfortunate feature was a crowd's overturning and setting fire to General Hertzog's car as it stood outside the Carlton Hotel in Eloff Street.

This incident was filmed by the "African Mirror" and produced such violent and diverse reaction in a Pretoria cinema audience that it had to be elided from the current issue of the "Mirror".

The cinema figured in another extraordinary political incident in May 1920. Election campaigns were then in progress and, for the purpose of proving that Sir Lionel Phillips, a staunch S.A.P. supporter, was flirting with the Nationalist Party and thus splitti votes in favour of the Unionist Party, a number of Nationalist Party candidates were filmed when visiting (uninvited) his home "Arcadia" in Johannesburg. The scene was entirely staged and it wa proposed to show the film in country districts. The Star (2) in a news paragraph headed :

A Low Trick
Disgraceful Episode

exposed the proceeding in unequivocal terms.

economic distress. The cost of living rose to great heights and producti showed little sign of meeting the needs of the public. The mass of the public "economised", shops advertised "Down with Profiteering", and "Thrift Campaigns" were eagerly promoted.(i)

During I920, despite the urgency and acrimony of local affairs, overseas unrest continued considerably to affect South African public opinion. The war between Russian and Poland, the general uncertainty of the Russian situation in which "the Bolshevik menace" began to trouble people's minds, the Sinn Fein outrages in Ireland (ii), the condition of Europe as a whole and the general disquiet overseas were largely reflected in South Africa. The world-situation grew progressively worse and in I92I, South Africa staged its own elections under conditions of intense excitement and bitterness. General Hertzog made an issue of racialism and republicanism while Colonel Cresswell, ostensibly leader of the Labour Party, showed a leaning towards Socialism verging on Communism. General Smuts, persevering in the S.A.P. policy of internal coöperation while maintaining the Imperial connection, was returned and resumed government under increasingly difficult circumstances. Meanwhile industrial and political unrest continued unabated overseas (a Coal Strike in Britain at one time became critical) and communicated itself with increasing intensity to South Africa. The distress which characterised the European situation

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(i) Publicity was given to "Freak Fashions" contrived by ingenious women such as coats made from blankets and rugs, dresses and costumes from curtains, and blouses from dish-clothes, swabs, etc. The manufactured articles were unprecedently expensive, as instanced by the following prices advertised in Cape Town (3) during I920 :
Stuttafords : Bewitching Dresses for the Hospital Ball -£23-I0s
Fletchers : Gabardine Coats and Skirts -£8-I5s to £9 - 5.
Jardines : Lady's Shirt-Blouses - 49/6d, 52/6d, 55/6d

(ii) In South Africa, meetings of Irishmen were called for the purpose of supporting the secession of Ireland and its conversion into a republic.

was faithfully reflected in the Union (i) and towards the end of I92I, the depression reached its height, hardship and suffering reaching shocking proportions. The financial situation was proclaimed as "infinitely worse than in May" and the Prime Minister was forced to give cold comfort to the numerous deputations that called on him.(ii) Simultaneously dissatisfaction among industrial workers grew increas-

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(i) Early in I92I, the headlines of parallel columns in the newspapers on any given day were of the following type (4) :

A Desperate Dublin Battle
Riot follows Execution
Sudden Sinn Fein Assault
The Scene after the Fight had died down

Forecast of Better Times
Great Britain's Outlook
Conditions making for Recovery
The National Budget
Expenditure of £I,I50,000,000

Fall in the Trade Barometer (South Africa)
Closing-down of Factories
Period of Liquidation
The Cry of Struggling Industries

Picture of Russia Today
Proletariat Revolt
Country boiling like a Great Cauldron
Soviet's War Cruelty
Trotsky and his Choice
Petrograd dying of Famine
War in the Territories

Owing to the fall of the diamond market and the closing of some of the mines, Kimberley was the centre of appalling distress :

Hundreds of Children Absolutely Starving
Magistrate's Appeal on Behalf of Youth
"White Children eating Natives' Leavings"

During this time, the Earl and Countess Haig visited South Africa and were entertained to a Civic Banquet by the Mayor of Kimberley.

(ii) "The law of necessity is inevitable", he said, "and we must all bow to it" when the Civil Service protested against the withdrawal of the War Bonus. The public was left to hope that "the temporary cyclone of depression" would soon pass.

ingly militant. On the Rand, strikes continuously occurred, not only among the miners but (in 1920) among tramwaymen, railwaymen, etc. Inspired by overseas example and the propagation of stimulating doctrines by subsidised "agitators", the miners eventually organised a strike of unprecedented dimensions. In March 1922, sporadic strikes on the Reef were united in a call for a general strike and the situation, with almost every vital industry menaced, suddenly became serious. By the 8th March, a state of anarchy reigned. Mobs of strikers terrorised the population along the entire Reef and murdered natives and coloured people. Shops were closed and shots fired at railway stations. The most peaceable citizens suffered interference at the hands of the strikers who had now organised themselves into armed commandoes under military discipline. Dynamite outrages daily occurred and trade was paralysed. At one time, starvation threatened Johannesburg. The situation went from bad to worse and eventually open warfare broke out. Two hundred and thirty people were killed and nearly six hundred injured. After seventy days of disorganisation culminating in open revolution, the Great Strike ended, having profoundly shaken the Rand and the gold-mining industry as a whole as well as fundamentally disturbing public morale throughout South Africa.(5)

Thereafter the situation steadily improved. The depression took many months to lift but the profound shock of these industrial disturbances had a steadying effect. Though distress continued, the rehabilitation of social life increased and the public turned with added interest towards distraction. Improvement in economic conditions argued not only in favour of the cinema which daily grew in popularity but also in favour of sport which, during 1922, developed greatly increased public support, particularly through the visit of the M.C.C. cricket team.

The slow but steady emergence of South Africa from trying post-war conditions was attended by several dominating factors. First and foremost was the political situation (1) which engaged an attention far in excess of any devoted to other matters. Secondly, though at first confused and depressed by economic difficulties, the unsettled

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(1) "Politics" (long known as "South Africa's major sport") occupied the minds of every class of person and racial animosity grew to a remarkable intensity. By 1926, it achieved its most virulent expression in the hotly-debated "Flag Question".

state of European affairs and the general lack of stability, the public was soon encouraged by the improvement in local conditions to consider the many important developments in several spheres that were then occurring. During 1923 in South Africa, four great influences were steadily intruding their influence on social life. Grounded in the public's release from strain and in the comparative stability of the situation after the post-war years of unrest, each attracted growing attention until it had become firmly integrated in the fabric of society. On the one had were the three established forms of diversion sport, motoring and the cinema; on the other, a nascent form - the radio.

Sport, which had always played a large part in South African social life, developed enormously from 1923 onwards and engaged an almost fanatical attention. (Rugby football, tennis and cricket were its principal forms, their most capable exponents becoming popular heroes. Similarly, motoring developed from a means of transport of esoteric application to a form of recreation within the means of all but a comparatively small minority of the European community. The popularisation of the motor car together with the development of various improvements (such as balloon tyres which first appeared in South Africa in 1924), the marketing of cheap cars such as the "Baby Austin", etc soon became an important social feature. The cinema, now an indispensable public facility, increased its popularity not only through its singular suitability for the circumstances but through the appearance of the first outstanding films or "super-features". The radio, though it had not yet appeared in South Africa (it came the following year) was awaited with great eagerness. Already in the broadcasting stage overseas, its extraordinary advantages were immediately apparent to a public which, comparatively, now had time to think. Unharried by depression and unrest, people began to be anxious to turn the latest scientific inventions to their own account and their commercial expressions were awaited with impatience.

From 1924 these tendencies developed uninterruptedly. Towards the middle of the year, owing to the result of the famous Wakkerstroom bye-election, Smuts went voluntarily to the poll and the South African Party was defeated at elections of unparalleled excitement, the Labour-Nationalist Pact assuming the responsibility of government.and remainin

in office for nine years.(i) The outstanding feature of 1924 was the development of the radio and aviation. Inspired by developments overseas, there had for many months been a popular demand for broadcasting in South Africa. On the 24th June 1924, experimental transmission was begun from the first Rand radio station operated by a private society and within a surprisingly short time, programmes were arranged and put on the air. Thereafter the public entered wholeheartedly into the popularisation of wireless and the Readers Columns of Rand newspapers were filled with protests, suggestions etc etc on the subject. On the Ist July, the Johannesburg Radio Station was officially opened and embarked on a short career. Its initiation proved of such interest that the radio appeared to occupy the Rand public's mind to the exclusion of everything else.(ii)

Simultaneously with the institution of radio as a public amenity went that of aviation. In May 1919, Hawker flew the Atlantic for the first time. Less than a year later, Pierre van Ryneveld and Quentin

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(i) Its leading figures were General Hertzog and Mr Tielman Roos, with Colonel Cresswell, leader of the Labour Party, a less dominating factor. This government remained in office for nine years and thoug its measures were often attended by intense resentment and bitter feeling from certain sections of the community, its stability undoubtedly assisted the country's development and, more particularly, that of many nascent forms of transport and communication.

(ii) On the 19th January 1927, it was officially announced that the pioneer Johannesburg station would close down on the 31st. Opened in February 1924 by the Associated Scientific and Technical Society of South Africa and transmitting officially in July 1924, it had succumbed to overpowering financial difficulties. Despite unrelenting economy including the dismissal of the orchestra and its leader Theo Wendt, even an epidemic of "wireless fever" had failed to save the enterprise. It was estimated that though the station had commenced transmitting only in July 1924, by 1925 there were 20,000 "ether pirates" preying on the 7,000 honest subscribers. On the 2nd December, the station had actually advertised :

J.B. WILL NOT CLOSE DOWN

A Word to Pirates

The programmes broadcast each day by J.B. have reached a very high level and provide excellent entertainment to J.B.'s 8,000 subscribers.

Those who have not paid their licence fees are retarding J.B.'s progress.

Why not join the 8,000 who pay ? Hearing is surely worth paying for

A.S.& T. Broadcasting Co. Ltd

Before the actual date of closing, Mr I.W. Schlesinger (repeating his role as saviour to the entertainment industry) announced his readiness to undertake the management of a new compan based on sound commercial principles. Much discussion ensued and Schlesinger formed a society which continued the broadcasts unbroken until the 4th April 1927 when his officially-constituted company took over the station. Subsequently transmitting stations were opened in other Union towns and "wireless fever", beginning as a"craze" contingent on "crystal sets", ear-phones, and other of the early impedimenta, soon had the public firmly in its grip. With a speed rivalled only by the cinema, the radio became inextricably integrated in the fabric of South African social life.

Brand flew from England to the Cape in seven weeks, starting in the "Silver Queen" which crashed at Bulawayo and finishing in the "Voortrekker" which was put at their disposal by the Union Government.(1)A year later (February 1925), an air mail service within South Africa was instituted. Its operation was at first fraught with much interruption due to fogs, bad landing grounds etc for which ample excuses were always made. The visit of the Prince of Wales in the same year did much to stimulate trade in general and the development of forms of transport (especially the aeroplane) in particular.

During this time too, there was discussion in South Africa of the newly-invented "talking pictures" which had made sundry appearances overseas but always with qualified success. The experiments of Dr Lee de Forest were watched with interest and there was considerable speculation as to whether his invention would develop into a commercial success or not.

In general therefore, the post-war period was characterised by the public's recovery from severe depression and the incorporation into the social structure of the advances of mechanical science. The cinema, the motor-car, the radio and the aeroplane had become integrated with the fabric of ordinary life and a little later, the cinema was further to entrench its position with the improvement of sound. Inasmuch as the public accepted mechanical methods of transport and communication and later the thorough mechanisation of utilities (such as the traffic robot, the automatic telephone, the automatic lift, the Frigidaire, the electric stove, the electric radiator, etc), the tempo of life in general steadily increased and concomitantly accentuated the demand for "escapist" recreation.

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(1) This epic flight caused immense excitement at the time and greatly stimulated the development of aviation in South Africa. Interest continued unabated but progress was necessarily slow. Four years later (6), head-lines in the Press announced :

Record One-Day Flight from Cape Town to Pretoria
100 Miles-Per-Hour Journey described by Cape Times Passenger
A Brilliant Achievement in Aviation
Possibilities of Commercial Air Transport Service in South Africa
Pioneers who have blazed the Aerial Trail

These "pioneers" were Pierre van Ryneveld, Major Meintjes, Captain Ross, Lieutenant Hammon and Sergeant Hollis. Three aeroplanes set out from Young's Field, Wynberg at 5 p.m. but only two arrived at Pretoria at 7.10 p.m., one having had engine trouble and making a forced landing. Despite the journalist's having been in this plane, his report continued ecstatic as he was picked up by one of the other aeroplanes.

That the cinema sufficed this need throughout this period was evidenced by its perpetually increasing popularity. (An appendix detailing the outstanding films shown each year is given at the end of this chapter.) Much of its attraction lay in the inherent mutability of its form and the fact that though some trends persisted, films were always new. At the conclusion of the war, the South African cinema was almost completely dominated by American films of which a large proportion were "Wild West" or dramas of "God's Great Out-of-Doors". Early in 1919, the sordid sexual theme seemed to have abated somewhat though dramatic films continued to be "strong" in other ways. This lull however was only transient and within a few months, "moral dramas" again flooded South African cinemas. Critical observers began to detect increased ingenuity in American production (1) - the simple theme of virtue triumphant over vice and little golden-haired children effecting reconciliation between estranged and erring parents had given way to more elaborate dramas whose characters came to be household words and to exercise an evil fascination on the tens of thousands of people who thronged the "bioscopes". The cinema of the time created a collection of fantastic figures which, though clear-cut in conception, were unparalleled in actual life. The soubriquets of "adventuress", "bad woman", "good woman", "ingenue", "vampire","Earl", "jail-bird", "rogue" "millionaire", "scion of a noble family", "king of the underworld", "love-child" (born of romantic episodes), etc etc played their parts in themes of predominantly disreputable character of which the "eternal triangle" was perhaps the least pernicious. The old sensationalism with its outdoor excitement and thrilling escapes began to give way to a sensationalism of moral, rather than physical, outrage. Where previously heroines were saved by cowboys from oncoming trains or the wicked machinations of the villain, now innocent girls suffered unmerited wrongs at the hands of the "social system" or were otherwise exploited by unscrupulous gentry, titled or otherwise. Slowly the trend of cinema production concentrated on melodrama of this order and "moral

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(1) All such comment was characterised by persistent propaganda in favour of the renascent British film production industry but despite such encouraging interest, few British films appeared in South Africa at this time, the industry having been thoroughly disorganised by the war.

drama" of an even more uninhibited type than previously. During 1919, the "moral drama" flourished as never before and so shamelessly pornographic did posters and advertisements become that the Governor-General Lord Buxtom made a public protest. It was said that films of the time were "charged with an over-mastering sense of the depravity o human nature"(7)(i) During 1920, morbid sensationalism masquerading as "morality plays" continued to be shown in a waning number of films in South Africa. They were sustained largely by the attraction of a special type of film-star, particularly Theda Bara and Nazimova; and b now, "moral drama2 and melodrama had become so inextricably mixed that the issue was negligible provided that public taste could be titillate by suggestiveness.(ii) By 1921, other tendencies had entered film production (iii); but melodrama of an unsavoury type (as dinstinct fro the pseudo "moral drama") remained and continued to characterise the cinema for many years.

One of the first departures from "blatant drama with a pornographic embroidery" was a complete volte-face in out-of-door films wit refreshingly clean and naive characters. In the place of the suffering female severely victimised by "society", there was the child of nature frisking in the open with a he-man hero. During 1920, "tomboy dramas" featuring "hoyden heroines" abounded (iv) and created a transiently popular type of character. Fed for years on meatier productions, the public supported these films only while their novelty lasted and producers soon reverted to themes of more questionable taste.

Fiction films from about 1921 onwards, though occasionally punctuated by short-lived vogues for the "Great North West" and others of morecsless innocuous genre, were distinguished by a voluptuous lavishness and extravagance which greatly engaged the sensation-seekir Sheer magnificence stupefied audiences into accepting as real the most

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(i) One company alone - "The Rialto Film Co" - made a policy of showir nothing but "moral dramas" in 1919. Its stock-in-trade consisted c "Shame", "One Law for Both", 'And the Children Pay", and "When Men Betray" - all purporting to deal with"social problems" and all succeeding in luring large audiences by reason of implied suggestiveness.

(ii) The following are typical examples of the type of advertising used to this end :

The Terrific Metro Morality Dramatic Wonderplay
"REVELATIONS"
presenting the Greatest Emotional Star the screen has known
Nazimova
"Revelations" is a drama that thrills you to your very soul. An amazing tale of fierce human passions.

Norma Talmadge
in
"PANTHEA"

See the Story of this Beautiful Russian Political Exile banished from her Native Land.
See her escape from the Dreaded Secret Police
See her shipwrecked on the English Coast.
See her driven to desperation. To save her husband, she submits to the great indignity a woman can submit to.
The star of this screenplay sounds every emotion that stirs the heart of this woman who makes the supreme sacrifice of unselfish love and wins additional sympathy by reason of her youth, comeliness and the excellence of her histrionic method.

Clara Kimball Young
in
"THE EASIEST WAY"

The Most Appealing Story ever told on Stage or Screen
"The Easiest Way" is the story of a young actress who, to get an engagement, accepts the influence of a wealthy man and pays the traditional price. Later she falls in love with another man and the story of how both her patrons and her lover spurned her was one of the great classics of the American drama, as it is now of the scree

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The Outstanding Morality Play of All Time
"BOHEMIA"
or "The Eternal Sapho"
presenting the Vampire
Theda Bara
in the greatest role of her wonderful career
A Living Tapestry of Luring Charm
Night Life in Paris

The Sensation of America
"SHOULD A WOMAN TELL ?"
A Metro Morality Play of a Girl's Soul in Doubt
A tense, human and infinitely appealing story of a Woman confronted with one of Life's greatest dilemmas.
Men regard a woman's mistake as unpardonable and their own as joyous escapades. To tell him would mean to lose him. To keep her secret would mean a life of uneasy happiness unutterably miserable.

(iii) Though in January 1921, "The Moral Uplift League" showed
"ARE YOU FIT TO MARRY ?"
Showing the use of Twilight Sleep
etc etc
in Cape Town and there were a few other manifestations of the persistence of the "moral drama" (as late as 1925 "The Breath of Scandal" told the story of "how a Daughter is affected when her Father woos another man's wife" and "For Sale" the story of a Girl offered by her own parents to the highest bidder to satisfy their lust for money and position"), the movement definitely declined after 1921.

(iv) Even Mary Pickford, "the World's Sweetheart", made "The Ragamuffin" or "The Hoodlum" at this time. The best antidote to "moral dramas" was discourse provided by Charlie Chaplin.

outrageous fictional characters and no situation was too absurd to be "put across" by lavish production. This was the era of "vamps" and "sirens" and mysteriously wonderful stars.(i) This tendency persisted for a considerable time on the premise that the public enjoyed vicarious pleasure through luxuriating in the sight of lavish extravagance.(ii) Another feature was the revival of the serial which, during 1921, had a brief but final spell of popularity in the major cinemas;(iii) and the appearance of propaganda films in various guises.(iv) During 1920,

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(i) An outstanding example of this type of film was "Salome" starring Theda Bara of which The Star critic wrote : "It is a moot point whether to describe "Salome" as a good film or as an interesting one. One thing however is certain : for lavishness, total disregard of expense, gorgeousness and the number of persons employed in its production, this film can be described as second only to "Intolerance". Theda Bara has made a name for herself in this particular type of character and perhaps there is no other actress on the screen who can portray the vampire so close to life. In "Salome" her art undoubtedly reaches the high-level mark. How to play on the passions of strong men is child's play to her. All that can be said for the story is that it is interesting from a biblical point of view and serves to show the part women of this type have played in some of the great events in history....Crowded houses are likely to be the order of the week to see "Salome", regarding the merits or demerits of which there will be some diverse opinions. Those who like it will like it very much. But others - and there are always these others who count - will think its plot and whole subject putrid and one that should never have been filmed at all."

(ii) During 1922 and later, films of the following type continued to be shown :

The Stupendous and Magnificently Produced Society Morality
Life Portrayal
"EVERY WOMAN"

A Beauty Show comprising One Hundred of New York's Most Beautiful Women. A Gorgeous Fashion Show. The temptations, extravagance and temporary yielding to physical allurement, that the sensual passion- and the final triumph of love. Orgies of New York's eve on the Great White Way of Broadway. The Greatest All-Star cast ever assembled in one story led by Violet Hemming, Wanda Hawley, Bebe Daniels, Noah Beery, Monte Blue, Theodore Roberts, Tully Marshall.

(iii) An outstanding example was "The Lost City", a most melodramatic film dealing with stolen princesses, slave dealers, Irish pugilist etc etc. Thereafter the serial remained the special perquisite of country audiences and children (though it reappeared in a different guise in the late thirties in sequences of films dealing with the same characters such as the Hardy Family and the Dr Kildare series made by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Sherlock Holmes and "The Saint" thrillers etc).

(iv) A remarkable example was "The Exploits of a German Submarine" shown early in 1920. Made during the war by Germany for domestic propaganda purposes, this film fell into the hands of the Allies and was released for widespread distribution in an apparent attempt further to discredit the enemy. It revealed the unscrupulous tactics of U-Boat warfare and aroused considerable indignation (though its release so many months after the conclusion of hostilities was questionable both in taste and purpose).

political propaganda was made of a film "Bolshevism" which purported to disclose the activities of the Bolsheviks in Russia and elsewhere which were much occupying the public's mind at the time. This film made a considerable impression. Thereafter the emphasis of film propaganda fell on social and health problems. In 1920, "The Spreading Evil" was shown and the Johannesburg Municipal Council (inspired by Councillor Mr Fitzgerald) showed "Whatsoever a Man Soweth" free of charge.(1) In 1921, further examples of such propaganda films appeared and were exceptionally well patronised; but thereafter, the use of the cinema for this purpose declined. In 1923, "The End of the Road" was shown by an independent exhibitor; in 1925, "What Becomes of the Children ?"and in 1926, "Damaged Goods"; but on the whole, the propaganda film as a form of public entertainment ceased to exist until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 when "Confessions of a Nazi Spy", "Professor Mamlock", "Beasts of Berlin", "The Lion has Wings", "The Mortal Storm" and other such films were shown.

The most significant feature of the post-war cinema was the development of production technique. The year 1921 was remarkable for considerable progress, particularly in the comparative emergence from crude sensationalism to a certain originality of theme though with the same emphatic tinge of unreality. Stars and the names of authors of famous books gained increasing ascendancy over the claims of the story and latterly in the year, the names of producers were given almost as much publicity. A desire to re-establish the prestige of the cinema (damaged by the "moral dramas") by filming original material with artistry and imagination became increasingly obvious. The development of this tendency was slow and the strangehold which the American industry had gained on the overseas market tended to retard it still further; but the move towards honouring audiences with better material slowly gained impetus and films of much improved quality began to be

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(1) The showing of "Whatsoever a Man Soweth" at the City Hall in Johannesburg without charge for admission resulted in unparalleled scenes.
The matter is fully dealt with on the appropriate chapter on the use of films for Publicity Purposes.

shown in South Africa.(i) Outstanding for their originality rather than their magnificence, the cinema's waning prestige was raised by films such as "The Miracle Man" with Thomas Meighan (1920), "Way Down East" with the Gish sisters (1922), "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" and "Orphans of the Storm" (1923), "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" (1924), "Robin Hood", "Captain Blood" and "The Wandering Jew" (1925) and a great many fine fiction films in 1926. Films of this type showed that the cinema was capable of far more than the crude melodramas that had hitherto characterised it and that the employment of finesse and imagination did not necessarily involve commercial failure.(ii) Though the appearance of these "super-feature" films and their exceptional stars was comparatively rare,(iii) there were other elevating factors such as the re-appearance of Continental productions and the exhibition of the first Technicolor film "Wanderers of the Wasteland". Short films of an improved kind, such as a series on the lives of famous musicians with special orchestral accompaniment, began to figure on programmes

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(i) The unreality and grotesquerie of silent melodramatic films remained for a long time and was particularly evident in domestic and moral dramas in which players flung themselves about, grimacing and gesticulating with fascinating though ridiculous abandon. Melodrama died hard and as late as 1924, first-class cinemas were showing films of the type of "The Eleventh Hour" of which an ingenuous critic (8)wrote - "Every hair-raising incident in the drama arrives at the eleventh hour to save some terrible situations in which the hero and heroine find themselves. Surely a woman, who in this film was Shirley Mason, could not do any more death-defying acts ? She jumped from a high house window into a raging sea, missing half-hidden rocks by inches; she was shot through a submarine's torpedo tube; snatched from a motor-boat by a man on a rope ladder suspended from an aeroplane; she left the aeroplane in a parachute when a shell from the submarine struck the aeroplane and in flames it fell into the sea; she - but why not see the whole stirring drama ?"

(ii) The development of a superior type of production was aided by the appearance of exceptionally talented stars who were able to give expression to the finer themes demanded by imaginative producers. Outstanding was Lon Chaney who probably added more cubits to the stature of the cinema at this time than any other factor. Thomas Meighan, Emil Jannings, Frederic March and the roystering Douglas Fairbanks inculcated an appreciation of characterisation which was previously lacking in cinema audiences.

(iii) By the end of 1926, though films were longer and slightly more ingenious in theme, they were still characterised by an unreality and fantastic conception. For many years, newspaper headlines could report sensational happenings with

BIOSCOPE DRAMA IN REAL LIFE

or

BITTER THAN THE CINEMA

The move to import finesse, however slow, finally prevailed and as early as 1925, was supported by other tendencies towards advancement.

and feature films grew increasingly "stupendous" and "colossal".

During this period too, certain of the cinema's abuses tended to disappear, notably that of "padding" and also gross improbability. Film reviews of 1919 complained bitterly of plots which "impose a severe tax on one's credulity" and the tendency to embroil characters in predicaments from which there was no escape except through coincidence, occult agency or shameless evasion annoyed the most dull-witted audiences. The hurried American productions of the war and post war years were characterised by these features; but their comparative diminution was attended by a new evil in the shape of palpable absurdities and anachronisms.(1) In the South Africa press, letters constantly appeared commenting first with amusement and then with resentment on the childish errors, irrational sensationalism and gross improbabilities committed by film producers. Cinema ineptitude ceased to be a source of amusement and became a target of obloquy. For its

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(1) Typical of the films of the time are the following examples (collected by W.G. Faulkner for the London "Daily Mail" and reprinted in the Johannesburg "Star" (9)) :
"In "The Iron Foot", for example, a party of American millionaires seek the elixir of life. They meet a roaring lion - his roar is silent on the screen and must be taken for granted; one of them drops dead and there is nothing to indicate the cause of death except a spot on the wrist. Every time the lion roars, a millionaire dies.
"Under Crimson Skies" is an orgy of violence. In one scene, in a ship's cabin, the ship is rolling in an alarming manner but the following scene of the deck of the ship shows the sea to be as calm as a mill pond.
In "The Fighting Chance", the producer places a cock pheasant on a nest to hatch eggs.
In "The Dust of Desire", the husband is shot but continues to act for another ten minutes before he dies. Such is the unconcern of the family butler who hears the shots that when the heroine, who had witnessed the tragedy, comes down the stairs, he hands her her cloak as if nothing had happened.
"The Lone Wolf's Daughter" is a far-fetched story of conspirators in some huge vaults in Limehouse. These plot to poison all the gas consumers in the area of the Westminister Gas Company" and proceed to pump gas into the mains by raiding an electrical power station. "My agents", says the principal conspirator, "will at my command turn on every tap in every house in the West End".
Rough people and crude conditions of life do not worry the producers of "The Tiger's Cub" when he wants to star Pearl White, "the heroine of ~~the~~ millions". In the midst of appalling squalor, her beautiful hair looking as if it had just passed through the hands of the most fashionable New York hairdresser, and wearing a hundred guinea fur coat in the latest style, she lives in Alaska as the daughter of one of the lowest types ever created for the screen.
In "The Terror of the Range", a Western story, the hero is tied by the hands to a tree. The heroine who comes up, can easily cut the rope but the producer decrees that she shall fire at it until the bullets set him free. This done, she goes to help him.
Etc, etc."

instance, one observer of a single "Tarzan" film noted that the "apes" wore masks fitted with sharks' teeth, that Tarzan met an Asiatic elephant in the African "jungle", that the tree which the elephant was engaged in pushing down was a willow, and that despite manifold tribulations, Tarzan was always beautifully barbered and his mate, though deprived of her Paris creation by the thonns of the "jungle", preserved her white kid shoes intact.(i)

A further feature of the silent film drama of the post-war years was the unintelligibility of captions. While producers confined description of the scenes to the grandiloqhence of "Retribution", "Love's Awakening", "Came the Dawn", "Remorse !", "Apotheosis", etc, well-trained audiences followed them easily; but the employment of peculiarly American slang (an expression of the cinema's integration with the American social structure) wrought confusion elsewhere. South African audiences for example, could make no sense of "A guy croaked

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(i) Another irate bioscope patron of I920 noted in one of the most popular films of the day "A Daughter of the Gods" starring Annette Kellerman (which was advertised as "a fine clean programme for the youngsters) that (IO) "the leading lady is a magnificent swimmer and diver and the main object of this fairy tale is to bring out this fact. In a previous state of existence, she and her lover bot inhabit the forms of birds. She is a singing bird and he is not. Both unhappily find a watery grave; after a spirit existence of 20 years, they blossom out again as a full grown and fully matured man and woman. They are most conveniently spared the trouble of an infant school and primary education and know all about everything at once. However we are prepared to swallow even this in a fairy tale but the young man, on coming to life after his spirit existence, is washed ashore in a cockle shell fully dressed in a well-fitting tailor-made Turkish costume whereas the young lady arrives with no other covering than her hair and she remains in her birthday suit for some considerable time. At a later stage, she is provided with a fairly adequate bathing costume - surely it would have been more charitable to dress her in this in the first instan The matinee performancex which I attended was laregly patronised b children and youths. The bioscope claims to have an educative moral force in our modern civilisation. Does this kind of film support the contention ? Or do the Johannesburg bioscope managements find themselves compelled to provide this spicy kind of fare in order t attract patrons ?..."

Apart from the impossbabilities, the detection of anachronisms became an absorbing occupation for discriminating cinema-goers and persisted indefinitely. Impossibility in plots soon declined in th face of world-wide cricitism but where sheddy production methods had first introduced ludicrous touches, ignorance now intruded "howlers" on the screen.

The tendency to commit such blunders was apparently irremedial and was particularly noticeable in historical and biographical films. So characteristic did it become during I940 that the South African press devoted sub-leading articles to its discussion.(II)

another one out there and the bulls are after me" (a man has been killed out there and the police are after me). In time, distributors realised the adverse effect of unintelligible captions and they were duly "anglicised"; but sufficient slang remained to propagate it among local audiences and to accelerate the incorporation of "Americanisms" in both English and Afrikaans, a process completed by the "talkies".

The most enduring and powerful feature of the post-war cinema was the supervention of "stars", the inculcation of the "star complex" and the infection of a certain proportion of the public with "film fanaticism". "Glamour" did not properly belong to the cinema until after the Great War when the public was most susceptible to it. Where previously high-speed acting, excitement, sensation and perpetual movement had held audiences entranced, now emotional appeal of an erotic order was exploited. Mary Pickford, one of the earliest stars, had achieved and maintained her popularity largely through pathos and an engaging freshness. She evoked the purest sympathies in her audience but by 1919, she and her many imitators had been doing so for almost ten years. It was necessary to titillate the public anew and to that end, producers invented the "vampire woman" or "siren". Theda Bara, the first "vamp", immediately achieved an extraordinary popularity and thereafter, women stars prospered in number and prestige. They were always cloaked in a special reputation and, in virtue of skilful "build-ups" by producers and publicity agents, by an almost fearful adulation on the part of the film-struck public.(1) Admirable acting on the part of players such as Lon Chaney and Thomas Meighan, unusual talent in child prodigies such as Jackie Coogan (1923), the satisfying antics of Tom Mix and Douglas Fairbanks and the ridiculous adventures of Harold Lloyd, Larry Semon (1921), Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin himself, raised far less response than that of the erotically-stimulating performances of the first "sirens" and "sheiks". Their advent inspired the first "film fans" to embark on letter-writing, collecting photographs, and autographs, cultivating idiosyncracies of mannerism and dress, and generally pursuing imitative action of a trivial and

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(1) Nazimova was one of the first such stars to engage not only the admiration but the active adulation of the public. A later example was Pola Negri.
(Long eclipsed, Nazimova made a surprising return to film productio in 1941 when she appeared meritoriously with Robert Taylor in a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer feature film.)

sometimes perverted order.(i)

Apart from these features, the South African cinema bore sever other distinguishing features, notably the fact that outstanding films were not shown in the Union until months, sometimes years, after their release overseas.(ii) Thâugh the general public was little the wiser, visitors from overseas commented on the fact that South African "bioscopes" were out-of-date in their programmes and that much of the obloquy directed against pernicious and shoddy American productions wa already obsolete. A further point of contention was the length of programmes. From time to time, acrimonious letters appeared in the press pointing out the fraud inherent in the advertised "2½ Hours Entertainment". Timed to begin at 8 o'clock, the performance usually began at 8.10 or even 8.20 with a long series of advertisements or "bioscope slides". The interval, advertised to last ten minutes, usually extended to twenty or more (frequently, and particularly in the country) by arrangement with adjacent bars and cafes)and audiences dispersed at 10.30.. In the country bioscopes this state of affairs wa aggravated by the fact that operators were inexpert in "changing the reel" and, should too many intervals be necessitated by this process, a reel would conveniently be forgotten.(iii) Audiences also registered

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(i) During the twenties, John Gilbert's barber was said to have been offered £1,000 for the clippings of his hair to retail to female fans. The vogue for Rudolph Valentino first brought this unhealthy preoccupation with screen personalities to the fore and his death in 1926 revealed to what extent "film fanaticism" had depraved feminine taste and upset its sense of value. Excellent for publicity and trade generally (during the twenties, sales of picture postcards of the stars,screen journals, pocket-biographies etc ros to remarkable heights), the star complex at one time represented a serious menace to adolescent psychology at least. Its encouragemen of silly sentimentality and its inculcation of false standards were undoubtedly harmful but it nonetheless represented a definite development of the cinema and one that was maintained.
As late as 1940, Robert Taylor, Clark Gable and other film stars have been mobbed by female fans and every button torn off their clothes.

(ii) When African Theatres eventually obtained the famous film "The Sheik" starring Rudolph Valentino, it was advertised as having run for fifteen months in New York and for nine months in Sydney. The cost of purchasing the South African rights to such extraordin arily successful films was often higher than the small local market could sustain and consequently it was not possible to show them until the price was diminished.

(iii) In country bioscopes, the personal predilections of projectionists have always prevailed and as late as 1940, cases were reported in which operators had ceased projecting before the end of the film and had gone home because they were bored or tired.

acute annoyance when the first "trailers" or advertisements for forthcoming films appeared. Incorporated in the programme as an item of entertainment, these short films were at first regarded as an insupportable iniquity.

These characteristics of the South African cinema in general were overshadowed by the wider issue caused by the predominance of American film production. The disrepute of American films was accentuated by widely-spread rumours that the "vamps", "sheiks", "dope addicts" etc of the screen were not merely figments of the imagination but existed in actual life. Hollywood in fact was a haunt of libertines and a sink of iniquity from which no right-minded person would draw his entertainment.(i) The Arbuckle affair substantiated much of this disrepute and accentuated apprehension concerning the growing "Americanisation" of dominion and colonial audiences.(ii) Popular opinion now veered sharply against American films. The renascent British industry made strenuous attempts to produce feature films to compete with the "American tosh" and "sobstuff" which flooded the market but undercapitalisation, lack of experience and other effects of the war hampered its efforts and the results were by no means satisfactory. During 1921, the African Films Trust imported an increased number of British films to South Africa but, replying to an accusation that it was prejudiced against them, the Trust pointed out that British production had not yet attained competitive standard and that it could buy only those films that assured a payable return. (It faced the same accusation in 1926) when feeling ran even higher.)(iii) The original

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(i)This impression was strengthened by the report of a most unsavoury affair in California in September 1922. Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle, one of the most popular comedians of the day, was arrested on a charge of murdering Virginia Rappe, an actress, who died after a party at Arbuckle's apartment at which he had raped her. The case was reported from time to time in the South African press and developed into a most unpleasant revelation of conditions of life among film production personalities. It occasioned an outburst against the orgies which took place in Hollywood and against the fabulous salaries paid to stars. During the case, all Arbuckle's films were officially withdrawn from exhibition in Australia and they were tacitly prohibited everywhere else.

(ii) New Zealand took the lead in September 1921 by mooting the imposition of a tax on foreign films discriminating in favour of British production.

(iii) Popular prejudice against American films was turned to account by sundry independent exhibitors, notably Miss Nina Kortsman who showed numerous British productions such as the Stoll films "The Woman thou Gavest Me", "Bars of Iron" etc in South Africa from 1922 onwards. The Stoll organisation opened distributing offices in Cape Town in 1922 but apart from such random exhibition, their films were not actively exploited.

outcry against the poor and sometimes pernicious quality of American productions persisted. The general attitude of the South African public was that American films had to be suffered in the absence of anything better. Protests were consistently made against the pernicio- effect of current sensational themes and the general tastelessness of American films but cinemas had no alternative to showing them. A negligible proportion of British films was shown but the industry itself was tottering towards dissolution in the face of over-mastering American competition.(i)

By I925, the obvious psychological effects of American dominat- ion engaged serious attention and an active campaign againstvit was instituted in the British Commonwealth.(ii) In South Africa however, nothing was done until I926 when the outcry against the American monopoly was coupled with clamour against the poor quality of British films. The movement in England to protect British production had attained a momentum which rendered action imperative.(iii) At this time, Mr I.W. Schlesinger, managing director of both African Theatres and African Films (which controlled the distribution and exhibition of almost all films in South Africa) joined the board of British Inter- national Pictures Ltd, one of the biggest film production firms in

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(i) During I924, Hepworth's, one of the oldest film production firms in England founded by the pioneer Cecil Hepworth, closed down.

(ii) One of the first to take legislative steps was the state of Victoria in Australia which established a quota for British films and similar steps were advocated elsewhere.

(iii) In February I926, the "British Empire Film Institute" was founde with a view to promoting the development of British films dealing with the achievements, ideas and ideals of the British Common- wealth of Nations and stimulating interest by pictures represent- ing all phases of life throughout the Empire. Its existence howeve was short.

In April I926, the Federation of British Industries drew the attention of the President of the Board of Trade to the American film monopoly and its pernicious effect on British prestige and Empire interests.

In June I926, the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association registered a further protest and numerous other bodies and individuals pressed the point so far home that both the trade and the public looked to the British Government and the Imperial Conference then in session to take immediate action.

England and the focus of public hope at the time.(i) Mr Schlesinger wa then in England and enabled closely to follow the deliberations of the Imperial Economic Conference then in session and the Economic Sub-Committee which considered the question of Empire film production. The essential problem was not so much to break the American monopoly by instituting a quota system and abolishing "block" or "blind"booking (by which exhibitors were forced to buy the output of American productions firms in bulk regardless of their quality) but to produce sufficient and suitable British films in competition. The question of Government subsidy of the British film industry was tempered by fears of "endowing incompetence". The conclusion of the Imperial Conference's discussion of films was ineffectual (ii) but it gave much-needed publicity to the British film industry while intensi fying prejudice against American films. In South Africa, protests continued unabated until 1927 when British films began consistently to be shown.

All these circumstances indicated a far more significant impact of the cinema on the public than previously. It now had a more subtle influence on adult and child psychology. The main tendency of the post-war cinema was directed towards the corruption of public taste and the debasing of intelligence. Improbability of plot, incredibility

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(i) The full significance of this move was not lost on South African observers of the situation. Some time later (21st May 1927), the Natal Mercury published a cartoon showing Uncle Sam and John Bull sitting in a cinema watching the screen. Mr Schlesinger leans over from the side, his head casting a shadow on the screen within which is written "British International Pictures". America asks : "What's that ?" to which England replies - "Oh, that's Uncle Sam John Bull Sunny South Africa Schlesinger."

(ii) The report of the Imperial Conference's sub-committee proved inconclusive but the interest it had aroused gave Mr Schlesinger the opportunity to enunciate a scheme of Empire film production which deserved a better hearing. This scheme, based on the assumption that the British Commonwealth of Nations itself provided a financially adequate cinema audience, proposed that with financial assistance from governments, all the Dominions and colonies should produce films for showing within the Commonwealth, such exhibition providing a payable return on production costs. The institution of this inter-Dominion and colonial circuit, as well as the financial backing of local film production, was to be guaranteed by legislation. Not only would the American monopoly with its pernicious effects on prestige and mutual interest be broken but Imperial coöperation would be greatly fostered. Despite the submission of a memorandum to the Federation of British Industries, no more was heard of Schlesinger's scheme and an excellent idea was allowed to fall into abeyance.

The main criticism against it was the necessity for legislation and the appropriation of funds on the part of every Dominion and colony.

of character and unreality of theme were forgotten in the context of the cinema itself. Audiences were stupefied into accepting as in some way real the tasteless imaginings of men incapable of finesse or subtlety of any kind.(i) Among the meretricious values thus inculcated was the public's acceptance of grotesquex grimaces and gesticulations as the art of acting and the lack of aesthhatic appreciation it implied. (ii) The stock-in-trade of the post-war cinema was thoroughly meretricious but no plot or character was too outrageous for lavish production to render convincing to the vast bulk of its audiences. Impassioned pleass for improvement and the removal of this public stupefaction occasionally appeared but the selling of a world of grotesque fantasy to an all-too-willing public was far too profitable to be discarded. (iii) In addition to the inculcation of false values, the cinema

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(i) The crudest characters strumpeted raucously across the screen and convinced their audiences of the actual existence of "night life", "dope dens", romantic desert sheiks, venomous "vamps", seductive "sirens" and the other paraphernalia which emanated solely from the production studio. Inevitably the minds of a considerable proportion of the public came to be peopled with a collection of figures which had no counterpart in real life and whose "glamour" was as ephemeral as its influence was corrupt.

(ii) "Fond and foolish as lovers notoriously are", wrote one observer in 1922 (13), "their state is distinguishable from congenital imbecility and the expression of their emotions does not necessarily resemble the onset of epilepsy. I do not suggest that prohibition has disqualified American actresses from portraying ~~xxxxx~~ the "love" of a Parisian dancer (nor do I doubt the purity of such love but when it see them "writhing on beds of amaranthine asphodel", I am tempted with Gilbert to believe that their excess of passion could probably be set right "with calomel"....I would like to know what has happened to the public that it can accept and applaud a representation with so little to recommend it. Is it not symptomatic ? Does it not confirm my statement that the crime of the cinema is the corruption of public taste ?"

(iii) "It is literally impossible", wrote a candid commentator of the cinema in 1923(which he described as "the nauseating essence of futility"(14)), "for the average cinema producer to conceive a public taste which desires something different to his own pale and monstrous pattern of what a film should be. A man and a woman - the introduction of a second man - entanglement - heaps of incidents - oceans of sickly sentiment - the confounding of the villainous third party and the triumphing of the saintly protagonists - for the latter, ineffable bliss in the married state - the end. This is the groundwork of his art and to which they all return.....We stand by and see the triumph of patient research and of human genius utterly debased yet make no agonised protest. Indeed so habitual has been its connection in our minds with the cheap and blatant, we are apt to think that the fault must be with the machine itself - a sort of mechanical defect like that of the early phonograph..... "Give the public what it wants" has been the cry but all the time, the criers have ordered the wanting. That is to say, they have exploited the lack of education of the masses and given them tosh. It is cheaper, easier, safer; furthermore, it is all their little minds are able to give.....Ever the cry has sounded "Give the publi what it wants". Now the public wants nothing better."

exercised a pernicious effect on immature intelligence by the "star system". The erotic influence of seductive male and female stars performing in lavish and extravagant settings found a ready mark in a considerable proportion of the bioscope-going public, particularly adolescents and, apart from the sentimental disturbance it created, inspired to worthless activity such as writing "fan-letters", soliciting autographs and photographs, purchasing and reading trivial cinema literature, etc etc. While it is difficult to trace cases of actual crime resulting from the cinema's perniciously erotic appeal at this time, its effects, if less spectacular, were nonetheless profound and were deeply deplored by social workers. It was often argued at this time that at least the "bioscope" kept men out of bars and away from more injurious forms of distraction. On the other hand, the Church alleged that it was the direct cause of the fall in attendance.(1)

The most insistent objection to the silent cinema was its effect on children. During the pre-war years, little boys who strutted about in buffalo chaps made from hearth-rugs and "held-up" pedestrians caused a certain amount of amused indignation; but the gravamen of charges against the bioscope was on hygienic and ethical grounds. The conditions of bioscope entertainment, rather than the films themselves, were the subject of protest. During the war, the prevalence of sordid sexual films and sensational melodrama drew attention to the cinema's menace to child welfare and thereafter the subject gained increasing prominence, particularly through the activities of Child Welfare Conferences, the National Council of Women, Teachers' Associations and other social welfare organisations. Initially condemnation of the bioscope was levelled at two points - its physical and psychological effects. On the physical side, the eye-strain of the "flickers" was obviously detrimental; secondly, the frequent attendance of school-children at evening performances left them tired and listless at school the following day, causing them to neglect their homework and reducing their ability to concentrate; thirdly, the still more frequent attend-

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(1) Occasionally Synod attacks on the bioscope manifested the serious diminution in congregations then occurring and alleged to have been caused by the cinema. Outspoken observers set the attractions of the one against the other, regardless of the utter disparity; but the fact that the cinemas were full and the churches empty during the post-war years and afterwards was a reflection of contemporary conditions rather than a result of the "bioscope's" evil attraction. That the increased tempo of ordinary life militated against the church and favoured the cinema became increasingly evident.

ance at matinees at which hundreds of children screamed and shrieked in concert almost unremittingly, resulted in an emotional output which left them exhausted for some time afterwards; fourthly, the atmosphere of bio-tearooms exercised a decidedly pernicious effect on children and adolescents in that they were frequented by professional prostitutes and evilly-disposed men who made conditions unpleasant for young girls.(i) On the psychological side, the ultra-sensationalism of films shown immediately after the war caused children to bring a "cowboy atmosphere" into the classroom and to render the maintenance of discipline even more difficult,(Emulating the "tough"characters of the screen, children became rough and unruly in their play and submitted with control with manifest aversion.) Teachers also detected a certain precocity and superficiality in children who frequently went to the "bioscope" and were alarmed at the emergence of a type of "scrappy" mentality which baulked at the assimilation of real knowledge while pretending superiority in irrelevant trivialities. The "glamorising" of objectionable characters gave children a meretricious sense of values and the depiction of evils in an alluring manner together with the hero-worshipping of criminal types and "kings of the underworld" tended to encourage crime or at least to rob it of the odium which properly belonged.(ii)Finally the suggestiveness of prevalent "moral dramas" not only confused the child mind but did nothing to elevate its moral tone.

The obvious retort to all such criticism (though it was never made by bioscope proprietors) was that parents should prohibit or at least limit the attendance of their children. Contrarily, it progressively increased until, during the early twenties, it became a matter of real concern. Apart from the inherent attraction of moving pictures, this increase was grounded in prevalent conditions. The atmosphere of

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(i) Whether no direct menace was implied by attendance at a bio-tearoom children derived no benefit from such an atmosphere. This criticism despite the institution of many ameliorating features, has maintained throughout the history of the cinema in South Africa. During 1929, a succession of "morality cases" were tried in Johannesburg involving sexual perversion. In many, the convicted perverts met their victims, usually young boys, in or outside bio-tearooms.(15)

(ii) The effect of serials in which mysterious methods of assassination, robbery and violence constantly recurred, was considered by the British Board of Film Censors to be especially damaging to child behaviour in this connection.

the post-war depression bred a spirit of uneasiness and discontent which encouraged attendance of the cinema. Concomitantly the enormous increase in the cost of living and general economic changes forced many middle-class families to take in boarders or paying guests which made conditions increasingly difficult for their children who either patronised the bioscope on their own account or were sent there by their parents to get them out of the way. The habit, once engendered, needed no encouraging and in many cases known to social workers, children attended bioscopes night after night. Paying usually as little as 3d for admission, this procedure was cheaper than inconveniencing parents or antagonising boarders. On the other hand, the cinema was supposed to have performed a real service during the post-war years in providing distraction for a class of child that might otherwise have come to harm in the streets.(i)

Observing the adults into which the children subject to these influences grew, it is impossible to assess whether the effects of the bioscope were enduring or whether a superficial mentality was not as much due to a variety of other causes of which the general mechanisation and acceleration of transport, communication and utility were probably the chief. The influence of the bioscope was undoubtedly not good but that it was permanent in any sense other than that it expressed the general unrest of contemporary conditions, is debateable. The only practical results of the time were the use of the cinema in education (ii) and the institution of a National Board of Censors.(iii)

In addition, there was the penetration of the cinema into the country where "going to the bioscope" on Saturday nights had become a social custom deeply integrated in the life of both dorp and farming

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(i) The outcry against the cinema's deleterious effect on children at one time reached such proportions that, as at all other such times African Theatres made strenuous attempts to institute "Children's Matinees" in the large towns at which not so much suitable as non-pernicious films were shown. In all cases, these enterprises were failure, the children preferring the hint of forbidden fruit to officially-sanctioned entertainment.

(ii) At this time, "Pathescopes" were installed in a small number of schools in the Union and achieved a certain amount of educational effect (though their audiences in adulthood remembered the exciting incidents which occurred in the dark rather than the films themselves.)

(iii) Indirectly the agitation against child attendance at bioscopes accelerated the institution of a National Board of Censors q.v.. The plea for an adequate censorship invariably accompanied protests concerning the cinema's pernicious influence on child welfare.

communities. The cinema was more than a distraction or an enlivening influence to these audiences. It furnished, before the advent of radio their only animating contact with the outside world and from it they drew much of their social inspiration, particularly in the matters of fashion and conduct.(i) Their taste in film stars differed from that of town audiences(ii) as well as their appreciation of the various types of films. Travelogues were popular and films of the sea had a special interest to isolated communities many of whose members had never been to the coast. Newsreels though usually many weeks out-of-date, always commanded an attention and popularity unrivalled by other types of films. Its vitalising of news read in the paper was of great value to country audiences and exercised a real effect on the orientation of public opinion.

One of the most remarkable features of the immediate post-war years was that, despite the high cost of living and severe economic depression, entertainment flourished. That theatres and bioscopes were continuously full testified to the sustained need for distraction; but it was not the type of distraction provided in previous years. The war had introduced several new types of entertainment (notably the musical comedy and the revue) and had practically obliterated vaudeville.Drama persisted but at a level far below its previous status. Drama now competed in a hurly-burly of entertainments; it not longer stood supreme as an indispensable social facility, tacitly taken for granted

During and after the war, entertainment of a somewhat frivolous order flourished in South Africa, purveyed chiefly by the African

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(i) Early "film fans", country audiences studied hair-styles and fashions of dress which were enthusiastically copied. Young men imitated Rudolph Valentino's lounging grace and cut their hair according to Wallace Reid or Richard Barthelmess. Mothers called their babies after favourite stars or popular films (such as "Gloria") and shops began to advertise "Cinema Modes" and "Film Star Fashions".

(ii) The general impression among country audiences was that Mary Pickford was a nice little girl who played in stupid stories fit only for children and old people. Rudolph Valentino and the other extravagant characters who figured in luxuriantly sentimental drama were regarded with suspicion. Tom Mix, Bill Hart and sundry forthright screen heroines such as Constance Talmadge, Betty Compson, Mary Miles Minter etc were very popular, their simplicity engaging more sympathy than the elaborate wiles of the "vamps" and "lounge lizards" of the day. Country audiences, though impressed by the lavish setting and extravagant themes of current film drama, did not appear to be as completely beguiled as town audiences. The lack of artificiality in their own lives encouraged a sense of incredulity often wanting in the urban populace.

Theatres Trust which, apart from maintaining vaudeville at the Johannesburg Empire and the Cape Town Tivoli, consistently presented musical comedy, revue and pantomime. Between 1919 and 1923 when entertainment showed signs of decline, the Trust produced many outstanding shows such as Ada Reeve in "The Merry Widow", "Katinka" which ran for record-breaking seasons everywhere, "The Bing Boys on Broadway", and Harry Lauder and a vaudeville company in 1920; "Chu Chin Chow" and Carter the Great in 1921; "The Peep Show" produced by Philip Levard and many other revues in 1922; and Yorke and Adams in "Potash and Perlmutter" and a preponderating number of musical comedies and revuews in 1923. Excellent variety artistes were also imported.(i) The popular demand for light entertainment did not prevent the Trust sponsoring several dramatic companies, notably Allen Doone (ii) and company in Irish plays, and Dorothy Rundell in light drama in 1919; an English dramatic company in 1920; Gertrude Elliot (Lady Forbes Robertson) in "Paddy the Next Best Thing", Horace Hodges in "Grumpy", Graham Moffat in his famous "Bunty pulls the Strings" and several other companies in 1921; Ruby Miller in "The Edge of the Beyond" and Alfred Woods in "Smouldering Fires" in 1922; and several enterprises in 1923 including Irene Vanbrugh and Dion Bouncicault, Percy Hutchison (iii), Maurice Moscovitch, Joseph Kessler and Muriel Starr.

The appeal of drama was however steadily waning through the competition of the cinema and lighter forms of entertainment. With his headquarters in Cape Town where his stock company constantly presented plays at the Opera House, Leonard Rayne struggled to maintain public interest in drama both by sending companies on tour and by importing well-known players. In 1919, he imported Ada Reeve to make her dramat

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(i) They included Sam Stern (1919), Beth Tate and J.W. Rickaby (1920), Wish Wynne and Wilkie Bard (1921), Julian Rose and Bert Coote(1922) and Jack Pleasant, Whit Cunliffe, Herschel Henlere and Tom Clare (1923).

(ii) Alen Doone became a great South African favourite and appeared on local stages in 1919, 1920 and 1921.

(iii) Percy Hutchison also became a great South African favourite and revisited the country in 1927. His experiences were entertainingly retailed in his biography.(16)

debut in South Africa in "Winnie Brook Widow"; in 1921, Lillian Hallowes and Terence Maxwell and, an outstanding example of enterprise Frank Benson and a Shakespearean company; and in 1922, a Robert Courtneidge-W.E.Holloway company in "The Garden of Allah", and the Scott-Alexander Grand Guignol company. By 1923, Leonard Rayne was already ill and though his companies, led by Freda Godfrey, Alfred Paumier and other stalwarts, continued to present plays, his personal initiative was lacking and there could be no further dramatic development. He died in June 1925 and was mourned by the entire country. His death marked the end of the fourth era of dramatic entertainment in South Africa (1) and with the disappearance of his personality, drama ceased to be integrated in the social structure and, instead of a permanently available form of entertainment, became a diversion of sporadic appearance. African Theatres tried to institute moreorless permanent dramatic entertainment in South Africa but the times were no longer apposite and the most that could be done was to import dramatic companies at erratic intervals according to and sometimes in defiance of public demand.

By the time Rayne died, the competition of the cinema had reached an insistence which could not be withstood. The first "super-feature" films had appeared early in the twenties and continued appearing.(11) Crowds attended their showing and patronage of the theatre concomitantly declined. Not only did drama wane in popularity but the musical comedy itself. Vaudeville struggled on in competition with revue which, a very fluid form, perpetually introduced new features such as "simultaneous dancers"(111) to revitalise its interest. Every

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(1) The first era of professional dramatic entertainment in South Africa occurred in the nineteenth century during the late '50s and '60s with the enterprises of Sefton Parry and others; the second during the '70s and '80s which was dominated by Captain Disney Roebuck; the third began in the late eighties with Luscombe Searelle and the Wheelers who brought out Leonard Rayne in 1896, and later Frank de Jong's enterprises; the fourth was initiated by Rayne himself when he began managing his own companies in 1897.

(11) Most of these exceptional films were shown many months after their overseas release and had thereby attained additional publicity and the advantage of long public anticipation.

(111) The "John Tiller Girls" greatly intrigued South African audiences who had never before seen "precision dancing" by a trained troupe as distinct from performances such as the "can-can". This type of dancing became an indispensable item in revues and was perpetuated by Philip Levard in almost all his South African productions.

artifice was tried by African Theatres to maintain audiences in its theatres and from 1924 onwards, all types of entertainment were imported including excellent dramatic companies such as Leon M. Lion and Renée Kelly (1924), The Macdona Players in Shaw plays (1925)(i), Denis Neilson-Terry and Mary Glynne, Owen Nares and Marie Polini, and Guy Bates-Post and Dorothy Brunton (1926); as well as well-known variety artistes (ii) and two complete orchestras (iii) and special presentations such as Anna Pavlova and Corps de Ballet in 1926. These were varied by a succession of musical comedies and revues, notably the extremely popular "No No Nanette" (1925) and "Mercenary Mary" (1926).

Despite these efforts, the popularity of theatrical entertainment steadily declined. The cinema had driven a wedge into "legitimate entertainment before it had had an opportunity of adjusting itself to war-time conditions and when this adjustment was made (notably through the staging of revues), it came too late to close the widening breach which the development in films had maintained and steadily increased.(iv) The decline of one branch of entertainment and the popularity of another was irrelevant to the business of the South African entertainment organisation which, confronted with an unprecedented demand for amusement, purveyed it by the most profitable means and developed an immense trade. By 1921, less than ten years after commencing operation the machinery and resources of both the African Theatres and Films

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(i) The extraordinary popularity of the Shaw plays staged by the Macdona Players aroused considerable comment at the time. The public was generally supposed to have become habituated to "low-brow" entertainment and to desire nothing else.

(ii) These included J.W. Rickaby, Marie Burke, Jennie Hartley and Bransby Williams (1924); Hetty King, Maidie Scott, Bert Erroll, Clive Maskelyne and Ronald Frankau's "Cabaret Kittens" (1925) and Winnie Arthur, Herschel Henlere and Tex Macleod(1926).

(iii) These were the Lisbon Gypsy Orchestra and Bert Ralton's Havana Band. (Bert Ralton died tragically in Southern Rhodesia where Denis Neilson-Terry also died some time later.)

(iv) "Talkies" were to complete the work of the war and its effect on public temper, in disintegrating the established nature of entertainment. Ten years after the advent of the sound-film, neither drama nor vaudeville, musical comedy nor revue, could claim to an established place in entertainment.

Trusts proved inadequate to demand. The necessity for expanding their field of operation had long been appreciated and plans made for great development, particularly in regard to the building of theatres. Accordingly on the I4th March I92I, "African Theatres Ltd" was founded for the purpose of acquiring the business and interests of the African Theatres Trust (which had commenced business on the I9th May I9I3 with an initial cash capital of £I2,500). An issue of £I shares was offered to the public totalling £I00,000, the increase in capital being intended to finance the building of two modern theatres seating 3,500 each in Cape Town and Durban. The auditors computed that this sum, when added to the excess of assets over liabilities of the company (that is, including properties, stores, cash, productions in hand, etc) would bring the company's assets up to £627,223 - I9 - 0d.(i)

In June I92I, "African Films Ltd" was founded to incorporate the African Films Trust (which had commenced business on the 25th July I9I3) with an initial capital of £45,000). A similar issue of I00,000 shares of £I each was made and the prospectus announced that "on the basis of the actual profits earned by African Films Trust in the previous year (I920), the directors estimated being able to pay dividends of 25 per cent per annum and to maintain same after making ample provision for reserves". The excess of assets over liabilities of the new company in June I92I was £I47,59I - I7 - 0d.(ii)

The policy of the two new companies covered the active development of both theatrical and bioscope entertainment and despite the prevailing depression, building plans were drawn up and many new cinemas opened. It needed only the death of Leonard Rayne in I925 to put them in complete control of South African entertainment. Economic circumstances during the twenties made the consistent provision of theatrical entertainment a difficult matter and during I924, African Theatres was subjected, somewhat unjustly, to a considerable amount of contumely, especially at the Cape where the closing of the Opera House during the

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(i) Mr Thomson (see Pages I34, I54 (i) and I62 (ii)) whose original 800 shares in the Union Bioscope Company of I909 had become 4,000 shares in Africa's Amalgamated Theatres of I9II and later 20,000 shares in the African Theatres Trust of I9I3, now received 40,000 shares in African Theatres Ltd.

(ii) Its circuit of cinemas was alleged to include the Union of South Africa, South West Africa, Rhodesia, Portuguese East Africa, British East Africa (Kenya), Madagascar, Mauritius, the Seychelles Islands, India and the Straits Settlements.

Christmas season caused some resentment.(i) As much as the waning popularity of the theatre caused difficulty to African Theatres Ltd, the steadily-increasing popularity of the cinema caused equal stress. The "monopoly", after the death of Leonard Rayne, was unassailed in the one field but, from the end of the war onwards, it was constantly assailed in the other.

The removal of Fisher's Bioscope from independent opposition in 1918 left African Theatres a clear field for film exhibition for a short time only. Early in 1919, the "Rialto Film Co." appeared and, in virtue of its policy of showing rather shady films, obtained considerable patronage.(ii) At the same time, "Carrick's Independent Bioscope" also toured the country showing melodrama, "moral drama" and ordinary fiction films, its greatest success being attained through "Mickey" starring Mabel Normand, a very popular film which Carrick continued to show intermittently for three years.(iii) In 1921 however, he joined the staff of African Theatres. In addition to these two ventures in 1919, the "Solar Film Co." showed "Gaby" with Gaby Delys and, continuing intermittently in 1920 and 1921, "A Member of Tattersalls" and the famous venereal diseases film "The Spreading Evil" which was banned by

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(i) Under the heading of "The Silent Theatres", the Cape Times publishe a condemnatory subleader concluding with - "There may be some reasonable explanation of what would seem to be the utterly inadequate fare provided by the African Theatres at the local theatre of late and for its closing during the next three weeks (the December holiday season). If so, it would be as well that it should be made public. Monopolies are unpopular enough in any ever and, superficially at least, the present theatrical control seems to be going out of its way to provide, by its own ineptitude, gratuitous justification for that always latent popular expressior (17) African Theatres made no reply - as they often did through their local branch managers.

They had been presenting light entertainment at the Opera House but public taste had changed and straight drama was no longe popular. Furthermore the Theatres had none of the long-founded appeal of Leonard Rayne who, as soon as the "Latest London Success began to play to poor houses, switched his stock company over to "East Lynne", "A Royal Divorce", "The Story of the Rosary" and other chronic favourites in which they were adept.

(ii) The entire stock-in-trade of the Rialto Film Company consisted on "moral dramas" including "One Law for Both", "Shame", "And the Children Pay", "When Men Betray", etc and though in 1920, it began showing less suggestive fiction films, it retained its popular appeal. In May 1920, it was incorporated in the"Citizens Amusement Co"(see Page 257).

(iii) Other films shown by Carrick's Bioscope were "God and the Man", "Woman", "Civilisation", "Five Nights" (adapted from Elinor Glynn famous novel which created a stir), "And the Children Pay", "Sporting Life", "When Men Betray", "The Spiral of Death" (an ultr sensational Italian film) etc etc (1919); "A Gentleman Rider" (a Stoll film) etc (1920); and "The Flame of the Yukon", "The Silver Lining" etc etc (1921).

the Cape Provincial Censor Board but shown elsewhere; and also "Prizma Natural Colour Motion Pictures" managed by Owen O'Neill showing "The Lure of Alaska" and an unspecified exhbbitor showing "Sparrows".

During 1920, independent ventures increased. Already established were the Rialto Film Co., the Solar Film Co. and Carrick's Independent Bioscope which occasionally warped sizeable audiences away from controlled cinemas. There now appeared a large number of individual exhibitors who, while separately inconsiderable, collectively caused concern. Outstanding among them was Nina Kortsman (i) who toured South Africa in 1920 and 1921 with a single film "The Woman thou Gavest Me" (Hall Caine's popular novel produced by Stoll) which attained such success than in 1922 she embarked on a more comprehsnsive venture. Others were the "Feature Film Booking Offices"(ii), the "New Independent Film Exchange" showing "Flirting with Fate", the "Tiger Film Exchange" showing "The Spirit of Romance", and unspecified exhibitors showing "Bolshevism" and "Blind Husbands".(iii)

These opportunist ventures were of less importance than the implied menace of two organisations which were launched in South Afric in May 1920 - the "Citizens' Amusements Ltd"(iv)and"Paramount Theatres Ltd"(v), both of which published a prospectus on the same day with the

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(i) Nina Kortsman was born in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, studied dentistry and became interested in films through appointment to the vice-presidency of the "Equator Film Corporation"(18).

(ii) The Feature Film Booking Offices showed "Twelve Ten" and "Attila" before being incorporated in the Citizens Amusements Ltd q.v..

(iii) Norman Lee, a film producer who had made a very indifferent film in Johannesburg entitled "Virtue in the City" road-showed it, and the Dorshei Zionist Association showed "Zionism on the Screen".

(iv) The directors of Citizens Amusements Ltd were Senator Munnik, John Memsley of Port Elizabeth, William Sayar of Kimberley, Lionel Nathan who was mayor of Bloemfontein, William Frickel, Maurice Goodman and Montague Simmers of Johannesburg, Cecil Covey and William Taylor of Cape Town and Herbert William Wright, general manager of the Rialto Film Co. which the new company incorporated and whose offices in Johannesburg it used. The public was asked to subscribe funds for grandiose plans of building theatres in Cape Town, Durban, Kimberley, Bloemfontein and Port Elizabeth, many favourable inferences being drawn in the share prospectus from the profits made by African Theatres and African Films.

(v) The directors of Paramount Theatres Ltd were Edward D. Delaney and Lionel Jacobs of Johannesburg, and Albert Buchman of Durban, its offices being with L.K. Jacobs and Co. in Johannesburg.

identical aim of acquiring and building theatres throughout the Union for the purpose of carrying on business as Bioscope Proprietors and General Entertainment Providers. The proposed flotation of these two companies betokened the flourishing state of the bioscope business and nothing more.(i) Both failed to materialise (ii) but during 1921, other ventures on a less pretentious scale continued to fly in the face of th "monopoly". These included the aforementioned Carrick, Nina Kortsman ar the Solar Film Co. who were now joined in competition by the "Anglo-African Kinema" showing "Kissing Cup's Race"; the "Universal Film Co.of South Africa" showing "Maciste in Love"; the "Select Film Co."showing "Someone Must Pay" (a very popular "moral drama" which constantly re-appeared)x and "The White Heather"; "Sudano's Exclusive Italian Films"; the "Royal Bio" showing "The Echo of Youth", "The Devil in Paris" etc; "Pearson's Bioscope" showing "Mickey", "A Gentleman Rider" etc; and several unspecified exhibitors showing "The Great Game", "The Mask and the Woman","Tommy Atkins in Berlin", "The Boxing Cavalier"(wit Georges Carpentier), "Over the Sticks", etc.

(i) The publication of the prospecti of these two companies occasioned acrimonious comment on the "monopoly" from"Baton" in the Natal Mercury (19) - "Is it good business for the entertainment of this country to be practically the monopoly of one company ? Yes : good business from the monopolists' point of view but not from the public's. Can anyone seriously aver that the film and dramatic fare that we are getting locally today is superior to what it was ten or fifteen years ago ?.....The floating of these new companies shows that some people consider the time is ripe for testing the South African public."

(ii) Citizens Amusements Ltd showed a few films at Town Halls in the Union and in September 1920 presented Sam Stern and vaudeville company at the Johannesburg Town Hall and later elsewhere with some success. The company however was never properly organised and in November 1922, it transpired in a court case brought by one of its directors, William Frickel, a Johannesburg baker, against a fellow-director Wright and two others on a charge of fraud, that "it was all a swindle". The"Feature Film Booking Office"had been the idea of two Cape Town advertising agents, Alfred and Lewe, who, together with several other enterprising speculators, had conceived the Citizens Amusements Ltd and launched it as a public company.Frickel had been "defrauded" of £3,000.

The "Paramount Theatres Ltd" venture was equally abortive, no further activity being manifested than the original publication of prospectus (unless it operated as "Paramount Film Corporation (S.A. Ltd" which showed "His Wife" and "Babbling Tongues" in various Union towns in 1920, both films subsequently being shown by African Theatres).

None of these ventures represented any serious assault on the fil monopoly; but during I92I, opposition came from another quarter when the Durban Municipal Orchestra organised and directed by H.Lyell Tayle (1) proved so successful that by I922, audiences began to be warped away from "bioscopes" to attend its performances. This new feature in the entertainment world (which was later to cause the Theatres and Film Companies increased concern) was one of many affecting "bioscope" attendance at the time. Industrial unrest culminating in revolution on the Rand had a very adverse effect and at the same time, there was intensified outcry against the quality of the preponderant American films in current programmes. African Theatres were on several occasions accused of a prejudice against British productions and thoug they defended their case on adequate and reasonable grounds (ii), the public remained ready to believe that British films were being intentionally witheld. An attempt to exploit this situation was made in February I922 when the following advertisement appeared in Cape Town papers :

CINEMA FILMS
The Stoll Film Co. Ltd of London and New York
are now entering into Hire Contracts with Exhibitors throughout South Africa
These Contracts will guarantee
Permanent and Continuous Supply
The World's Best Programmes
Reasonable Flat-Rate Charges
Equity - No Percentage Extras
No Drastic Clauses - A Supply Contract based on Mutual Goodwill
All communications (strictly confidential) to
The Precision Engineering Co. Ltd, Cape Town
Guy H. Morgan - Managing Director

The "Precision Engineering Company" which had for some time been making cinema projectors, now became a distributing agency for Stoll Films.(iii) Its associated exhibiting company, the "Precision Film

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(i) In October I921, H. Lyell Tayler, previously musical director of the Brighton Orchestra, arrived in Durban at the invitation of the Corporation to organise a municipal orchestra. Within a few weeks, he had galvanised musical activity in Durban and himself an energetic and flamboyant personality, had converted into considerable success, previously moribund musical interest. The orchestra which he organised and which began performing in I922, furnished serious competition to the existing 'bioscopes'.

(ii) See Page 244 et seq.

(iii) The company was financially backed by Messrs Partington & Co., brokers and insurance underwriters, the senior partner E.A. Partington being a director of the company and of the Good Hope Building Society. Its initial plans were ambitious - it intended leasing and building cinemas and later engaging on film production but though none of these plans materialised, the company operated successfuly for some time both in distributing and exhibiting films.

Circuit", consistently showed films at the City Hall or Railway Institute in Cape Town for several months.(1) Very few independent exhibitors appeared to have availed themselves of the facilities offered by the distributing company. One of them was Nina Kortsman who, having made herself a director of her own company "Fine Art Films Ltd", toured a number of Stoll films, notably the popular "Bars of Iron", throughout the Union. In November 1922, Nina Kortsman presented "Lady Godiva" at the Durban Town Hall in conjunction with Lyell Tayler and the Municipa Orchestra. This revolutionary step of allying a commercial enterprise with a municipal cultural facility raised much adverse comment (ii); but thenceforward the orchestra collaborated with a number of film shows in the Town Hall.

In addition to this competition in Durban, African Theatres met a further competitor in H. Howard who opened the Alhambra Cinema (opposite the Technical College) seating 800 on the 7th August 1922 and maintained his independence until April 1927.(iii) Early in 1923,

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(i) Outstanding among them was "Bars of Iron" which proved very popula The quality of this film however was not maintained in other Stoll productions (a fact which African Theatres had always argued) and the venture could not therefore persist beyond 1922.

(ii) A large number of the burgesses (some of whom were conceivably inspired) felt that their newly-formed orchestra should not be associated with a commercial venture, especially of such doubtful value as the "bioscope"; but their Musical Director thought otherwise and persisted in his policy.

(iii) H. Howard was one of the early bioscope pioneers in South Africa (see Page 89 (i)). When finally he retired, he inserted the following extraordinary advertisement in the Durban papers of the 28th April 1927 :

Alhambra
Notice

This theatre has been sold to African Theatres Ltd as from Monday next the 1st May

THANKS

Mr Howard takes this opportunity of expressing his very sincere thanks for the loyalty and support extended to him during the last five years and hopes that all who are desirous of a Health-restori Holiday in the Free State will pay him a visit to his Lovely Farm

Oaklands
Van Reenen
Electric Light, Modern Sanitation, Tennis, Riding, Swimming, etc
Terms Moderate

One Last Request
Fill the Theatre Every Night

On the 30th April, he advertised finally :

Oh ! To think of it !
H. Howard's Last Day of Management
Are you coming to say
Goodbye ?

the Greyville Cinema was opened and advertised under the heading "The Independent House with Brand New Films"(i) and later "Entirely Free fro- All Trusts and Combines". Another independent venture was the Royal Cinema in Johannesburg (opposite the Jewish Guild in Bree Street) which was opened by the "African, European and Australian Film Co.Ltd" on the 23rd March 1923 but ceased to operate in October.(ii) This flaunting of "independent" enteppriae, however unsuccessful, maintained public awareness of the "monopoly" which at this time, was the target for much obloquy revolving largely round the fact that it permitted the showing of old films, prevented the showing of British films etc etc. African Theatres and Films countered these attacks by pointing out that so far from enjoying a monopoly, the South African cinema field was open to competition and that independent distributing and exhibiting concerns did in fact exist.

During 1922, rather fewer films were shown by independents than in 1921. W.J.Shepherd, by arrangement with E.J. Carroll, toured the famous Australian production "The Sentimental Bloke"; S. Hoffman showed "The Adventures of Tarzan" (iii); Pearson's Independent Bioscope showed "Dante's Inferno"(iv); the "Stella Film Co." showed"Passion"; the Navy League "The Empire(s Shield" and other propaganda films; and unspecified exhibitors three Jewish films "Uriel Acosta", "Ritual Murder" and "Endurance" or "The Life of Theodor Herzl". Independent exhibition of films had now become fairly usual and during 1923, several other enter- prises appeared.(v) Lyell Tayler also collaborated with several indep-

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(i) The Greyville Cinema later obtained its films from Jack Sneider who opened a distributing office in Johannesburg in 1923.(see Page 262)

(ii) The managing director of the company was M.S. Blumberg. Starting with a British film "The Prince of Lovers", the new cinema made an auspicious debut but by the middle of October, the company had gone into liquidation and African Films Ltd bought its moveable property such as films, projectors, etc.

(iii) "The Adventures of Tarzan" was an exceptionally popular film in fourteen reels the showing of which took the whole evening.

(iv) "Dante's Inferno" was an old film whose scenes of agonised naked humanity outraged many reviewers.

(v) These included the "Micacross Feature Film Co." with "A Royal Divorce"; the "Independent Film Co" with "Are Mon Legally Married ?" Joe Myers with "The Innocent Cheat" and several unspecified exhibitors showing "Bars of Iron" (still retaining its popularity), "An Amateur Gentleman", "The Soviet in Germany" (a propaganda film), "Madame Peacock" and "The End of the Road" (a venereal diseases film

endent film enterprises in Durban and, having inspired his orchestra to remarkable activity and himself received the additional appointment of Beach Manager, organised such a variety of entertainment as noticeably to affect the attendance at African Theatres' cinemas. In November 1923, Jack Sneider opened a"Film Exchange" in Johannesburg for the distribution of "Arrow" films and shortly afterwards commenced independent exhibition. He forthwith met the competitive methods of African Theatres which, perceiving that he intended showing Jackie Coogan in "Circus Days" at the Town Hall on the 21st December, showed Jackie Coogan in "Oliver Twist" at the Bijou on the 17th. Sneider however continued with his ventures. (i)

The overbearing weight of organised control of the entertainment industry presented too formidable an opposition and during 1924, still fewer independent showmen gambled on the chances of drawing audiences to rented Town Halls.(ii) Fanned by certain sections of the Press, public resentment against the operations of the "film monopoly" continued and the news that Sir Benjamin Fuller, the Australian entrepreneur, was about to institute a rival chain of theatres and cinemas in South Africa was received with some excitement.(iii) Nothing came of this project but African Theatres continued to meet minor opposition from various sources and particularly from Durban where Lyell Tayler continued to cooperate with independent showmen (iv) and in July 1924, the Beach Pavilion (v) opened. The municipal orchestra frequently performed there and other attractions lured the public away from cinema

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(i) During 1924, Sneider showed "Daddy", "Jacqueline", "Flesh and Blood", "Lost in a Big City", "The Streets of New York", "None so Blind", etc.

(ii) Apart from Jack Sneider, there were only the "Superfilm Co." showing the pseudo-moral drama "Stagestruck"; the "S.A. Film Syndicate" showing "The Millionaire Vagrant" and an unspecified exhibitor "Anna Karenina". The Zionist Association imported "Touring Jewish Palestine" and the United South African Jewish Relief, Reconstruction & Orphans Fund "Brother of Mine".

(iii) Early in 1924, Sir Benjamin Fuller, the well-known Australian theatre proprietor, mooted the idea of exploiting the South African field where, he believed, "healthy competition will be welcomed". He had considerable interests in Australia while New Zealand was known among theatrical people as "Fuller's Earth".

(iv) Durban audiences were much impressed when they saw a man beating a drum in "Endurance" and the municipal drummer supplied the noise.

(v) The Durban Beach Pavilion was totally destroyed by fire in 1939.

It was obvious even to the most optimistic speculators that by this time, the cinema-going public had become so accustomed to going to African Theatres' "bioscopes" that few extraneous enterprises had a chance of breaking the habit. During 1925, less than half a dozen films were shown by independent exhibitors (i); but African Theatres and Films were threatened by a new intrusion in the shape of a dissatisfied American production company. On the 17th December 1925, a spectacular full-page advertisement ~~advertisement~~ appeared in Cape Town papers announcing that within sixty days, independent renting offices would be opened to distribute Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer films. The following day, an advertisement in the amusement columns announced :

While waiting for
METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER
to join the independent showmen
book at Darters for
"HELEN OF TROY"
The World's Greatest Love Story

Opening on the 28th December, this film was shown at the Cape Town City Hall for four nights and subsequently elsewhere in the Union. The promised independent renting offices failed to materialise owing to the fact that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, who had sent out two agents to report on the possibilities of the terrain, had eventually entered into contracts with African Films Ltd for the distribution of their films.

The "trustification" of the South African entertainment field gave African Films Ltd a commanding position in contracting for the productions of the big American film companies. There was, in fact, no alternative to dealing with them apart from the method abortively tried by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. In 1926 however, a more strenuous effort was made to combat this situation by the powerful United Artists Corporation (20)(ii)which employed the services of Edward Jose and Arthur de Jong (iii)to make a tentative exploitation of the South African film market and, should results justify further development, to institute a circuit

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(i) These were "Livingstone" made by M.A?Wetherell and shown by "Empire Pictures"; "The Virgin" by "Garber's Film Service"; "Reveille" by James W. Grant and H.Howard in Durban; and "What becomes of the Children ?", a survival of the "moral drama" by an unspecified exhibitor.

(ii) The United Artists Corporation was directed by and controlled the films of Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks.

(iii) Arthur de Jong, the well-known South African impresario, had retired to the French Reviera but was persuaded to emerge to conduct the affair for United Artists.

of cinemas showing United Artists' films.(i) On arrival in South Afric Jose and de Jong tried to persuade African Films to enter into a hirir agreement on sharing terms with United Artists as obtained elsewhere; but the distributing company refused and it was decided to "roadshow" the films, one of which "The Black Pirate" had just been released in America but not yet in England.(2I) Accordingly on the 28th July 1926, large advertisements above the signature of Edward Jose and Arthur de Jong appeared in Cape Town papers announning the establishment of an agency for the distribution of United Artists' films, and the showing of "The Black Pirate" at the City Hall on the 24th August. This enterprise promptly met the full force of competitive methods.(ii) On the 23rd August, African Theatres showed "Ypres" at the Opera House under circumstances of unparalleled preparation.(iii) On the 24th,"The Black Pirate", totally in Technicolor and starring Douglas Fairbanks,

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(i) The fundamental motive for this enterprise was United Artists' dissatisfaction with the method by which their films were exhibite in South Africa. Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and Charlie Chaplin were unique stars and in all other countries, the company was able to conclude a hiring agreement on sharing terms which made proper capital out of their films' special attractions. This gave them a payable return on the enormous costs of production and the huge salaries paid to their stars. African Films however would not be party to this kind of agreement and insisted on buying United Artists' films outright for comparatively small sums. Their policy was ofcourse dominated by a more intimate knowledge of the country and the potential financial return of any given film.

(ii) On the I7th August, a newcomer to independent exhibition "Barnes Independent Bioscope" rented the Railway Institute in Cape Town fc several nights to show a rapid succession of Douglas Fairbanks' films of considerable age - "One of the Blood", "Flirting with Fate" and "American Aristocracy". During these exhibitions, Jose and de Jong continuously advertised their showing of "The Black Pirate"at the City Hall on the 24th, concluding their advertisemer with :

Notice

The undersigned consider it their duty to advise the Public tha they are not connected in any way with performances other than those mentioned in this advertisement.

Edward Jose - Arthur de Jong - Managers

Simultaneously African Theatres was advertising with bigger "spreads" than those given to imported dramatic companies their showing of the film "Ypres" at the Opera House on the 23rd August or the night before the debut of "The Black Pirate" at the City Hall. On the 20th August, another unspecified exhibitor showed another Douglas Fairbanks film "The Clouds Roll By" at the City Hall for one night.

(iii) The stage of the Opera House had been reconstructed, there was a special orchestra and 2,000 people including the Mayor, the Administrator, consuls, clergy and many notables attended the firs night. An ecstatic note pervaded the whole proceeding and reporters specially noted "the man who sang Reveille with a sob in his voice".

was shown at the City Hall for six nights and on the 4th September, "Stella Dallas".(i) A few days later, African Theatres released the news throughout the Union of their building plans for the future. Cape Town was to have a "Bright Light Centre"(ii); Durban, where the Prince of Wales Theatres (Prince's) had been opened in July, was to have a super-cinema; and there were to be two new cinemas in Johannesburg and one in Maritzburg, Bloemfontein and Kimberley. The enunciation of this extensive building programme possibly impressed the public and assured them of African Theatres' goodwill. At the same time, Mr Schlesinger was known to have become a director of British International Pictures and to be occupied in furthering South Africa in particular and the Empire in general at the Imperial Conference. Meanwhile United Artists were attempting successfully to show their American films in Port Elizabeth, East London, Durban, Maritzburg and Pretoria. In Durban, African Theatres had been showing Fairbanks' films "Don Q" and "The Mark of Zorro" at Princes with extensive publicity (iii) and on the 4th October the following advertisement appeared :

Notice and Warning

The public are hereby informed that the pictures to be shown at the Town Hall on Tuesday next and two following nights, the wonderful colour film of Douglas Fairbanks

"THE BLACK PIRATE"

is absolutely and undeniably the latest picture made by this celebrated artist and has not yet even been released in England.

The public are warned not to be misled by statements that other old Fairbanks pictures shown lately and now to be shown in this city are this artist's latest pictures. The parties responsible for these statements are now challenged to substantiate same.

Arthur de Jong - manager for Jose and de Jong

These very obvious competitive gambits had heretofore been ignored by the Press but on the 5th October, the whole matter was take

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(i) "The Black Pirate's" first night audience of 1,200 gave it "a wonderful reception". There was a "first-class orchestra" and ever thing was done to attract the public. "Stella Dallas" appeared equally popular. "Ypres" at the Opera House ran until the 4th September and United Artists therefore had a few days without specially organised opposition. There is no doubt however that muc of their thunder had been stolen.

(ii) "The Bright Light Centre" in Cape Town was realised some years later in the concentration of the Alhambra, Coliseum, Plaza, Royal and Apollo Cinemas within a very small area.

(iii) Apart from African Theatres showing Fairbanks's films at Princes on the 2nd and 3rd October, simultaneous with United Artists' first advertisement, "Barnes Independent Bioscope" appeared and showed "One of the Blood" at the Durban Town Hall.

up. Contrary to its previous policy, the Natal Mercury supported African Theatres and all local exhibitors who might suffered through this unjustified incursion into their own and proper field. The advent of United Artists was described as a menace to local interests and indignation was called up on all sides.(i) The same competitive method were adopted in Johannesburg where "Stella Dallas" (ii) was shown at the City Hall for six nights beginning on the 22nd November; but on the I~th November, the following notice was published :

NOTICE !
Owing to unforeseen circumstances
the showing of
"THE BLACK PIRATE"
is
cancelled
Edward Jose & Arthur de Jong - Managers

(i) Councillor Kemp recommended to the Finance Committee of the Town Council that the tariff for the rent of the Town Hall be raised to £50 as against the previous £I8; but his recommendation was later amended to £25. M.V. Hennessey, chairman and managing director of Criterion Theatres Ltd, protested emphatically, stating that his theatre alone paid £2,000 annually to the Durban Corporation and ~~[illegible]~~ no less than £5,I47 in I925 to the Provincial Council in Entertainment Tax. Arthur de Jong, in reply, denied the secondary accusation that all the money accruing would go to America. He had already paid £2,000 to the Union in customs duties on two films alone. His advent simply meant more competition and the release of more money for circulation rather than its being ~~[illegible]~~ out of South Africa. "He concluded by pointing out that the United Artists Corporation were determined to show the South African public what really modern films were being made now and they were going to fight, even if it meant building bioscopes all over the country".(22)

(ii) On the IIth Octobef, "Barnes Independent Bioscope" duly appeared though now advertising :

Special Notice
The Public are advised that this picture(One of the Blood) stands alone and is in no way connected with any other Bioscopes in town.

which was countered by United Artists with :

NOTICE AND WARNING
Edward Jose and Arthur de Jong are presenting in South Africa absolutely and undeniably and we hereby challenge contradiction, the very latest United Artists' Corporation Productions, two of which viz the latest Douglas Fairbanks Magnificent Picture
"The Black Pirate"
and the wonderful all-star film drama
"Stella Dallas"
will shortly be shown in Johannesburg at the Town Hall.
The Public are warned that the above pictures and all the other very latest productions of the United Artists' Corporation will only be shown in South Africa under the direction of the undersigned whose names will always appear in connection with such performances.
(signed) Edward Jose and Arthur de Jong

It is doubtful whether the public paid much attention to these manoeuvres of the commercial film industry.

All that was known at the time was that de Jong had received a peremptory cable from his principals (i) ordering him to cease exploiting their films in South Africa. For some weeks, neither party indicated the outcome but towards the middle of December, it was revealed that African Theatres had bought the imported films in amicable settlement and that "American Opposition in South Africa" had been withdrawn. Edward Jose, winding up the local affairs of United Artists, gave as the reason for withdrawal "the limited population of South Africa and the few towns of any importance".(ii) African Films had in fact been in negotiation with United Artists in America while de Jong was exhibiting in Pretoria and the successful outcome of these transactions had resulted in the cable ordering him to hand over all material to African Films.

The success with which the organised South African entertainment industry had withstood this attempt to disrupt its structure was very short-lived. It marked the last occasion in the history of South African entertainment that one organisation enjoyed unopposed control.

(i) The films made by the United Artists' Corporation were at this time achieving far more prominence than those of any other make. Previously Paramount had been the aristocrat of the cinema and it was considered sufficient merely to advertise "A Paramount Production".

(ii) L'Estrange Fawcett gives a somewhat different version - "United", he stated (23), "had over-estimated the value of the non-coloured market for films in South Africa".

Appendix to Chapter IX

The following represent the outstanding films of each year :

1919 : "Thelma" (Malvinia Longfellow)
"Rags" (Mary Pickford)
"Macbeth" (Constance Collier, Herbert Tree - D.W. Griffith)
"Once Upon a Time" (Nelson Keys, [illegible], Vesta Tilley-Stoll)
"The Kaiser" or "The Beast of Berlin"
"Sparrows"
"Shadows of My Life" (Evelyn Nesbitt Thaw)
"The Spy" (Dustin Farnum - Fox)
"The Passing of the Third Floor Back" (Forbes Robertson)
"Sporting Life"
"The Adventurer"(Charlie Chaplin)
"The White Heather"
"Tarzan of the Apes" (Elmo Lincoln)
Many Mary Pickford Films

The Surrender of the German Fleet

"One Law for Both" (Rita Jolivet)
"Sins of Ambition" (Leah Baird)
"The Warfare of the Flesh"
"The Fringe of Society" (Ruth Roland, Milton Sills)
"Shame"
"The Common Law"(Free Love)
"A Soul for Sale"
"And the Children Pay"
"Borrowed Clothes" (Mildred Harris)
"Sapho" (Pauline Frederick)
"When Men Betray"
"Wives of Men"
"As a Man Thinks"
"The Devil's Playground"

1920 : "Daddy Longlegs" (Mary Pickford)
"The Daughter of the Gods" (Annette Kellerman)
"Joan the Woman" (Geraldine Farrar)
"Broken Blossoms" (Lillian Gish, Richard Barthelmess-Griffith)
"The Ragamuffin" or "The Hoodlum" (Mary Pickford)
"The Miracle Man" (Thomas Meighan, Lon Chaney, Betty Compson)
"Male and Female" (Thomas Meighan, Gloria Swanson)

South Africa in the World War
Shackleton's Expedition to the South Pole
The Exploits of a German Submarine
Fighting the Bolsheviks
Bolshevism

"Bohemia" (Theda Bara)
"The Sin Woman"
"Sex" (Louise Glaum)
"Revelations" (Nazimova-Metro)
"Should a Woman Tell ?" (Alice Lake - Metro)
"Lifting Shadows" (Emmy Wheilan)
"Whatsoever a Man Soweth"
"The Spreading Evil"

1921 : "Tommy Atkins in Berlin" (Ben Turpin, Ford Sterling - Mack Sennett)
"The 13th Chair"
"Mr Wu" (Matheson Lang, Lillah Macarthy, Meggie Albanesi)
"The Virgin of Stamboul" (Priscilla Dean)
"Mickey (Mabel Normand)
"Foul Play" (Renee Kelly)
"M'Liss" (Mary Pickford, Thomas Meighan)
"The River's End" (Lewis Stone)
"Silver Lining" (Bombardier Wells)
"The Boxing Cavalier" (Georges Carpentier)
"Salome" (Theda Bara)
"The Romance of a Movie Star" (Violet Hopson, Stewart Rome)
"Go and Get It" (Wesley Ruggles - Marshall Neilan)
"Love, Honour and Behave" (Mack Sennett)
"Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde" (Frederic March)
Many Mary Pickford Films

I922 : "Silks and Saddles" (Australian)
"The Sentimental Bloke" (Australian)
"Tilly of Bloomsbury"
"The Penalty" (Lon Chaney)
"Carnival" (Matheson Lang, Ivor Novello, Hilda Bayley)
"Kismet" (Otis Skinner, Rosemary Theby, Elinoxr Fair)
"Bars of Iron" (Stoll - English)
"Why Change your Wife ?" (Glora Swanson, Thomas Meighan, Bebe Daniels)
"The Kid" (Jackie Coogan, Charlie Chaplin)
"Way Down East" (Lillian Gish, Richard Barthelmess-Griffith)

I923 :""The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" (Rudolph Valentino)
"Orphans of the Storm" (Gish Sisters - D.W. Griffith)
"Over the Hill" (Mary Carr)
"All the Brothers were Valiant" (Lon Chaney)
"The Queen of Sheba" (Betty Blythe)
"The Prisoner of Zenda"

"The End of the Road"

Many comic films starring Charlie Chaplin, Larry Semon, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd.

I924 : "Lost inm a Big City"
"The Huncback of Notre Dame" (Lon Chaney)
"Under Two Flags" (Priscilla Dean)
"The Sheik" (Rudolph Valentino, Agnes Ayres)
"Scaramouche" (Ramon Novarro, Alice Terry, Lewis Stone)

I925 : "Blood and Sand" (Rudolph Valentino, Nita Naldi, Lila Lee)
"Moon of Israel"
"Captain Blood" (Warren Kerrigan)
"The Wandering Jew" (Matheson Lang)
"The Ten Commandments"
"Monsieur Beaucaire" (Rudolph Valentino)
"Robin Hood" (Douglas Fairbanks)
"The Humming Bird" (Gloria Swanson)

I926 : "The Sea Hawk" (Milton Sills)
"The Mark of Zorro" (Douglas Fairbanks)
"Don Q"(Douglas Fairbanks)
"Quo Vadis" (Emil Jannings)
"The Only Way" (Martin Harvey)
"Stella Dallas" (Ronald Colman)
"The Phantom of the Opera" (Lon Chaney)
"The Shepherd King"
"Madame Sans Gene" (Gloria Swanson)
"The Black Pirate" (Douglas Fairbanks)

Ypres
Nanook of the North
Cobham's Flight down Africa.

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CHAPTER X

Kinemas break the "Monopoly" and introduce "Talkies"

Formation of African Consolidated Theatres and Films Ltd

1927-1931

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Kinemas break the "Monopoly" and introduce "Talkies"

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From about 1923 onwards, the South African Press continuously published short reports from overseas dealing with the "Talk Film" or "phonofilm" with which Dr Lee de Forest was experimenting. Long before there was any mention of its exhibition in South Africa, there was speculation as to its effect on drama, its reception by the public, the fate of the silent film etc. Early in 1927, it became known that a private company had been formed which had bought the rights for the exploitation of phonofilms in the Union. The founder of this company was Mr Sydney Hayden (1) who, with his brother David Heydenreich and a few interested financiers, proposed entering the South African entertainment industry on an extensive scale. Interviewed by the press, Hayden announced his firm conviction in the future of the sound film (a beliefs then by no means widely held) and the intention of his company to institute a circuit of cinemas in South Africa for their exploitation. Under then circumstances, this optimism was courageous.

Kinemas S.A. (Proprietary) Ltd made its first public appearance on the 28th February 1927 in Cape Town when it showed "The Chinese Bungalow", a silent film starring Matheson Lang and Juliette Compton, and a short programme of phonofilms at the City Hall. Performances were given until the 9th March (an unprecedented length of time for an independent exhibitor to hold the City Hall) and though the silent feature films were admired (good British films were exceptional), the phonofilms made little impression. The sound was of very poor quality

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(1) Late in 1926 when in England, Sydney Hayden met the holder of the British rights to phonofilms at a luncheon party in London. Becoming interested in this new invention, he was invited to a private preview and was impressed by its possibilities. Crude and imperfect though phonofilms then were, Sydney Hayden realised that the development of the talkie film would not be arrested and that in time, it would revolutionise the cinema. Accordingly he bought the South African rights and instituted arrangements for the support of exhibitions of phonofilms in South Africa by good British silent fiction films. A small company entitled Kinemas S.A. (Proprietary) Ltd was formed to finance the enterprise and was registered in Pretoria on the 19th February 1927. Hayden returned to South Africa early in 1927 accompanied by sound-engineers trained in the mechanism of phonofilm-projection. Phonofilms represented the first attempt to record sound on celluloid and to reproduce it by means of a photo-electric cell, thereby differing from all previous attempts which had used a synchronised gramaphone or independent sound unit. The process of both recording and reproduction took some time to perfect.

and extremely variable.(i) At the Johannesburg Town Hall on the other hand where Kinemas opened on the 16th March (ii), there was great enthusiasm and the phonofilms, though harsh and metallic in sound and variable in volume owing largely to the bad acoustical properties of the hall, were acclaimed by both the press and the public. The success of these initial ventures encouraged Kinemas to proceed along ambitious lines, beginning with the purchase of a small independent exhibiting organisation called the "Independent Film Service"(iii). Equipped with its stock of feature films etc, Kinemas now began giving exhibitions at the Johannesburg Town Hall while negotiating for the leases of halls and the purchasing of cinema sites elsewhere. These exhibitions were combatted by the usual competitive tactics of African Theatres (iv) to which Kinemas duly reacted; but such incidental exhibition was of minor importance in the extensive schemes on which the company had embarked. Fortified by the phonofilm rights (which represented a unique attraction) and a number of good English and American feature films, the company intended entering the entertainment field on a equal footing with African Theatres and competing

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(i) At the commencement of their operations, Kinemas were always embarrassed through having to show their phonofilms in large City Halls whose bad acoustics accentuated the defects of early recording on film and its amplification. Early phonofilms appeared almost completely toneless.

(ii) Kinemas opened at the Johannesburg Town Hall with the silent film "The Triumph of the Rat" with Ivor Novello and Isabel Jeans, the supporting programme including short phonofilms in which, though the synchronisation was moreorless reliable, the sound was metalli The performances however were most successful and crowds beset the Town Hall whose bad acoustics Kinemas did their best to improve. "House Full" notices had to be displayed and audiences numbering 2,600 a time patronised the shows for the few nights they were given.

(iii) A week before Kinema's exhibition at the Johannesburg Town Hall, "The Flag Lieutenant", a popular British film starring Henry Edwards, had been shown by the "Independent Film Service", a small organisation managed by Charles Clore which had imported a number of British and American feature films. By the 25th March, Kinemas had bought this concern and all its films including"A Daughter of Israel" starring Betty Blythe and "The Bells" starring Lionel Barrymore.

(iv) When Kinemas advertised their showing of "A Daughter of Israel" at the Johannesburg Town Hall on the 4th April, African Theatres promptly showed a film of the same name at the Palladium, causing Kinemas to advertise :
"We must request the public not to confuse this new and brilliant production with the other film of the same name which has since been advertised and is at present being exhibited locally."
Kinemas' version met with such success that its season at the Town Hall had to be extended.

with it, cinema for cinema. By the middle of May, a few weeks after it foundation, Kinemas had already prepared an extensive circuit. The company had leased the King's Hall in Durban seating I,IOO, the Trades Hall in Benoni seating I,OOO and the Town Halls of Boksburg, Benoni and Springs on the Reef. It had bought a site in the centre of Johannesburg on which it intended building a cinema theatre and it was considering similar sites in Cape Town and East London. The publication of this news was countered by the announcement by African Theatres of great building activity, notably in Durban where the "Durban Opera House" seating I,850 was to be erected next to Prince's in Smith Street.(i) Kinemas continued organising a country-wide opposition to the existing structure of the film industry, meeting various obstacles (ii) but steadily accumulating a circuit.

At this time - when public interest began genuinely to be focussed on the entertainment industry - the magnitude of Kinemas' plans left no doubt that they were in no way similar to previous attempts at "independent exhibition". By the end of June 1927, their architect's (iii) drawing of the Plaza Kinema at the corner of Rissik and Jeppe Streets in Johannesburg was published together with the fact that Kinemas had bought the site for £27,500. Their general manager, C.G. Burgon made numerous announcements of the company's projects and, thus prepared, the public was finally asked to subscribe funds in support of the new enterprise. On the 1st July, shares in "Kinemas Limited" were offered for sale. The new company had bought and taken over the operation of the privately-owned "Kinemas S.A.(Pty) Ltd" on

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(i) This project materialised only in 1935 when The Playhouse, a super-cinema or "atmospheric theatre" was opened on the site.

(ii) In Durban, for instance, an entirely unprovoked outcry was raised against the use of the Town Hall for showing films on the grounds of fire risk. Romer Robinson, a well-known solicitor, wrote to the Mayor and threatened that unless cinema exhibitions at the Town Hall (the only one of which was Kinemas') ceased immediately, he would apply to the Supreme Court for an interdict.(I)

(iii) The original plans for the Plaza Kinema were drawn by Captain Harry Clayton but were not used for the actual building.

the Ist June, having through its successful operations, been assured of further prospects in South Africa.(i) Apart from continuing with the institution of its competitive circuit, Kinemas proposed to engage in film-renting and in time, to erect its own talkie studios and to issue a local Talkie Topical Budget. The most pronounced feature of its policy was the showing of British films which it frequently emphasised.(ii)

The continued success of this enterprise which already held leases and options on a large number of theatres, made it clear that the film "monopoly" operated by African Theatres and African films for nearly fourteen years had at length been broken. Kinemas continued their policy of expansion apparently without limit and both organisations now entered on a phase of competitive development which was to provide South Africa with some of the best cinema entertainment ever presented. During the four years that the struggle lasted, the South African cinema developed most of its distinguishing characteristics -

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(i) Registered on the 4th July 1927, Kinemas Ltd had on its board of directors Sydney Hayden, Councillor David Penry Roberts (later Mayor of Johannesburg), Robert Storm of Durban, and George Henry Dickson of Johannesburg.

The private company had been used as a stalking horse and had revealed a high degree of public support. In an interview given to The Star (2), Sydney Hayden, London director of the company, said : "In attempting to gauge the prospects, I am my fellow investors preferred to risk our own money rather than to invite the public to contribute. Our confidence however has been justified and, as is stated by the auditor in the prospectus, we have already earned on the preliminary capital of £25,000 a net profit of over 20 per cent per annum. The support accorded to us by the people of South Africa has made the present issue imperative. Since my arrival in this country some six months ago, I have been testing in addition the possibility of overcoming the prejudices that have undoubtedly existed against British silent productions. I am pleased to be able to say that my expectations in this direction have been very greatly exceeded. These prejudices were present, not because British films were imperfect but because the public had not had an opportunity of viewing first-class issues. That is proved by the success which has attended the consistent exhibition by Kinemas S.A.(Pty) Ltd of the best of British efforts.....Arrangements have been made by our London office for regular supplies not only of British but also of the leading Continental and American pictures. The de Fores phonofilms have improved since their introduction almost beyond recognition. Even in the Johannesburg Town Hall with its shockingly bad acoustics, they have been "coming over" with truly marvellous clarity as a consequence of the latest addition to the plant which has reached us from London."

(ii) Many of Kinemas' British films were inferior in quality but the novelty of their exhibition coupled with the attraction of the phonofilms served to draw the public.

notably the subtle change from "bioscope" to "cinema". The outstanding feature of this fierce competition was the countering of one company of every development announced by the other. Simultaneous with the publication of the share prospectus of Kinemas Ltd came the announcement of extensive building plans on the parts of African Theatres which manifested great activity and prosperity. Shortly after Kinemas had opened King's Hall in Durban (i) and were rumoured to have bought the Theatre Royal, African Theatres took over the Criterion Theatre on the Esplanade owned by Criterion Theatres Ltd and ran it as a bio-vaudeville house. At the same time, Lyell Taylor, previously Musical Director and Beach Manager to the Durban Municipality, assumed his appointment of Musical Director-in-Chief to African Theatres, African Broadcasting and African Cateroro (all companies controlled by Mr. Schlesinger) and in 1928, was made general manager of African Theatres. (ii) Every move on each side was watched and combatted and the public soon sensed the tensenese of the situation.(iii)

(i) When the King's Hall was opened as a Kinema in Durban, thousands were turned away, the phonofilms proving very popular.

(ii) Early in June 1927, Lyell Taylor suddenly and unexpectedly resigned his position as Musical Director to the Durban Municipality, which he had held for six years. This step occasioned much surprise and regret Taylor's energetic and capable character having been much appreciated The Durban Municipal Council had already decided that he should go on for four months leave and be re-engaged at a salary of £100 a month; but Taylor preferred "to keep faith" with the public and continued his municipal work until August when he joined the Schlesinger organisation in various managerial capacities. He remained general manager of African Theatres until his resignation in 1936. He died in August 1938, leaving over £32,000, and his widow a year later.

(iii) Occasionally the conflict came into the open. When Mr Madeley (then Minister of Post and Telegraphs in the Pact Government) was asked to open a Kinema at Benoni in August 1927, he made a forthright speech - "The presence of so large a crowd", he was reported to have said (3)"might or might not be a happy augury. Usually the hall was only crowded when there was trouble on or brewing (this referred to the Revolution of 1922). Perhaps however the trouble was not quite of the usual sort expected from Benoni and maybe it meant trouble for a monopoly. The people of Benoni did not like monopolies or martial law and the fact that this enterprise was an effort to cut in on a monopoly was one of the reasons he so readily agreed to open the house that night. The people objected to having a pistol held at their heads in having to accept what entertainment was given them. He was not going to say that they had not been given good shows in the past but he welcomed the intervention of Kinemas and phonofilms. ...He congratulated the promoters on having sufficient enterprise an pluck in starting in opposition to the monopoly and in declaring the Capitol Kinema open, he wished them every success."

This speech was utilised by The Star's cartoonist "Quip" (Packer). Mr Schlesinger's company had recently officially taken over the Johannesburg Broadcasting Station in which transaction the Department of Posts and Telegraphs had played a large part. Quip's cartoon, published on the 19th August, showed Madeley reading aloud from an infinite scroll of words while Schlesinger, standing in the background, holds a despatch case labelled "Wireless Deeds" and says "Very nice, Mr Madeley; but you had the sense to deliver me the goods so the Benoni comrades are waiting to the speech"

The atmosphere of bitterness with which cinema competition was now imbued was homogeneous with the uneasy temper of the public at large. At the time, the Flag Question was reaching its crisis. The approved design had come before the public, thousands of whom were incensed to discover that the Union Jack in its composition was one/ sixty eighth of the total size. Eventually when a referendum seemed inevitable, a compromise acceptable to all sections was reached in the proposal to fly both the Union Jack and the Union flag side by side. This settlement produced a feeling of comparative amity towards the end of the year but various politicians persisted in maintaining the racial issue and for many months, public morale continued tense and disquieted. The unqualified rivalry between African Theatres and Kinemas was consonant with these unhappy circumstances. On the one hand, Kinemas had persuaded themselves and gave the public the impression that they were waging a kind of altruistic crusade to break a pernicious monopoly for the benefit of the public; on the other hand, African Theatres and its associated companies fought to save an industry which they alone had founded, consolidated and brought to prosperity. The issue therefore came to be fought without quarter, many disreputable incidents characterising its development.

In September 1927, Colonel James Donaldson of the financial firms of Donaldson and Carlis and one of the best known figures in Johannesburg financial circles, joined the board of Kinemas. By then, the company was well advanced on their programme of expansion - the Eton Hall in Noord Street, Johannesburg was shortly to be opened as the "Astoria"; the Adelphi in Pretoria was in course of construction (it was opened in November); and Prince's Hall in Salisbury and the Pavilion at the Strand, Cape had been leased for showing Kinemas' films. Furthermore Kinemas had not only advertised for suitable cinema sites in the Cape Peninsula (a tactical rather than a practical move) but had opened a film-renting office in Cape Town.(1)

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(1) At this time, there was considerable animosity towards African Theatres and its associated film-distributing company, African Films Ltd, on the part of Cape municipalities, particularly The Strand (which had always been the enfant terrible of its municipal confreres). Through African Theatres building or leasing cinemas in almost every town of importance, there was little use for municipal town halls and a project was accordingly mooted to municipalise all bioscopes. A second scheme involved each municipality running its town hall as a bioscope in opposition to existing interests but, until the advent of Kinemas, there was no constant source of film supply (though representatives of British firms visiting the country appear to have flirted with the prospect). The proceedings of town councils in

Towards the end of September 1927, Mr Schlesinger made a sensational demarche by joining the board of the British company controlling de Forest phonofilms - British Talking Pictures Ltd. Kinemas affected great pleasure at this announcement. As concessionair for the Union, Rhodesia and South West Africa, they applauded the addition of new capital to the company which would possibly enable it to supply them with improved films.(i)

The overt actions of the competing companies considerably diverted the general public but not until Kinemas brought a case against African Theatres late in 1927 when the whole position was aired, was the extent and bitterness of competition fully realised. On the 18th October 1927, Mr Sydney Haydon released the news in London that Kinemas had bought a number of British films including "The Somme". On the 25th October, African Theatres commencing advertising largely their showing of "The Battle of the Somme" in the Johannesburg press to take place at the Town Hall on the 31st October and 1st November, the entire proceeds to be given to the British Empire Service League. On the 1st November, Kinemas applied for and obtained an interim interdict calling upon African Theatres to show cause why they should not be restrained from using the title "The Somme" for a picture which was being shown at the Town Hall entitled "The Battle of the Somme". African Theatres entered opposition to the rule sought by Kinemas and on the 14th November, argument was heard before Mr Justice de Waal.(ii) The hearing lasted two days and much of the companies' domestic affairs was revealed to the public. It appeared as if African Theatres had revived an old film "The Battle of the Somme" (made in 1916) and shown it under the protecting auspices of the B.T.C.L. to embarrass Kinemas' impending showing of "The Somme" (in the same way

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which animosity towards African Theatres, their monopoly, their curious methods of extinguishing all opposition, their refusal to tolerate independent proprietorship, etc etc were freely aired, were given considerable publicity in the local press. There is no doubt that at this time, both press and public looked askance at the company which was making such manifest moves to crush all independent enterprise.

(i) Whatever the significance of Mr Schlesinger's joining its board, British Talking Pictures Ltd went into liquidation early in 1930 but not before he had disposed of his holdings.

(ii) Mr Stallard K.C. (leader of the Dominion Party and later Minister of Mines in the Smuts War Cabinet of 1939) appeared for Kinemas and Mr Philip Millin K.C. (later Mr Justice Millin) for African Theatres.

as they had revived "A Daughter of Israel" (made in 1915) to embarrass the showing of Kinemas' contemporary version of the same title, and had shown "He who gets Slapped (an exceptional film starring Lon Chaney) wherever Kinemas had shown "The Golden Clown" in an attempt to confuse the public. Stallard representing Kinemas made a forthright accusation that African Theatres had wilfully attempted to deceive the public which Millin, their representative, as effectively countered. The real significance of the case lay in the public's being made aware of the ruthless competition for its patronage (i) There were further such occasions (ii) but the real battleground lay in the cinemas themselves which Kinemas were leasing and building with astonishing speed. In November 1927, they opened the Adelphi in Pretoria seating 1,000 and a month later, it was announced that they had bought a central site in Pretoria (in Pretorius and Bank Streets extending to Church Square) for £26,500 with the intention of building a super-cinema called the Plaza. In December, they opened the Astoria in Noord Street, Johannesburg and in January 1928, the Lyric in Braamfontein. In the meantime, African Theatres, though less ostentatiously, were engaged on building the biggest cinemas in South Africa according to the designs of their architect J. Rogers Cooke whom they had specially sent to the United States for the purpose of studying the latest developments.

The progress reported by Kinemas Ltd after only five months as a public company was phenomenal. At the end of 1927, King's Kinema in

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(i) So far from dissuading both parties from such competitive action, "The Somme" feud was carried to Cape Town early in 1928 where Kinemas and African Theatres fought the battle out at the City Hall and the Railway Institute alternately. Kinemas, showing "The Somme" at the City Hall, appended to their advertisement :

DO NOT BE CONFUSED !
This film has not been publicly exhibited elsewhere in Cape Town

while simultaneously African Theatres advertised largely :

City Hall
Saturday Next
in collaboration with the
Cape Town Orchestra
The Greatest War Film of All
"THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME"

Later Kinemas advertised :

IMPORTANT NOTICE
Kinemas Ltd notify the public that they have no connection whatsoever with the film advertised to be shown at the City Hall on Saturday night

and still later, when Kinemas were showing "The Somme" at the Railway Institute and African Theatres "The Battle of the Somme" at the City Hall, Kinemas advertised :

Do not be Deceived
This is the Film

(ii) There was, for instance, the Tunney-Heeney Fight film of 1928

Durban and the Adelphi in Pretoria were playing to good business as well as Prince's Kinema in Salisbury. There were Kinemas all along the Reef (in Benoni, Boksburg, Brakpan and Springs) as well as at Pietersburg, East London, The Strand and Durban where, in addition to King's, there was the Royal Palace Kinema. (These were all fairly small houses but their every audience represented a loss of revenue to the Schlesinger group of companies.) Preparatory to building its own cinemas, Kinemas were also exhibiting almost continuously in Cape Town and Kimberley in rented halls. The Tivoli Kinema in Port Elizabeth was about to be opened. The centre of the battle was however Johannesburg where both companies had their head offices. At one time (before the opening of the Astoria) Kinemas provided exceptional attractions such as the Sistine Choir and the boxer Kid Lewis, to induce audiences to patronise their film-shows at the Town Hall which was also frequently leased by African Theatres for the same purpose.(i)

During 1928, competition was accentuated (ii), Kinemas, now firmly established, continuing with their building programme and the extension of an already large circuit, African Theatres, faithful to their earlier announcement, proceeding with the building of numerous large cinemas

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for which Kinemas claimed the sole South African rights and obtained an interdict against African Theatres' showing the film. In 1930, Kinemas claimed an interdict against African Talking Pictures Ltd (recently founded by Schlesinger to purvey talkie apparatus) for infringement of rights and there were numerous other occasions on which intensity and bitterness in competition were made evident.

(i) On the 22nd December 1927 - or the night before Kinemas opened the Astoria, their first big house in Johannesburg - African Theatres leased the Johannesburg Town Hall to show "Little Annie Rooney" with Mary Pickford.

(ii) In February 1928, an abortive attempt to add to the prevailing state of competition in the cinema industry was made by the launching of a company entitled "Union Theatres Limited" which proposed entering the theatre business, the directors being H.D. Caro, W.A. van der Byl, R.G. Gordon, E.J. Easton and V. Poupard. Its share prospectus which elaborated grandiose plans of building theatres and cinemas, announced that "No Trust or Syndicate having as it object similar business, will have any interest whatsoever in the affairs of the company." Published in Cape papers, this prospectus inspired critical correspondence and subsequently nothing was heard of the company beyond its presentation on the 1st October at Cape Town of Haydn Rumory, bass, and Lola Curona, "the only woman operatic tenor in the world" which was not a success. During bankruptcy proceedings in 1929, Rumory, who had been touching music in Grahamstown and Johannesburg, stated that he had not made a penny when performing under the aegis of Union Theatres.

throughout the Union (i) and opening a number of small "bioscopes" in the larger towns. Extensive publicity on both sides and particularly on that of Kinemas, informed the public of the remarkable progress made. By the middle of 1928, Kinemas had 44 bioscopes on their circuit and both organisations planned to open more in the near future.

As far as the cinema-going public was concerned, the effect of opposition was very beneficial. Every type of film was imported by both sides in an attempt to encourage patronage and British, American and Continental productions were exhibited in almost equal profusion. African Theatres were at a disadvantage in having only silent films. Though Kinemas' phonofilms were crude, they featured them continuously in their larger cinemas wired for sound and, progressively improving, they continued to attract the public. In September 1928, African Theatres essayed to meet Kinemas on their own ground by presenting a pseudo-talkie "The Jazz Singer", a full-length feature film starring Al Jolson. His songs, including the famous "Mammy" and "Dirty Hands, Dirty Face", were presented on the "Panatrope", a electrical device on the disc-record principle. It had scant success and the venture was never repeated, sound-recording technique having suddenly advanced considerably overseas.

Competition now entered another phase. The variety and excellenc of films which it had provided, had inspired a considerable degree of discrimination in the cinema-going public who had learnt to distinguis different makes of film, the names of directors and other factors of production which made special appeal. Exceptional efforts therefore ha now to be made to curry their favour. In October 1928, African Theatre announced their purchase of a year's output of British International Pictures (ii), the public-spiritedness of this deal and its motive of placing British productions before Empire audiences (iii) being duly noted by the Press. Ten days later, Kinemas announced their purchase o

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(i) Notably the Alhambra in Cape Town, the laying of whose foundations on quick-sands caused considerable difficulty.

(ii) Mr Schlesinger had disposed of his interests in British Internat ional Pictures some time before.

(iii) Mr David Heydenreich, managing director of Kinemas, used the occasion to point out that his company had made a policy of showin British films - "I might almost take the credit of being the pioneer of British films in South Africa", he said (4); and later (5) - "I say without hesitation that we are responsible for having introduced and popularised British films in this country."

the entire 1928 output of UFA, the best-known and most popular make of German film which became a vogue in South African (one of these films, "The Spy" was already being shown in the Union with great success). Kinemas also announced the purchase of 57 feature films and 36 comedies from an American company and 37 British feature films including "Shiraz", the Indian film then exciting favourable comment overseas. Piling Pelion on Ossa, Kinemas then announced their purchase of a whole year's output of the Gaumont-British and Gainsborough firms. By this time, the South African cinema presented a more representative face than it had done since pre-war years.

Meanwhile the building and opening of cinemas continued on both sides. Kinemas bought many sites and by the end of 1928, had 60 cinemas on its circuit. On the 22nd October 1928, they opened the Astoria (1) Kinema in Woodstock, Cape Town amid scenes of extraordinary enthusiasm. It was Kinemas' first big enterprise in Cape Town and their purchase of the house "La Serena" in Sea Point shortly afterwards betokened their intention of expanding further. Simultaneously African Theatres pursued an active policy - a super-cinema had been promised to Maritzburg; similar plans had been made for Durban which, though anxiously awaited, took several years to materialise to the annoyance of the burgesses; the immense Alhambra in Cape Town was already in course of construction; the Opera House was to be re-modelled; other new cinemas were being built throughout the country and provision was made for several non-European "bioscopes". Meanwhile Kinemas' much-vaunted Plaza in Johannesburg had failed to materialise.

During these activities, competitive action continued along standardised lines. For instance, when Kinemas showed "The Rat" with Ivor Novello at the Astoria in Johannesburg in June 1928, African Theatres showed "The Rat" at the Palladium. There were also many mysterious incidents which, if they were not always reported in the Press, were discussed by the public at large. On occasion, attempts to sabotage new enterprises achieved newspaper publicity (as, for instance in December 1931 when, prior to the opening of the Plaza, Kinemas' new theatre in Pretoria, the cooling plant and electrical apparatus suffer

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(1) Mounted police attempted to control crowds of such proportions in the Main Road that traffic was frequently held up and fights for admittance took place. Despite sundry mysterious misadventures, the opening performance was an outstanding success and, though unfortunately situated in an industrial suburb, became a popular rendezvous. It was destroyed by arson in 1944.

ed mysterious interference and, the night before the opening, the manager received two anonymous telephone calls warning him of possible disorder at the ceremony). The prevalence of these incidents and their inseparable connection with Kinemas' activities endowed intense cinema competition with a melodramatic quality which the public did not fail to appreciate. This unfortunate aspect was rendered more conspicuous by common knowledge that the exhibiting firms were fighting desperately for every modicum of public patronage. After some years of prosperity and social equanimity, the economic situation began to deteriorate and during 1929, shortly after the Prime Minister, General Hertzog, had forecasted its arrival in a broadcast warning, depression began to afflict South Africa. Already involved in extensive development scheme both companies required the full support of the cinema-going public, a support which progressively declined and which, in the interests of the one company, was constantly vitiated by the competition of the other. Wild rumours now began to be bruited abroad.

On the 27th February 1929, Kinemas published a company report dealing with the financial period ending on the 31st October 1928. It revealed a great extension of their circuit of cinemas which was now represented throughout the Union, in Rhodesia and as far as Kampala in Uganda, and an astonishing degree of building activity. Six cinemas were in course of construction in Johannesburg and along the Reef, including the Plaza in Plessik Street. The Troeadero and King's Kinema in Kimberley had been opened, the Adelphi at Sea Point (Cape) was in course of construction, an option had been bought on the site on the corner of Waterkant and St Georges Streets in Cape Town (Plaza), the site of the Capitol in Wynberg had been bought and plans had been prepared for the Metro in Hanover Street, Cape Town and the Astoria in East London.

Ten days later, Kinemas published a share prospectus offering for sale to the public 8% Cumulative Participating Preference Shares, the issues later being alleged by the company to have been over-subscribed Capital was needed to finance ambitious schemes and though the circuit of the company on paper looked impressive, it was in fact composed of a large number of very small institutions some of which operated only once a week and produced very small revenue.(1)

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(1) Though less than two years in existence as a public company, Kinemas advertised their circuit in the prospectus published on the 9th March 1929 as follows :

Baker's Buyers - "Green's Kinema"
Bethlehem
Bindura, Rhodesia
Benoni - "Capitol Kinema"
Bloemhof - "Palace Kinema"
Bloemfontein
Boksburg
Brakpan
Cape Town - "Astoria Kinema", Woodstock
Durban - "King's Kinema"
"Orient Kinema"
"Waldorf Bio-Café"
East London - "Lyceum Kinema"
Glenvale
Elgin - "Grabouw Kinema"
Florida
FortBeaufort
Fouriesburg
Gwelo (Rhodesia) - "Prince's Kinema"
Harrismith - "Criterion Kinema"
Heidelberg - "Hippodrome Kinema"
Johannesburg - "Astoria Kinema"
"Lyric Kinema"
"Grand Kinema", Fordsburg
"Malvern Kinema"
"Majestic Bio-Tearoom"
"Savoy Kinema"
"Scala Kinema", Kelville
"Grand Bioscope", Vrededorp
Kampala (Uganda)
Kimberley - "Theatre Royal Kinema"
"Trocadero Kinema"
Kingwilliamstown
Koster - "Alhambra Kinema"
Kroonstad
Krugersdorp
Lydenburg - "Capitol Kinema"
Modderfontein Dynamite Factory Club Hall
Nairobi(Kenya) - "Lyric Hall Kinema"
Nelspruit - "T. & A. Kinema"
New Modderfontein Recreation Club
Nigel
Paarl - "Elite Kinema"
Pietermaritzburg - "King's Kinema"
Pilgrim's Rest
Port Elizabeth - "Tivoli Kinema"
Potchefstroom
Pretoria - "Adelphi Kinema"
"Oxford Kinema"
Putfontein
Queenstown - "Astoria Kinema"
Que Que (Rhodesia) - "Empire Cinema Hall"
Salisbury (Rhodesia) - "Prince's Kinema"
Springs -
Strand - "Pavilion Kinema"
Town Hall
Stutterheim
Umtali (Rhodesia) - "Olympia Kinema"
Wankie (Rhodesia) -
Wolverdiend

Building and contemplated :

Benoni - "New Capitol Kinema"
Boksburg
Bulawayo
Caledon - "Good Hope Kinema"
Cape Town - "Plaza Kinema"
"Metro Kinema"
"Adelphi Kinema", Sea Point
"Capitol Kinema", Wynberg
East London - "Astoria Kinema"
Johannesburg - "Plaza Super-Kinema"
Turffontein
Troyeville
La Rochelle
Kimberley - "Plaza Kinema"
Krugersdorp - "Astoria Kinema"
Pretoria - "Plaza Kinema"
Parow
Port Nolloth
Witbank
Worcester

Meanwhile the imminent arrival of talkies proper was eagerly awaited throughout the Union. Notes on the popularity of "The Singing Fool", "Arizona" and other talkies already being shown in London continuously appeared in the "Stage and Screen" columns of South African newspapers. Their imperfections were still apparent but they represented a novelty in the entertainment world and persistently piqued public curiosity. Long before their actualk appearance in South Africa, there was speculation on their probable effect on both cinema and theatre (i) the publication of which furnished the forthcoming feature-length"talkies" with invaluable publicity. The public looked to both African Theatres and Kinemas for their soon release and from time to time, news was published of the plans that had been made. (ii). On the 6th July 1929, Kinemas showed the first lengthy feature-film talkie at the Astoria Kinema in Johannesburg. It was called "Mr Smith Wakes Up" and was a British production featuring Barbara Gott, Moore Marriott and Elsa Lanchester who did Cockney sketches. Heralded by advertisements "THE TALKIES HAVE ARRIVED", "Mr Smith wakes Up" was enthusiastically received. It was described as differing greatly in improvement from the phonofilms, its synchronisation was excellent and the sound itself was perfectly audible. There were indeed only two defects - an unnaturally "tinny" tone to the voices and the absence of proper pauses for the audience's laughter.(iii) "Mr Smith wakes Up", though successful in South Africa, was in effect an experimental "short"; but its exhibition by Kinemas was a decided advantage. Thereafter both African Theatres and Kinemas published the news of "Big Deals" in talkie films; but Kinemas' original precedence was maintaine

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(i) The stage was thought by many to be doomed; others maintained that the sound film was but a transient phase of the cinema and that th silent film would persist indefinitely; while many, more observant commentators applauded the innovation inasmuch as it would call fo greater intelligence in acting and the infusion of a more convincing degree of reality.

(ii) By April 1929, it was known that African Theatres had booked several American talkies for exhibition in South Africa though the maintained (6) that they would show none that was not already "an unqualified success", thus neatly absolving themselves from any possible accusation of dilatoriness. In July 1929, Kinemas announced their purchase of the first outstanding talkie successes,includ ing "Syncopation" and "Rio Rita". By that time, they had already shown a "long length talkie" and forestalled African Theatres by more than three months.

(iii) In Johannesburg, the first audience of "Mr Smith wakes Up" clapped at great length and then paused as if waiting for the actors to appear. In Cape Town (where the film was first shown at the Astoria, Woodstock on the 26th August 1929), "in many instance the audience's laughter was so uncontrollable as to drown subse-

and they could fairly claim to have introduced talkies to South Africa Popular excitement concerning the soon arrival of these films now reached a high pitch. The London Times drew attention on 24th July I929 (8) to the fact that African Films Ltd had bought the whole outpu of silent and sound films of British International Pictures for the coming year for distribution in South Africa. The price paid for "Blackmail" was said to be the biggest ever paid for a film bought for the Union.(i) A month later it was announced that Kinemas had bought the entire output of the British and Dominion Film Corporation for several years - a transaction which was again claimed to be the gx biggest deal in British films ever booked for the Union. Kinemas were also said to have bought the output of the American firm F.B.C. amounting to £500,000.

Anticipation having now reached a great height, on the I3th September I929, Kinemas showed at the Astoria in Johannesburg the first feature-length talkie to be shown in South Africa - "Syncopation", a musical film featuring Morton Downey (a type of 'crooner"), Leon Barte, Bert Glennon, Mackenzie Ward and Barbara Bennett.(ii) Rapturously received, "Syncopation" ran for a month or 53 consecutive performances in Johannesburg. Thereafter Kinemas continuously showed talkies at the Astoria. Ten weeks after this triumphal inauguration, African Theatres commenced showing talkies at the Bijou with "The Singing Fool" starring Al Jolson and little Davy Lee. By that time, Kinemas had already shown four talkies including the highly-successful "High Treason"(9); but African Theatres could claim to having played a trump card in showing the first Mickey Mouse silent cartoon which proved an instant success and inaugurated a "craze". Kinemas' priority was repeated elsewhere

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quent speech. Every sound was faithfully registered and at certain moments, the audience was so quiet that the proverbial dropped pin could have been heard. At other times, the audience was so carried away that the outbursts of applause lasted many moments."

(i) "Blackmail" was, however, not the first British feature-length talkie to be shown in South Africa - Kinemas showed "High Treason" (9) before African Theatres could show "Blackmail".

(ii) Of incidental interest is the fact that the South African-born Ian Hunter was the "villain" of "Syncopation".
"Syncopated" music was a current "craze" and inspired many jokes of which the most widely-circulated had to do with the dipsomaniac who, on consulting his doctor, advised his wife that he had been told he was suffering from "syncopation - an erratic progress from bar to bar".

the talkies always been acclaimed with great popular interest.(i) In Cape Town, Kinemas were at a decided disadvantage through their major cinema, the Astoria, being at Woodstock. African Theatres, on the other hand, opened "Africa's New Wonder Theatre", the Alhambra with "The Singing Fool" on the 2nd December 1929. This was the Union's first "atmospheric" theatre and was then one of the most lavishly equipped and decorated theatres in the world.(ii) In Durban, the competition over talkies was neatly exploited by Kinemas which, while African Theatres continuously advertised that their first talkie "Lucky Boy" would open at Princes on Monday the 25th November, simultaneously advertised "Keep Saturday (23rd) for King's" and on that date suddenly published a full-column advertisement of "High Treason" peppered with slogans such as "Kinemas First with the Latest", "Kinemas Keep Faith with the Public"- No Increase in Prices", etc etc. African Theatres

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(i) The following chronicles give the appearances of the first talkies
JOHANNESBURG - 1929
6th July - "Mr Smith Wakes Up" (Kinemas)
13th September - "Syncopation" (Kinemas)
11th October - "The Wrecker" (not 100% talkie - Kinemas)
21st October - "High Treason" (Kinemas)
24th November - "Blockade" (Kinemas)
25th November - "The Singing Fool" (African Theatres)
30th November - "Street Girl" (Kinemas)
16th December - "Blackmail" (African Theatres)
23rd December - "Lucky Boy" (African Theatres)
25th December - "Half Marriage" (Kinemas)
30th December - "The Donovan Affair" (African Theatres)
13th January 1930 - "Rio Rita" (Kinemas)
CAPE TOWN - 1929
26th August - "Mr Smith Wakes Up" (Kinemas)
22nd November - "High Treason" (Kinemas)
2nd December - "The Singing Fool" (African Theatres)
6th December - "Street Girl" (Kinemas)
16th December - "In Old Arizona" (African Theatres)
"Syncopation" (Kinemas)
30th December - "My Man" (African Theatres)
"Blockade" (Kinemas)
DURBAN - 1929
23rd November - "High Treason" (Kinemas)
25th November - "Lucky Boy" (African Theatres)
9th December - "Blockade" (Kinemas)
16th December - "Syncopation" (Kinemas)
"The Singing Fool" (African Theatres)
27th December - "Love in a Desert" (Kinemas)
"Blackmail" (African Theatres)

(ii) The event was properly celebrated with ceremony. A distinguished audience filled the theatre; the performance began with Gladys Daniels' singing the National Anthem; there followed a fanfare of trumpets arranged by Bandmaster Rendle V.C.; the Mayor of Cape Town the Rev.A.J.B.Lewis introduced the Administrator of the Cape Province, Mr J.H. Conradie who performed the opening ceremony; and the programme began. "The Singing Fool" did not make much impression (its "sobstuff" evoked much contumelious comment) and it ran for less than two weeks which, by Kinemas standards, was not long (though ofcourse the capacity of the Alhambra far exceeded any Kinemas). Misadventure befell the performances and once "The Singing Fool" went silent. The attractions of the new theatre however (particularly its Spanish decoration, the twinkling stars and clouds moving across the sky together with the "mighty Wurlitzer" played by Mr

had advertised an increase in admission owing to the expense of installing talkie apparatus, importing sound-films, etc.(i)

Meanwhile despite the expense of wiring theatres during a period of impending financial depression, both companies went ahead with their programmes of expansion. In November, Kinemas opened their IC0th cinema and by December, their circuit was alleged to number I06. African Theatres were equally active and opened numerous theatres throughout the Union in addition to their building activities. When Mr Schlesinger returned to the Union early in December 1929 after a visit overseas lasting nine months, he announced a still more comprehensive plan of development. Drastic depression conditions intervened however and many projects had to be abandonned. At this time, many rumours of amalgamation between Kinemas and African Theatres were current and were strenuously denied by both sides.(ii) Presiding at a company meeting of Kinemas, Colonel Donaldson stated (IO) - "I wish to contradict a

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(i) The occasion was used for a remarkable display of bias on the part of The Natal Mercury which specially commissioned three critics (one a woman) to review "Lucky Boy", their reports being most adverse while "High Treason" received ecstatic praise. At a later date, "Eaton" remarked that how "Lucky Boy" came to be put on the screen at all passed his comprehension - though this comment was almost mild in comparison with the remarks made by the three original critics. Meanwhile irate correspondence was being published which both ridiculed and resented African Theatres' increase in admission prices. On the 2nd December, Princes reverted to silent films and the usual prices of admission. King's Kinema continued showing talkies at the usual rate. There is no doubt that African Theatres lost prestige and public confidence over this contretemps

(ii) On the 30th November 1929, The Cape Times published a cartoon by Wyndham Robinson showing an African Theatres commissionaire endeavouring to induce a little boy in a kilt sailor suit with "Kinemas" on his hatband to come into a cinema to see Al Jolson in "The Singing Fool" (with which the Alhambra Kinemas was to be opened on the 2nd December). Below was printed :

Al (of African Theatres) :
"You're my dearest prize, Sonny Boy,
Lent from out the skies, Sonny Boy,
Let me hold you nearer,
But don't grow any dearer
For I love you so, Sonny Boy."
Sonny Boy (Kinemas) :
"I wonder...."

The fact that this cartoon was published indicates to some extent the interest which the conflict between the two organisations had aroused. The reference to "don't grow any dearer" appeared to imply that Kinemas had once stated a price and subsequently raised it.

persistent rumour which credits another entertainment concern or its chairman with holding a controlling or any interest in this company. I deny this absolutely and in toto; and state that the control is entirel in the hands of your directors who have investments amounting to well over £200,000....."(i)

Both organisations were now duplicating high expenditure on the purchasings of sites, the building of large cinemas, the importation of supplies of machinery, films, posters and other equipment as well as the installation of electric plant and talkie apparatus. African Theatres had the advantage of vested resources and accumulated financial reserves but as the depression steadily intensified and public patronage concomitantly declined, both organisations found it increasingly difficult to continue with their planned development.(ii) Mr Schlesinger announced the suspension of some activities and, similar stringency afflicting Kinemas, in May 1930 the company found it

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(i) At this time, Kinemas were applying for an interdict against African Theatres Ltd and African Talking Pictures Ltd to restrain them from using the apparatus and exhibiting any of the films covered by the de Forest inventions at the Bijou Theatre in Johannesburg or elsewhere within the jurisdiction of the Witwatersrand division of the Supreme Court.

(ii) In February 1930, it was reported in the Press that British Talking Pictures Ltd which had been formed in 1928 with a capital of £500,000 to acquire the de Forest phonofilm patents, had gone into liquidation. Its 5/- shares now had a purely nominal market price of 6d. It was recalled that Mr Schlesinger had become a director of the company in September 1927 (see Page 277) and, despite the fact that he had disposed of his holdings some time previously, the Cape Times used the news as a peg on which to hang various derogatory remarks concerning the activities of other of Schlesinger's interests. It pointed out, for instance, that construction work had ceased on the new African Theatres super-cinema, the Capitol in Pretoria. Mr Schlesinger was reported as having said (II) - "Owing to the present economic condition of the country, I think it unwise to push ahead with our new theatres at present and we do not propose to resume building operations until the country has recovered and the economic conditions of the Union are in a more settled state. On the point whether the theatrical business feels the present depression very severely, I can only refer you to our balance sheet for the year just ended when you will see that we had an exceedingly good year and I must say, in spite of the present lull, business is keeping up wonderfully well....We may look forward to a turn of the tide round about September." The Cape Times concluded by pointing out that "there was a sharp slump last week in the shares of African Theatres and African Films which touched 19/- and 21/3d respectively though for the past three years, African Theatres have paid dividends of 13%, 24% and 14% respectively while African Films have paid 15%, 16% and 18% respectively. In November last, African Theatres shares changed hands at 36/- and African Films were sold last month at 27/6d. The shares rallied quickly however and today both are quoted at about 23/- buyers."

necessary to make a further appeal to the public for funds. This step caused a Johannesburg weekly "The Sjambok" to publish a sensationally libellous article on the administration of Kinemas (1), an incident

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(1) During 1928, a weekly paper entitled "The Sjambok" under the editorship of the South African playwright and journalist Stephen Black (who during 1928 and 1929 toured a South African dramatic company under the aegis of African Theatres) was published in Johannesburg and distributed throughout the Union. Its sub-title was "A Weekly Critical Paper for the Spreading of Public Truth" and its contents, though blatantly sensational, purported to expose prevalent evils in the furtherance of public welfare.

In its issue of the 24th March 1929 (or ten weeks after Kinemas' first issue of shares for public subscription - see Page 282), "The Sjambok" published a remarkable front-page artiel in which it alleged that Mr Sydney Hayden, London director of Kinemas, had changed his name from Sydney or Shlomen Heydenreich (for which "The Sjambok" demanded a reason) and that the activities of Kinemas as a company administering public funds could not bear scrutiny. However vague its insinuations, this article was not calculated to inspire public confidence in Kinemas. No direct action however was immediately taken and the matter was apparently ignored by those concerned.

In its issue immediately following Kinemas appeal for public funds of May 1930, "The Sjambok" published a three page article in which, apropos Kinemas' latest creation of a trust fund administered by Colonel Donaldson and the well-known Johannesburg auditor Alexander Aiken, it alleged that money previously subscribed by the public had been misused and called as witness the fact that the Johannesburg Plaza which was to have been built in 1927 had not as yet showed signs of existence. Various other libellous statements and insinuations were made, the contents and tone of the article being deliberately calculated to cast spurious aspersion at Kinemas and to discredit their activities.(1a) Widely read by the sensation-seeking public, "The Sjambok" undoubtedly achieved a great deal of publicity in other quarters as well through this attack. As far as the general public was concerned however, no retaliation was made and the paper continued to appear weekly and showed every sign of continuing indefinitely.

Early in 1931 (nine months after the publication of the offending article), Kinemas Ltd and its directors Sydney Hayden, David Heydenreich, Colonel James Donaldson and George Henry Dickson brought libel actions against Union Periodicals Ltd (proprietors of "The Sjambok"), Stephen Black (editor of "The Sjambok"), the Central News Agency (publishers), and the Technical Press (printers). The details of the transactions were never divulged but in accordance with a consent to judgment filed in the Rand Division of the Supreme Court, Mr Justice Greenberg made an order of court entailing the defendants paying the total costs, £1,500 to Kinemas Ltd, £1,500 to Sydney Hayden, £1,000 to David Heydenreich, £300 to Colonel Donaldson and £200 to George Henry Dickson as well as ordering them to publish an apology in 25 newspapers in the Union and Rhodesia, in London and New York. This apology was also to appear on Page 1 of the next issue of "The Sjambok" which was forbidden to mention any aspect of the transaction whatever. It was duly published on the cover of "The Sjambok" of the issue dated the 20th February 1931. The paper ceased publication a month later (20th March 1931) and Stephen Black, its editor, died in Yeoville, Johannesburg in August of the same year.

Despite the absence of outside publicity, "The Sjambok" affair with its widespread publication of apology created a minor sensation though the public knew only by rumour the underlying agencies which had precipitated one of the most disreputable incidents in the history of South African journalism.

which was homogeneous with the melodramatic atmosphere which continued to pervade the prevailing cinema competition and which was frequently sustained by mysterious misadventures such as the cutting of talkie wires ont ~~the~~ opening nights, the strewing of cinema car-parks with tacks, interference with electrical apparatus and other acts of sabotage. On the other hand, there were by no means so many overt signs of competition (such as the rival showing of similar films on "The Rat" - "The Rat" basis) and the public might legitimately have assumed by the end of 1930 that the state of competition would persist indefinitely. Theprevailing depression preventedn either organisation from showing spectacular signs of development other than the periodical exhibition of outstanding films and the sole event of any prominence was Mr Isaac Ochberg's (a well-known financier) joining Kinemas' board of Directors in October 1930.

Towards the end of 1930, both organisations were confronted with the appearance of outside competition when Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, through their agent Carl J. Conin, commenced the establishment of a film distributing agency in Johannesburg. "We are here, not to fight any existing interests", said Conin in an interview (13), "but solely for the purpose of distributing our films south of the equator." The following year, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer went into active opposition to existing interests, constantly releasing news of the progress of its plans. The effect of this enterprise and the continuing depression did notnprevent both African Theatres and Kinemas from pursuing the extensive development which was to engage increased public patronage. In September 1931, African Theatres opened the palatial "atmospheric" theatre designed in "early Italian rennaissance style", the Capitol in Pretoria with "The City of Song" featuring Jan Kiepura, one of the first musical rather than vaudeville films.(i) In August 1931, Kinemas had opened the Plaza in Kimberley and in October they opened the Plaza in Johannesburg which in austerity and simplicity, marked a new departure in cinema architecture and decoration.(ii)

(i) The opening ceremony of the Capitol was performed by the Prime Minister, General Hertzog, who paid a striking tribute to Mr. Schlesinger's courage and initiative in riding the wave of depression and continuing to provide the public with first-class cinema entertainment.

(ii) The opening ceremony of the Plaza was performed by the Mayor of Johannesburg, Mr G.H. Nelson, the feature film being "Cimarron", an epic of the time.

The opening of these immense theatres had the significance both of prestige and of engaging public support of far larger dimensions than had been possible previously. The value of successful films had never been fully exploited in the small theatres in which they had had to be shown; but now both African Theatres and Kinemas continued development along these lines. Kinemas were engaged on many projects such as the exploitation of East Africa (whose limited population provided only a small market for films) and the building of a palatial Plaza at Durban. African Theatres, whose plans had been conceived far earlier and many of which had already been realised, needed a "main house" in Johannesburg and in April 1931, "Colosseum Buildings Ltd"with an authorised share capital of £150,000 divided into £1 shares (1) having been registered in Pretoria, by August 1931 tenders were invited for a mammoth "atmospheric" theatre in "old Roman Style" to be called the Colosseum in Commissioner Street, Johannesburg. The foundations of the Playhouse in Durban, another "atmospheric" theatre in "old Elizabethan style" were being excavated and a New His Majesty's in Johannesburg and a theatre in Bloemfontein were planned. These evidence of optimism in the face of depression betokened far-sighted planning, courage and confidence.

These activities tended to conceal from the public the bitter struggle between the organisations in their every aspect. Exorbitant prices were paid by each company, bidding against the other, for outstanding films. Public patronage, despite the attraction of new and palatial theatres, was very unevenly sustained. In the larger towns, it might be maintained at a reasonably remunerative rate by the constant provision of good and expensive films; but elsewhere it fluctuated considerably and many of the lesser "bioscopes" on both circuits barely covered expenses. Both organisations fought their way through the depression and, by the end of 1931, both appeared successfully to have survived. Kinemas was known to have had great difficulty in successfully opening the Johannesburg Plaza but, once effected, this capacious cinema furnished them with a steady source of revenue.It appeared therefore as if competition between the two organisations was to remain

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(1) The directors of Colosseum Buildings Ltd were I.W. Schlesinger and his associates W.C. Bullock, J.A. Macrae, W.F. White and Julian Schlesinger.

the status quo of the South African cinema industry with the possibility of further competition from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer if they succeeded in building their own theatres.(i) It was therefore a complete surprise to the public at large when it was announced in the Press on the 2nd December 1931 that African Theatres and Films Ltd had amalgamated with Kinemas Ltd.(ii)

The parallel development of the two organisations was in fact commercially impracticable. The fact that either organisation would go to great lengths to thwart the other was known overseas and exploited to the advantage of the production and distribution firms. Bidding against each other, African Films and Kinemas would raise the price of outstanding films to a point where payable returns were practically impossible. Secondly, competition in erecting cinemas was exhausting the resources of both organisations. Thirdly, competition had resulted in the opening of cinemas by both interests in dorps whose population could barely support one. Thirdly, under circumstances of economic stress, the importation of six distinct cinema programmes by both organisations for their competitive circuits was an unnecessary extravagance, three being sufficient for the total requirements. Fifthly the financial situation had become increasingly precarious and there was no immediate sign of its amelioration.

The merger was effected through the foundation of two new companies - "African Consolidated Theatres Ltd" and "African Consolidated Films Ltd" which controlled the merged film-exhibiting interests of Kinemas Ltd and African Theatres Ltd and the film-distributing interests of Kinemas Ltd and African Films Ltd respectively. African Consolidated Theatres Ltd was constituted as a purely administrative company and did not acquire either the theatres or the real estate properties of the two companies whose joint interests it controlled.

(i) The distribution of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer films through cinemas controlled by Mr Schlesinger's interests was effected by "Union Theatres Ltd" founded in October 1931, its policy being controlled by those interests.

(ii) Repeated rumours had been strenuously denied on both sides for some time and the supposed amalgamation had finally been dismissed by general public opinion as improbable. When it occurred, it came as a complete surprise both to the public and to the staffs of both concerns. The precise circumstances of the amalgamation were never made public and remained a perpetual source of speculation.

It was granted leases of all the cinemas and theatres belonging to both circuits (i) while Kinemas contributed not only its circuit of cinemas and its film distributing agency but a nascent film production organisation. The merger was one of the biggest business deals transacted in South Africa.(ii)

The amalgamation was at first regarded with real regret by the general public. Competition had provided cinema entertainment of an unprecedentedly high order as well as innovations and variety which were previously impossible. Some considered that the bonds of "monopoly" would clamp film entertainment within rigid limits and that the public would become passive victims of dictatorial caprice while others felt that the combining of resources would ensure progressive development. (iii) The fact remained that continued competition had proved impossible and that had it been pursued, to the extinction of one party, the public would have suffered through cinema entertainment being left in the control of an exhausted survivor. There was the additional possibility that a third and foreign protagonist might have capitalised on the situation and advantageously intruded on the national entertainment industry.

(i) The agreement also involved the following interests controlled by Mr Schlesinger :
African Amusement Parks Ltd
African Film Productions Ltd
African Talking Pictures Ltd
Durban Theatres Ltd (Prince's Cinema)
Empire Buildings Ltd (later the Johannesburg Empire and offices)
Goldreich Buildings Ltd (His Majesty's Theatre and Building, Jhburg)
Johannesburg Estate Co. Ltd (Palladium Theatre - sold in 1938)
Oudtshoorn Theatre Co. Ltd
Port Elizabeth Theatre and Opera Co. Ltd.
Pretoria Theatre Co. Ltd
Colosseum Theatres Ltd
African Caterers Ltd
Etc etc

(ii) The amalgamation in no way affected the individual existence of Kinemas Ltd which, to the mystification of the public unaware of the terms of the agreement, continued to issue company reports to the Press manifesting independent existence.

(iii) In a sub-leader soon after the news of the amalgamation (14), the Natal Mercury wrote - "There may be many who will lament the passing of a healthy rivalry and the establishment once again of a virtual monopoly of entertainment in this country. At the same time South Africa has long owed "The Little Man"(Schlesinger) a debt of gratitude for the high standard which African Theatres Ltd had already set before others attempted to exploit the field he was busy developing and it is difficult to point to any abuse of the monopoly he once held."
(These sentiments were directly at variance to those expressed by the Natal Mercury at other times - see Page 258 (1))

References : CHAPTER X

(I) Natal Mercury - 20th April I927

(2) The Star - Ist July I927

(3) The Star - I8th August I927

(4) The Star - 20th October I928

(5) Cape Times - 23rd October I928

(6) Natal Mercury - 24th April I929

(7) Cape Times - 26th August I929

(8) The Star - 24th July I929

(9) Cape Times - I939 "Do you remember this Film(High Treason)" - T.G.

(I0) The Star - 2nd January I930

(II) Cape Times - 20th February I930

(I2) The Sjambok - 9th May I930

(I3) The Star - 8th December I930

(I4) Natal Mercury - 5th December I93I

CHAPTER XI

The Impact of the Sound Film and the "Atmospheric" Theatre

1927-1931

CHAPTER XI

The Impact of the Sound Film and the "Atmospheric" Theatre

I927-I93I

(An appendix at the end of this chapter details the outstanding films shown each year.)

Whether a spontaneous phase of development or inspired by the approaching competition of "talkies", the silent film during this perio improved appreciably in concept and technique. The signs of increased imagination and finesse which had been remarkable in a growing number of films during the post-war years now came to characterise a large number of productions. African Films held the South African rights for most of the best American firms. Kinemas, capitalising on the prevalent aspersion on American films and the publicity given the British industry, mage a policy of importing British films (i) and during I927 particularly, impressed the public with the idea that the cinema did not consist solely of American productions. At the same time, African Theatres showed a number of remarkable German films made by UFA (ii) and several singularly imaginative American productions (iii). The impending competition of talkies overseas impelled producers to resort to new methods of maintaining public patronage of silent films. The appeal of "glamour"(exemplified in "sheiks", "vamps" and "sirens") had been exhausted; but a new attraction was discovered (iv) by Hollywood in "sex-appeal". "It", the famous film featuring Clara Bow, did not reach South Africa until I928; but long before then, "sex appeal" had begun tom characterise a great many American films shown in the Union, bringing the cinema into further disrepute. The prevalent conception of "sex appeal" was the portrayal of suggestive near-nudity for which the "bathing girl" (and sometimes the "chorus girl") were ideally suited. There was no attempt to deny or conceal the emphasis on erotic stimulat

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(i) Many British films shown by Kinemas were of inferior quality but a few, such as the famous "Rat" series featuring Ivor Novello, proved very popular.

(ii) The UFA productions was extraordinarily imaginative and capably produced, outstanding examples being the futuristic "Metropolis" with Brigitte Helm and "The Spy", "The Wonderful Lie" and other films in which this star featured.

(iii) These American films included "The Lost World" in which, through painstaking photography, prehistoric animals were reconstructed and made to move naturally; "The Iron Horse", a super-Western on documentary lines; and "He who gets Slapped", an imaginatively handled tragedy featuring Lon Chaney.

(iv) "Sex Appeal" or "It" was largely contrived by Elinor Glynn, the famous novelist, who found an able disciple in the popular film sta Clara Bow and many later imitators.

ion and though "sex appeal" began as a semi-humorous and negligible quality of the cinema, its first success led producers to exploit it without limit or scruple and once again films began to wear "a pornographic embroidery" to which objection was actively taken.(i) "Sex appeal" continued a pronounced feature of the South African cinema for several years and though the films themselves were generall innocuous, their method of advertising in a country of mixed population continued to excite unfavourable comment and to move editors to the writing of sub-leading articles.(ii)

The growing incidence of "sex appeal" films from I927 onwards was countered by the variety and originality of the films whose showing in South Africa had been made possible by intense competition. During I928, British films came into increased prominence through Kinemas showing them consistently and African Theatres frequently;but they were obershadowed by the Continental productions which both companies now showed with consistent frequency. These films emanated from France, Germany and Italy but the German, especially the UFA productions, were usually the most successful.(iii) In point of

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(i) On the 26th November I927, the body of Irene Kanthack, a member o a well-known Johannesburg family, was found in a plantation at the Zoo Park. Her murder by an unknown personexcited nationwide interest and a great local outcry against the inadequacy of the police force, prevalent menaces to unaccompanied women such as th "gutter sheik", the "kerb-crawler", etc and other social evils. The hut of one of the suspected (and subsequently released) natives was found to contain photographs of nude white women whic caused a spate of letters to the Press. Several of these expresse no surprise at this revelation since cinema posters of a suggestive nature were exhibited outside cinemas and daily paraded through the streets, sometimes on lorries driven by natives. Thes posters frequently bore pictures of semi-nude white women in "artistic" (or abandonned) postures. Earnest pleas for the institution of a censorship of posters as well as of films invariably accompanied these protests.

(ii) Twice during I930 and I93I, the Maritzburg Municipal Council Film Censorship Committee ordered the covering of a scantily-clad figure of a white woman on a film poster. On both occasions, the cinema manager had a "bathing costume" painted over it. Similar cases were reported from elsewhere and the demand for an adequate censorship in volume. In I930, Dr Malan had already introduced the Entertainments (Censorship) Bill and by the time it was passe (during I93I) "sex appeal", so far from becoming effete, had almost dominated American film production.

(iii) Among the UFA films were "Metropolis" (an amazingly imaginative film which proved immensely popular), "Koenigsmark", "The Student of Prague" with Conrad Veidt and "The Way of All Flesh" with Emil Jannings in I928; "The Loves of Jeanne Ney" and"The Wonderful Lie with Brigitte Helm, "The Spy" and "The Last Command" with Emil Jannings in I929. The advent of the sound film naturally disqualified the continued showing of these excellent foreign films. Other outstanding films of I929 were the Indian "Shiraz", the Russian "Mother", "Simba" - a Martin-Johnson African documentary, and "Wings", the first fiction film dealing with the Air Force of the Great War, produced with unusual sensitiveness.

originality and excellence, the South African cinema reached its apogee in 1929 when, in addition to the British, American and Continental films of exceptional artistry and imagination, the first full-length talkies were shown. These first sound-films were remarkably imaginative but as the demand for talkies increased, feature films became shoddy and banal.

The phonofilms which, early in 1927, heralded the arrival of talkies two years later, were known to a comparatively small proportion of the South African public. With their then imperfection and unreliable performance, it was not practicable for Kinemas to instal their special and expensive apparatus in the many small cinemas that comprised their first circuit. Phonofilms therefore were shown only at one or two of the larger houses, such as the Astorias in Johannesburg and Woodstock, and were manifestly imperfect.(i) The South African public, under the influence of radio and other modern tendencies, were intoxicated by noise and the intense excitement produced overseas by the increased showing of talkies inspired excited anticipation throughout the Union.(ii

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(i) The quality of the sound which was generally perfectly synchronised with action was distorted in increasing its volume to reach every member of the audience, giving it a metallic quality which endowed phonofilms with the nature of a mechanical marvel rather than a definite departure in entertainment. (The problem of amplification was exactly paralleled in radio.)

Talkies were not a refinement of Lee de Forest's phonofilms. Several other inventors were engaged on the problem (as early as 1916, Emile Lauste had produced practicable talkies based on the modern technique in England) and at the beginning of 1926, the Bell Telephone Company in America effected a synchronisation of sight and sound through the Vitaphone. This apparatus was developed with singular courage and in the face of great difficulty by Warner Brothers, the well-known American film producers. "Cependant", say Bardèche and Brasillach (I), "le temps travaillait pour les frères. Le public que la T.S.F. avait intoxiqué de bruit, sentait confusément que le bruit était maintenant inseparable de tous ses divertissements." There was no stopping the progress of development in sound.

In 1927, William Fox exploited another sound mechanism or "Movietone" and, at the end of the year, Fox and Warners in concert produced "The Jazz Singer" with Al Jolson. This film created a furore overseas where every effort was made to ensure the perfection of its sound; but it proved a very mediocre success when shown in South African by African Theatres in 1928. Development continued and henceforward talkies were produced with astonishing rapidity and shown extensively in England and America.(2) Within a short time, the merits of "sound-track" recording on the film itself disposed of the earlier claims of disc-recording on the gramaphone principle.

(ii) By the end of 1928, every type of well-known figure had jeopardised their reputation by forecasting the probable effects of talkies and their possible failure to achieve anything more than transient popularity. Long before talkies were shown in South Africa, speculation on their effect on the theatre was filling columns in the Union Press.

During the first half of 1929, expectation rose to greater heights and was enhanced by the return of overseas visitors who had seen and heard the first full-length talkie feature films in London and elsewhere. In September 1929, Kinemas showed "Syncopation" in Johannesburg and shortly afterwards, talkies were shown in the largest towns throughout the Union.(i)

Apart from one or two hastily-produced musical films such as "Lucky Boy" and the quasi-talkie "The Wrecker" in which only loud noises were reproduced, South Africa's first talkies exhibited remarkable range and imagination. "High Treason", Pemberton Billiggs' play of life in 1940, rivalled the silent "Metropolis" in fantastic futurism; "The Singing Fool" was a cloying mass of sentiment; "Blackmail", a brilliant British production whose excellent voices and x accents greatly impressed Union audiences, was a straight drama excelled only by "The Donovan Affair"; "Rio Rita", last of the first memorable cycle of talkie films, was a musical revue which, apart from making the first talkie stars out of Bebe Daniels, John Boles, Wheeler and Wolsey, proved that the talkie might have charm as well as raucousness. Elsewhere than Johannesburg, this extraordinary diversity of films appeared before audiences within eight or ten weeks. Each one represented an entirely different technique and an entirely new possibility for the screen. The imperfections that marred most of them (ii) were almost completely cancelled by their outstanding novelty(iii) Sound alone could not dull an audience's discrimination (as the rapid failure of the first shoddy productions soon proved); but sound employed in themes which would have been imaginative even on the silent screen, produced an effect almost of stupefaction.

Immense crowds flocked to see the first sound films despite the prevalent depression. Typical of Press reports of the time is the

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(i) See Page 285 et sequitur.

(ii) The sound was seldom "natural". When Jameson Thomas laid his head on a silken pillow in "High Treason", there was a loud crackle.

(iii) Many members of these early audiences remember certain of the first talkies as immensely impressive without retaining the slightest recollection of their subject or contents. This reaction obtained only in the case of the exceptional films (such as "High Treason") and it is significant that the better talkies were early detected and the poorer played only to short seasons.

following (3) :

CAPE TOWN RUSHES TO THE TALKIES

Astoria finds Difficulty with the Crowd

"...."The Donovan Affair" is filling the Alhambra while "Woman to Woman" caused a complete hold-up of pedstrian traffic outside the Astoria on Tuesday night. The crowd was so great that the police were kept busy controlling it. More than once it looked as though it might be impossible to do this as the queues got out of hand. A rush was mad for the circle entrance at one moment but things sorted themselves out and, a little late, the performance was able to begin."

On the one hand, the public was anxious to see this new development; on the other, it was slightly prejudiced against it. Steeped in the silent cinema for over thirty years, audiences were ready to regard with distrust any fundamental alteration. Accordingly immediate public reaction in different places varied in accordance with the quality of the first talkies shown. If they were poor (as in Durban), a soon end was prophesied for the sound film and perennial prosperity for the "art" of the silent. If they were good, the silent cinema, the theatre, the opera, vaudeville, even the newspapers were thought to be doomed. Some of the first talkies gave ample grounds for the belief that the sound film was a monstrosity which the public would not long suffer to have visited upon it. The considerable body of opinion which conceded but transient existence to the sound film might reasonably have maintained much longer had it not been for the soon showing of the record-breaking "Rio Rita",(1) which probably dissipated more doubts that any other of the early talkies. Produced entirely in Technicolor and combining attractive music with comic dialogue (the "wisecrack" made its first appearance and successfully competed with the custard-pie-throwing slapstick of the silent screen), "Rio Rita" captivated its audiences. People who had been to the "bioscope" only once or twice in their lives, journeyed to the Astoria at Woodstock, Cape alone, from miles around to see it during a season of several weeks. In Johannesburg it ran for nearly three months or 135 performances. After "Rick Rita", the public (including large numbers of people who resented the disappearance of the "restful atmosphere of the

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(1) "Rio Rita" is generally supposed to be the first talkie feature film to have been shown in South Africa. It was actually the eleventh and opened in Johannesburg in January 1931.

bioscope" were convinced that the talkies had come to stay.

One of the outstanding features of the first sound films was that they did not merely apply sound to previously silent themes but immediately explored avenues of their own. One of the earliest manifestations of individual development was the appearance in South Africa of the first "Silly Symphonies" and other Walt Disney sound cartoons.which were first shown by African Theatres in Johannesburg on the 25th November 1929 in the programme supporting "The Singing Fool" and made an immediate impression. Animated cartoons had long been a feature of the "bioscope" but with sound and Disney's peculiar genius they developed a new artistry and a new appeal. The emotional outlet for audiences provided by the irascible Donald Duck, the perpetually triumphant Pop-Eye and other cartoon characters was of quite different genre to the amusement caused by the antics of the silent Mutt and Jeff, Felix the Cat, Bonzo, etc.(1)

The first sound feature films naturally took advantage of existing routines and involved either vaudeville items or current musical successes. The climax of this movement was reached in "The King of Jazz"(1930) starring Paul Whiteman and his orchestra in which trick photography in scenes such as one showing Whiteman with his entire orchestra playing on the palm of his hand, entranced South African audiences. "The Desert Song" with John Boles and "The Vagabond King" which first introduced Jeanette Macdonald to South African audiences (1930) made use of known successes. More original themes were then employed and the musical comedy-drama resulted. By 1931,this type of film ("The Love Parade", "The Love Waltz", "The Big Pond", Broadway Melody" etc) had become a definite and extremely popular feature of talkies. Finally there appeared the "straight" or non-comic musical film in which first-class artists such as Jan Kiepura, Lawrence Tibbett, Lily Pons etc performed.

Dramatically the talkies admitted no limitations, making classification impossible. The sole identifiable element in a hetero-

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(1) Subsequently the cartoon developed into an artistic medium, entirely dispensing with caricature. The application of colour and stereoscopic effect permitted the production of "shorts" (such as M-G-M's "The Blue Danube" shown in South Africa in 1940) with no vestige of plot or sustaining action. Designed solely to delight the eye and charm the imagination with sound and concept, these films were an entirely new and successful departure. Another development was the full-length cartoon which first appeared in 1938 in Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs".

geneity of production was the "horror" film which began with "Dracula" in 1931 and continued desultorily through the "Frankenstein" series thereafter. The advent of sound revitalised the cinema and gave it unbounded range of expression. For the first few years of their existence and before their technique could become standardised, every possibility of production was explored and a number of remarkably forthright and imaginative films were shown in South Africa. The novelty of sound and the fact that epics such as "All Quiet on the Western Front" could be put on the screen, were sufficient to attract audiences. Subsequently when the public learnt to declare its likes and dislikes, producers invented "box-office appeal" as an excuse for vitiating features which crept into production. In the beginning however, courage, originality and imagination distinguished talkie films and, though transient tendencies, served to establish the cinema in its new prestige.

In South Africa, the effect was enhanced by the simultaneous appearance of the first "atmospheric" theatres. These palatial cinemas (i) endowed the showing of films with a wonder surpassing any they had previously possessed and their combination with the sound-film produced an effect almost of anaesthesia. The extravagant luxuriance of some of the last silent films had given audiences a pleasantly vicarious satisfaction. Now there was nothing vicarious in their reactions - they walked on thick-piled carpets, they sat in richly-upholstered arm-chairs, they beheld luxuriant and colourful decorations and they reclined at ease to regard not only the screen but twinkling stars in the sky-ceiling and clouds (and sometimes aeroplanes) rolling majestically by. Furthermore they were ushered to their seats by a small army of svelte maidens dressed in buckled shoes silk stockings, tight satin knee-breeches and brightly-coloured monkey jackets.(ii) Outside the auditorium, there were other innovations -

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(i) South Africa's remarkable "atmospheric" theatres were entirely due to the enterprise of African Theatres in sending their architect J. Rogers Cooke to the United States in 1927 to study their design. The opening of these extravagantly luxurious theatres (the Alhambra Cape Town; the Playhouse, Durban; the Capitol, Pretoria; etc etc) set an extremely high standard in cinema architecture which all succeeding enterprises had to parallel to make any impression.

(ii) The appearance of the first uniformed usherettes conforming to the decor of atmospheric theatres created a considerable sensation and did much to maintain the prestige ~~and~~ of the theatres and the wonder of the public.

wide palm-decorated vestibules, spacious marble staircases, balustrade galleries hung with works of art (i) and, with a special appeal, "cosmetic rooms".(ii) Finally there was the Wurlitzer organ whose immense and booming sonority struck awe and wonder into the hearts of its first audiences.(iii)

The "atmospheric" theatre (iv) was calculated to inspire its audience with a feeling of awe and respect for the cinema but in South Africa, it exceeded this purpose. Immensity and magnificence heightened the stupefaction into which the public was wont to fall on entering a "bioscope". In the course of twenty years, the "bioscope" had become a public institution into which people regularly wandered, sat down and endured manifold discomforts for the sake of two hours' abandonment to a world of fantasy. Its perennial attraction lay in a soporific quality which the droning of its orchestra, the frenzy of its films and the camaraderie of its audiences perpetually endeared to the public. All this was destroyed on the advent of talkies. The restful intimacy of the "bioscope" gave way to the overpowering magnificence of the "atmospheric" theatre and where audiences had once gazed with semi-humorous concern at melodramatic action on the silent screen, now they felt small and stupefied by a crushing immensity which rendered them proportionately impressionable to the sound film and less susceptible to its meretriciousness.

This effect of the advent of talkies was not immediately widespread. Sound films appeared under circumstances of unparalleled magnificence in most of the big towns; but elsewhere the public had to wait for months (and sometimes years) before new cinemas were built or old theatres wired. Thousands of people were forced to go to town to

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(i) In the Metro Theatre in Johannesburg particularly, excellent reproductions of the French Impressionists and still-life studies were hung.

(ii) Long a disreputable feature of the "bioscope", the ordinary Ladies Cloakroom disappeared from big cinemas and the excellently-appointed "Cosmetic Room" took its place. Its appeal to feminine members of audiences was at first enormous and it undoubtedly helped to improve conditions in smaller cinemas.

(iii) The Colosseum Cinema in Johannesburg was exceptional in possessing a large orchestra.

(iv) The building of "atmospheric" theatres throughout the country was followed by the building of equally immense though less extravagant cinema theatres such as the chain of Plazas and Metros, the Cape Town Colosseum (1939), the Johannesburg Twentieth Century (1940) etc whose decoration and design was designed to convey the modern atmosphere. The standard had been set very high and resulted in South Africa's possessing some of the finest theatres in the world

behold the current sensation and these special circumstances alone served to impress them with the wonders of the sound film. In time, talkies penetrated well into the country and the full effects of their competition with the "bioscope" appeared in the disappearance of the small orchestras which were indispensable to the "flicks" and, in the remoter areas where the populations were not sufficiently large to support the installation of apparatus, the appearance of "talkie vans" which contrived sound reproduction in unequipped halls. In the country the silent "bioscope" took some time to disappear (a market had to be found for the remaining stocks of silent films); but the "intoxication with noise" produced by the widespread ownership of wireless soon made every kind of audience discontented with the silent film and before long, the country public would rather motor from ten to twenty or more miles to town to see a talkie than patronise the local silent "bioscope".

In the towns, the immediate public reaction had been a rush to see talkies and a considerable division of opinion thereafter dependent on the quality of the films first shown.(i) As soon as sound films became an institution, one or two pronounced effects were manifested.

(i) Almost every newspaper in the Union at once appealed to its readers to send in their opinions on the future of sound films. The results were fairly evenly divided between prophesied doom for the silent film and prosperity for the improved talkie; and doom for the offensive talkie and prosperity for the "artistic" silent film. There was no immediate consensus of opinion in favour of the sound film - a fact which was not surprising under then circumstances of weird sound effects and variable synchronisation.

Later when it became apparent that the silent film could not withstand sound, there was a considerable body of reactionary opinion. The phonofilms themselves had raised rueful comment from confirmed "bioscope-goers". As early as 1927, many of them maintained that the pleasure of the film would cease to exist with the introduction of sound. The principal attraction of the silent film was precisely its silence and many of the moving and "beautiful" scenes it portrayed would be ruined by the intrusion of the human voice. Sound would inevitably destroy the "artistry" of the film and leaving nothing to the imagination, would dispense with all finesse and implication. It would, according to some champions of the "bioscope", be equivalent to putting a gramaphone behind an old master.

These theoretical considerations were amplified by many practical regrets when the first full-length talkies were shown. Thousands of people resented the passing of the "bioscope" and all that its fusty atmosphere implied. Gone was the soothing darkness, the droning orchestra or piano and the silent drama. In their place was the side-lit cinema and the raucous cackling noises of the talkie film, inescapable and all-pervasive. In the "bioscope", if the film were bad, one could listen pleasurably to the orchestra. In the cinema, there was no evading persistent noise - a noise of metallic music, American twang and crackling sound. Where previously audiences had sat in the restful atmosphere of the bioscope, now they sat, tense and unrelaxed, impotent victims of a cacophony of metallic sound.

Within a few weeks, British talkie production was swamped by American competition and by 1931, the South African talkie cinema was almost totally American. The rush to "cash in"on the successs of talkies inevitably resulted in shoddy production and, apart from a few outstanding films, talkies of the time were of very poor quality.Audiences complained bitterly of being not only bored but disgusted. The nasal twang of the voices grated unpleasantly, the language itself was often totally incomprehensible and the plots were of a nature to appeal only to American audiences, being either unintelligible or repellent to the local public. Yet people continued to flock to cinemas and dispassionat observers wondered how many of them realised that theatrical performances a tithe as bad would have been booed or hissed off the local stage.

The advent of the sound film was completely homogeneous with current mechanisation of public utility and acceleration of transport and communication. Button-pushing, knob- and switch-turning were fast becoming woven into the fabric of ordinary life and, with the mechanical efficiency and increased speed they implied, individual consciousness suffered a fundamental change. The tendency of time-saving electrical utilities, of the radio, the improved and easily-available motor car, and the aeroplane was to disturb mental equanimity and to inflict on every member of the public an uneasy and tensed frame of mind. Paradoxically the public remained unconscious of its unease and, so far from resenting further contributions to its lack of equanimity, welcomed them with enthusiasm. Caught up in a wave of mechanical efficiency which touched them as nearly in their homes (the electrical refrigerator, stove, radiator, the automatic telephone, the radio etc) as it affected them outside (the automatic lift, the robot, the trolley bus, the aeroplane, the electric train etc etc), and bludgeoned by ceaseless propaganda for the commercial use of modern invention, people were incapable of rejecting the further advances of mechanical ingenuity. Enthralled by mechanism, electricity, acceleration and sound, the public was far too fascinated to react other than passively or to appreciate the fundamental change in the social situation. Into this state of social consciousness, the talkie film perfectly fitted.

Stupefied by the circumstances of their first exhibition as much as they were hypnotised by current mechanical advance, the public flocked to talkies of insultingly poor quality. Where before, the

"bioscope" had provided a soporofic, an "escapist" distraction from increasingly trying social conditions, now the cinema, amply aided by the prevailing depression, provided an extension of precisely those conditions. The "escape" it offered was inherently fraudulent in that it was founded on precisely the same principles that disturbed public equanimity. The talkies, so far from assuaging fundamental public unease, merely accentuated it. Though this was perhaps the least obvious, it was the profoundest effect the advent of the sound film exercised on the public at large.

Its effects on children were not so soon apparent. The majority of children frequented the lesser bioscopes which were not converted for talkie projection for some months after their advent. In the meantime, children continued to suffer from the "demoralising" effect not so much of prevalent "sex-appeal" films but of sordid dramas depicting "nude and immoral life".(i) Much of the fantasy and unreality of the "bioscope" disappeared with the advent of talkies. The imposition of sound curbed emotional transports and improved the standard of acting considerably; but conversely, it intensified other aspects. The"horror' film, for instance, was made much more terrifying by the addition of sound. Secondly, there was a spate of war films ("All Quiet on the Western Front", "The Case of Sergeant Grischa" etc) in which the scream of wounded men and other horrifying sounds were faithfully recorded. Thirdly, there was, according to the British Board of Film Censors' report of 1931, "a tendency to produce films depicting a succession of extremely brutal incidents together with an unrelieved atmosphere of sordidness which is most objectionable", that is, films after the type of "The Blue Angel"(ii) which abounded at this time.

The additional impressiveness which sound conferred on films

(i) These fantastic silent films did not, in point of fact, have much effect except in particular cases. It was trenchantly observed by Dr F.G. Cawston of Durban early in 1931, for instance, that the "bioscope" had a pronouncedly pernicious effect on workless juveniles. Rendered particularly impressionable by being "at a loose end" and with nothing constructive to occupy their thoughts, unemployed youths sometimes accepted the suggestion of current silent films and resorted to crime. Though Dr Cawston emphatically asserted that "the educative value of the bioscope is about equal to the food value of alcohol"(4), it is possible that the effects he condemned might equally well have been produced by cheap literature and the yellow press.

(ii) "The Blue Angel" was imported by Kinemas in 1930 and was banned by the Cape Censor Board early in 1931. It featured Emil Jannings and made an international star of Marlene Dietrich, besides inaugurating a vogue for artistic films of sordid circumstances.

undoubtedly had a pernicious effect on children emotionally. Wherever horror or fear was inspired, the talkie emphasised its point beyond the resistance of impressionable children and ensuing nightmares, nervousness and chronic tension inspired parents and every kind of social welfare body to protest. On the other hand, the ultra-realism of the early talkies did not long persist and within a few months, apart from the abatement of horrifying films, children learnt to bend to the blast of current conditions and became accustomed to unprecedented demands on their emotions.

The imitative action which had always characterised child reaction to the phantasmagoria of the silent screen developed considerably with the sound film. The incorporation of American slang into both English and Afrikaans promptly began and with it, a marked slovenliness of speech. Children readily resorted to catch-words and slang phrases heard in the talkies rather than exerting themselves to find the correct words. Finally, the pronounced American accent and nasal twang (i)even if it were not consciously copied, did nothing to encourage correct pronunciation.

The advent of talkies, with its almost completely new constellation of "stars", also effected an intensification of "film fanaticism". Adolescents (ii) were particularly prone and now no longer content with photographs, autographs, screen papers and magazines, began to buy gramaphone records.(The sales of records of the music of "Rio Rita" alone rose to great heights.) The adulation of "sheiks" of previous days was now conferred on "whispering baritones", "blue-singers" and other purveyors of "jazz". The effect on younger children was the

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(i) Early sound-recording "picked-up" and amplified the peculiarities of American pronunciation. This effect was soon improved and in addition, for the purpose of ensuring an international market for their films, producers soon eliminated the more pronounced "Americanisms".

(ii) It is noteworthy in connection with the intensification of "film fanaticism that towards the end of 1930, a bogus film agent was tried and convicted in a Durban magistrate's court for fraudulently representing himself to be an Elstree talent scout recruiting film actresses. On the 10th December 1930, The Star published the following letter under the heading "British Company Warns South African Girls" - "We are informed that a certain gentleman is active in South Africa alleging himself to be a representative of Messrs British International Pictures Ltd and purporting to recruit young ladies for work in the Elstree Studios. We take the opportunity of asking you to warn your readers against this party since we have no direct representative in the territory of South Africa, and also to give due warning that we shall take action against any unauthorised person using this company's name".
In subsequent years, several instances were revealed of unscrupulous men posing as "talent scouts" and luring film-struck

emulation of the "gangster" (rather than the cowboy) type and the affectation of "toughness" etc. On the whole, talkies, in this as in most other respects, intensified the cinema's prevailing evils though in none except its effect on language, its inculcation of meretricious values and its maintenance of unease, could its effect be described as permanently pernicious.

On the nature of entertainment in general however, the sound film had a profound effect. The change in theatrical entertainment which the Great War and the succeeding disturbance of social equanimity had involved, had ensured a great popularisation of the cinema. While the theatre could resort to new methods of attracting the public such as the revue, the musical comedy and (a later development) the spectacular musical show, it maintained a precarious existence; but in time no further novelty could be found and audiences steadily declined. By 1928, the theatre in England had registered a record in depression and in South Africa, though apparently healthy, the theatre already showed signs of moribundity.(1) For years, its major support had been light musical shows and the incidence of dramatic presentations had steadily grown smaller. Its waning attraction was undoubtedly decreased still further by the advent of Kinemas and the extraordinary range and diversity of films which both their operations and the subsequent competitive activity contrived to produce. By 1927, theatrical entertainment had so far declined as to be very erratically sustained. African Theatres imported four dramatic companies ledy by Guy Bates Post and Dorothy Brunton, Arthur Bourchier, Percy Hutchison and Phyllis Neilson-Terry as well as a Yiddish company; but even a rivival of "Mercenary Mary", the production of a revue"TipToes" and the pantomime "Puss in Boots", and the sponsoring of the Royal Welsh Choir failed to produce much response in the public.

During 1928, renewed efforts was made to engage public patronage of the theatre and African Theatres imported some outstanding companies

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girls into their offices for indecent purposes.

(1) There is a tendency to ascribe the subsequent complete collapse of theatrical entertainment in South Africa to the influence of the cinema. This is totally erroneous. The South African theatre, like the theatre in England which had shown pronounced signs of decline before the advent of talkies, had been failing for some time. Incapable of assuaging public unease, it had been forced to abdicate in favour of the silent cinema which sui generis, was better suited for the situation. Talkies, bringing the very innovation which the theatre was incapable of producing, completed the process of warping audiences away from the theatre.

including Sybil Thorndike and Lewis Casson (in "St Joan" and "Medea"etc Zena Dare, Ben Webster and Dame May Whitty; the Macdona Players in Shaw plays (which significantly, did not repeat their previous success) Harry Green and Lee Kohlman; and M. Berman's Yiddish Company. Stephen Black leading a South African company also toured the country, continuing into 1929. African Theatres also presented the singer Joseph Hislop, the Steele-Payne Bellringers, Carter the Great, the revue "Queen High", the pantomime "The Sleeping Beauty" and several variety stars including Clive Maskelyne, Will Fyffe and Will Hay. This varied entertainment of high standard could not compete with the singular attraction of the British, Continental and American silent films now being shown by Kinemas and African Theatres. The initiative and unrelenting opposition shown by Kinemas tended to throw the cinema into a still more conspicuous and attractive position and the current discussion on the appearance of talkies overseas and their imminence in South Africa further contributed towards diverting attention from the theatre.

It became increasingly apparent that professional drama was no longer adapted to the needs of the times and public temper and that, despite the sustained confidence of African Theatres in occasionally presenting it, it would finally disappear. The growing realisation of this fact together with the long intervals separating the appearances of dramatic companies, inspired a remarkable development in amateur enterprise throughout the Union. Amateur dramatic and musical societie had existed almost since the theatre's appearance in South Africa but the activities of their members were inspired more "by the fun of the thing" than by any desire to maintain theatrical entertainment. The fatal menace to the professional theatre which steadily grew from 1927 onwards, inspired people throughout the Union with an almost religious fervour for the drama and where previously amateur performances had been organised in haphazard fashion, now purposeful societies were founded imbued with "the holy ideal of holding the torch of drama aloft".(1) Inasmuch as the commercial theatre declined and the cinema

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(1) During 1928, the Johannesburg Repertory Players, one of the best-known and most capable of such societies, was founded.

prospered, amateur activity increased.(1)

The conviction that drama could still draw audiences continued to be held by African Theatres for the next few years. Despite financial loss, they persisted in importing dramatic companies in the teeth of talkie competition and economic depression. Among them were Gerald Lawrence and Madge Compton (ii), Guy Newall and Dorothy Batley, John Deverell and Diana Wilson, and Mary Clare in 1929; Olga Lindo (iii), Athene Seyler and Nicholas Hannen, Maurice Brown playing the currently popular "Journey's End", and Frank Neil and his Comedians in 1930; Olive Sloan and James Raglan in comedies, Alan Doone in Irish plays, Angela Baddeley and Glen Byam Shaw, a melodramatic company staging "thriller" plays, and, in association with Alex Cherniavski, the Gonsalez Opera Company (iv) in 1931. Wavering interest in drama however was steadily overpowered by the demand for light entertainment(to which the advent of the musical-vaudeville talkie gave added point). During this period, the prevalence of frivolous rather than "straight" entertainment markedly increased until in time, if there were any theatrical entertainment at all, it was of a light musical or magical order only. In 1929, African Theatres presented George Robey, Marie Blanche and a London company; Chefalo the magician; the revues "Funny Face" and "So This is Love" and the pantomime "Dick Whittington", as well as the violinists Marie Hall and Paul de Groot. During 1930 when entertainment became even more erratically sustained, frivolous amusement predominated - the revue "Bubble and Squeak", the musical comedy "Mr Cinders", Charles Heslop's "Follies" and their revue "Moonshine", the pantomime "The Forty Thieves" and numerous variety stars including Ella Shields, Victor Chenkin, Tom Newell and Jasper Maskelyne. Alex

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(i) This ration continued until by 1939, the theatre (except for a few touring Afrikaans professional companies) was entirely in the hands of amateurs whose several societies in all the large towns maintained an erratic succession of plays. The outbreak of the Second World War in that year naturally entailed a diminution of this activity.

(ii) Gerald Lawrence's dramatic company played period pieces, a member of the casts being the later famous film star, Ralph Richardson.

(iii) Olga Lindo and dramatic company recorded the sole outstanding success in the dramatic field and paid many return visits to the various Union towns.

(iv) The Gonsalez Opera Company came from Italy and though mounted, dressed and produced somewhat poorly, gave performances which were a revelation to large numbers of South Africans. The company included several fine singers, one or two of whom remained in South Africa, notably the well-known Albina Bini.

Cherniavski attempted to exploit possibly latent public appreciation of "straight" entertainment by presenting the pianists Benno Moisevitch and Ignaz Friedman, and the singer Florence Austral; and African Theatres themselves presented Clara Butt and Kennerley Rumford; but public taste lay elsewhere and in later years such promotion were perforce abandonned.

During 1931, legitimate entertainment entered the last phase of its decline. In an effort to provide novelty, African Theatres presented a succession of thriller plays and, in conjunction with Tom Arnold, the revues "Clowns in Clover", "One Dam' Thing after Another" and "Folies Bergeres"; and, with Charles Ross "Helter Skelter". Vaudeville still survived at erratic intervals (i) but without hope for the future. Already continuous variety was impossible and complete programmes appeared only infrequently. Theatres were often shut and would have remained continuously closed for months at a time had it not been for amateur activity. Long intervals began to separate the appearances of either dramatic or musical companies in the major towns and theatrical entertainment as a whole continued to deteriorate.(ii) Depression and the now insistent competition of the talkies made its survival impossible. By 1932, theatrical entertainment had completely collapsed

The silent cinema, broadly speaking, had had the social significance of distraction only. The sound film widened that significance to embrace almost every aspect of social life. Where there had been distraction only, there was now entertainment, information, culture, political propaganda (largely in newsreels), demonstration and moral suasion. Sound gave the cinema a consciousness of purpose which had always proved abortive on the silent screen. If it annulled the figure of fantasy of the silent screen, it gave added ~~reality~~ emphasis to the figures of reality that emerged in the talkie film. With sound, the cinema became a social force, not merely a feature of the social situation.

(i) It included many famous artists such as Harry Lauder, Desi Desiderati and Herschel Henlere.

(ii) In July 1931, André Huguenet, one of the most distinguished and successful actor-manager-producers, had already remarked on the decline of Afrikaans professional drama in all the four provinces. (5). This lack of public patronage was only temporary nut served to indicate the dual impact of the depression and the advent of the sound film.

Appendix to CHAPTER XI

The following represent the outstanding films of each year :

1927 :(Silent)
"The Last Days of Pompeii" (Italian)
"The Sea Beast" (John Barrymore, Dolores Costello)
"The Lost World" (American)
"The Flag Lieutenant" (English)
"The Three Musketeers" (Douglas Fairbanks)
"He who gets Slapped" (Lon Chaney)
"Vaudeville" (UFA)
"Don Juan" (John Barrymore)
"Faust" (Emil Jannings)
"Grass"
"The Iron Horse"
"The Rat" (Ivor Novello)
"The Lodger" (Ivor Novello)
"Second to None"
"Zone"
"The Somme"

1928 : (Silent)
"Metropolis" (Brigitte Helm)
"Koenigsmark" (Huguette Duflos)
"The Prince of Adventurers" (Ivan Mosjoukine)
"The Student of Prague" (Conrad Veidt)
"Beau Geste" (Ronald Colman)
"It" (Clara Bow)
"Hotel Imperial" (Pola Negri)
"The Fall of An Empress" (Italian)
"The White Sheik" (Jameson Thomas)
"The Road to Mandalay" (Lon Chaney)
"Les Miserables" (French)
"The Gaucho" (Douglas Fairbanks)
"The Jazz Singer" (Al Jolson - pseudo-talkie)
"The Way of All Flesh" (Emil Jannings)
"Moulin Rouge" (Olga Tschewowa)

The Battles of Coronel and Falkland Islands
The Emden (German Admiralty)
"Chang"

"The Road to Ruin" (Kinemac)
"The End of the Road" (Independent Films)

1929 : (Silent)
"Mr Wu" (Lon Chaney)
"Shiraz" (Indian)
"The Spy" (UFA)
"Seventh Heaven" (Janet Gaynor, Charles Farrell)
"A Woman of Paris" (produced by Charlie Chaplin)
"The Loves of Jeanne Ney" (Brigitte Helm - UFA)
"Beau Sabreur" (Gary Cooper, Evelyn Brent)
"Sadie Thompson" (Gloria Swanson)
"Piccadilly" (Anna May Wong, Gilda Grey, Jameson Thomas)
"Wings" (Clara Bow - Paramount)
"The Lost Patrol" (Cyril Maclaglen)
"The Trial of Donald Westhof"
"Flesh and the Devil" (Greta Garbo)
"The Last Command" (Emil Jannings)
"The Wonderful Lie" (Brigitte Helm, Francis Lederer)
"The Crowd" (Eleanour Boardman)
"Mother" (Russian)
"Forgotten Faces"

"Simba" (Martin Johnson)

"The Port of Missing Girls" (African Theatres)
"Cocaine" (Shadow Plays World Tour)

1929 : (Talkies - in order of their first appearance in Johannesburg)
"Mr Smith Wakes Up"(Kinemas) - 6th July
"Syncopation"(Kinemas) - 13th September
"The Wrecker"(not 100% talkie - Kinemas) - 11th October
"High Treason"(Kinemas) - 21st October
"Blockade"(Kinemas) - 24th October
"The Singing Fool"(African Theatres) - 25th October
"Street Girl"(Kinemas) - 30th November
"Blackmail"(African Theatres) - 16th December
"Lucky Boy" (African Theatres) - 23rd December
"Half Marriage"(Kinemas) - 25th December
"The Donovan Affair"(African Theatres) - 30th December

1930 : Talkies
"Rio Rita" (Bebe Daniels, John Boles, Wheeler and Wolsey)
"The Great Gabbo" (Erich von Stroheim)
"Bulldog Drummond" (Ronald Colman)
"The Iron Mask" (Douglas Fairbanks)
"Splinters"
"The Trespasser" (Gloria Swanson)
"Rookery Nook" (Tom Walls, Ralph Lynn)
"The Desert Song" (John Boles)
"Atlantic"
"The Vagabond King" (Jeanette Macdonald)
"Cocoanuts" (the Marx Brothers)
"Innocents of Paris" (Maurice Chevalier)
"Balaclava"
"All Quiet on the Western Front" (Lew Ayres, Oscar Wollheim)
"Disraeli" (George Arliss)
"The Case of Sergeant Grischa"
"King of Jazz" (Paul Whiteman)
"Journey's End" (Colin Clive)

Silent
"The Patriot" (Emil Jannings)
"Laugh, Clown, Laugh" (Lon Chaney)
"The Wedding March" (Erich von Stroheim)

"Tembi" (Cherry Kearton)
With Byrd to the South Pole
Many Great War documentaries

"No More Children" (Kinemas)
"Deserted Mothers" (unspecified)
"The Battle of the Sexes" (African Theatres revival)

1931 : Talkies Only
"The Taming of the Shrew" (Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks)
"The Blue Angel" (Marlene Dietrich)
"The Love Parade" (Maurice Chevalier)
"The Love Waltz" (Lillian Harvey)
"Escape" (Gerald du Maurier)
"The Dawn Patrol" (Richard Barthelmess)
"Young Woodley" (Frank Lawton, Madeleine Carroll)
"Gold Diggers of Broadway"
"Grumpy" (Cyril Maude)
"The White Hell of Pitz Palu" (Leni Riefenstahl)
"The City of Song" (Jan Kiepura)
"The Green Goddess" (George Arliss)
"Cimarron" (Richard Dix)
"Dreyfus" (Cedric Hardwicke)
"The Big Pond" (Maurice Chevalier)
"Dracula"
"Morocco" (Marlene Dietrich)
"Broadway Melody"
"Anna Christie" (Greta Garbo)
Many Aldwych farces
"City Lights" (Charlie Chaplin- silent)
"The Birth of a Nation" (silent)

"The Mystery of Life" (Mary Field)
"Her Child" (African Theatres)

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(2) In toto - "De Geluidsfilm" - Lou Lichtveld

(3) Cape Times - 30th January 1930

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(5) The Star - 1st July 1931 (Stoeptalk)

CHAPTER XII

Advent of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Union Theatres Ltd

Impregnation of the Cinema in the Social Structure

1931-1937

African Consolidated Theatres Ltd and African Consolidated Films Ltd commenced operations under conditions of unexampled difficulty. Amalgamation had timeously consolidated the resources of the entertainment industry to withstand the exigencies of the Great Depression which, commencing in 1929 (the year of amalgamation) had gradually worsened until agriculture, industry, the export trade and the vital essentials of the nation's life continued only under the greatest difficulty. Bankruptcy faced the provincial administrations and during 1932, the Provincial Government of the Free State had to appeal to the Central Government for financial assistance. Distress not only of the lower-income sections of the community but of every occupation and profession prevailed throughout the Union. Under these circumstances, the successful prosecution of an entertainment industry which had recently undergone fundamental changes in form and organisation, required the utmost acumen and courage. On the one hand involved in enormous capital expenditure on the building of new theatres and the equipping of those existing with sound apparatus, on the other contending with a public some of whose livelihood had dwindled to the point of extinction and others whose salaries and sources of income had been drastically reduced, African Consolidated Theatres and Films with their associated companies needed every fraction of their combined resources to meet the situation. As the Depression worsened, audiences progressively decreased and even the attractions of the new "atmospheric" theatres and their still novel talkies could not induce the public to pay for admission. In addition to these difficulties, the local situation had been complicated by the entry of a competitive firm.

On the 15th April 1931, reports appeared in the local Press of an interview with Colonel Edward A. Schiller, vice-president of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, one of the biggest and most distinguished film productio corporations in the United States, who was then in South Africa negotiating for the distribution of his company's films. Like United Artists of five years previously, Metro was dissatisfied with the terms on which their films were bought for exhibition in South Africa. Using

the best and most famous acting talent in Hollywood and producing some of the most expensive films on the market, Metro desired more advantageous conditions than either African Films or Kinemas would offer. The company therefore decided to exploit the South African cinema field on its own account. Colonel Schiller announced the purchase of a site in Bree Street, Johannesburg for £50,000 on which to build a super-cinema, the first of a chain which was to extend through all the large towns in the Union. Building operations were to commence in three months' time according to a plan prepared by the company's architect Thomas W. Lamb of New York. A site was also to be procured in Durban.

The following day, the news was released of Mr Schlesinger's formation of Colosseum Buildings Ltd (i) with an authorised share capital of £150,000 for the purpose of building the present mammoth "atmospheric" theatre in Commissioner Street, Johannesburg. These were apparently the opening moves of further competitive activity in the South African cinema field; but in the meantime, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer films were shown throughout the Union through the agency of a third company, Union Theatres Ltd (ii) which was controlled by Mr Schlesinger's interests. This company leased theatres other than those controlled by African Consolidated Theatres Ltd for the purpose.(iii) Registered in Pretoria on the 13th October 1931 (iv), Union Theatres was entrusted with the exhibition of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's first talkie films none of which had yet been shown in South Africa (though their silent films had been distributed and shown by African Films and Theatres). Before it

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(i) Ostensibly the company was formed "to acquire by purchase or otherwise immoveable property in the Union of South Africa or elsewhere and erect thereupon cinema theatres or theatres..."

(ii) The directorate of Union Theatres Ltd was composed of directors of Schlesinger companies.

(iii) Later Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer films were shown in cinemas controlled by African Theatres as well.

(iv) The foundation of this company must not be confused with the foundation in May 1931 of a new cinema company also entitled "Union Theatres Ltd" for the purpose of building and supplying a chain of cinemas for Non-European audiences throughout the Union with Indian and Eastern films directly imported. Its capital amounted to £25,000 divided into 96,000 ordinary shares of 5/- each and 4,000 management shares of 5/- each, the directors being H. Mayer, company director; M. Mayers, accountant; S. Liknaitzky, solicitor; all of Johannesburg. The shareholders were to elect seven more directors. Apart from the news of its foundations, nothing more was published concerning this organisation.

came into operation, the competitive building race between African Theatres and Kinemas was engaging public attention, and there were strong rumours that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer was involved in a proposed amalgamation. In July 1931, Durban which had long complained bitterly about its lack of theatres while other towns had "supercinemas"(i), was promised three super-cinemas - a "Metro" whose site Carl Sonin, South African manager for Metro, was considering; a "Plaza" for whose site, Sydney Hayden, London director of Kinemas, announced that investigations were being made; and "The Playhouse" which African Theatres intended building in "olde Englishe style".(ii) In September 1931, when African Theatres had opened the Capitol in Pretoria and Kinemas were about to open the Plaza in Johannesburg, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer made a public denial of its rumoured amalgamation with other talkie interests and also the departure of its architect from New York (there had been speculation as to why the proposed "Metro Theatre" in Johannesburg had not begun to materialise). At this stage, Union Theatres was formed to show Metro talkie films and on the 30th November 1931, the first M-G-M talkie shown in South Africa was screened at the Palladium in Johannesburg which was leased for the purpose. (iii) On the 7th December, Union Theatres opened the Grand Theatre in Pretoria as a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer house and on the 14th December, the Criterion in Durban which heretofore had been conducted by African Theatres as a bio-vaudeville theatre.(iv) Subsequent additions assured Union Theatre of a sizeable circuit for the exploitation of M-G-M films which, in

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(i) In Durban, apart from Prince's, all the "bioscopes" were antiquated and the sole theatre, the Theatre Royal, had been built in 1882 and only once renovated.

(ii) This project which had several times been expounded in the Durban Press by the architect, J. Rogers Cooke, now approached fruition. So far from being flattered by his pronouncement that the town "is really fortunate in having waited to get the very latest", Durban adopted a dog-in-the-manger attitude towards the new cinema. The publication of the perspective drawing of The Playhouse caused an outbreak of acrimonious controversy, the buggesses contending that the olde Englishe style was out of harmony with the surrounding architecture of the City Hall, Old Mutual Building, etc. This lack of appreciation soon abated; by October 1931, 2,000 cubic yards had been excavated; the foundations were soon laid and in June 1935, Senator Clarkson opened The Playhouse which retained the olde Englishe style of its original design.

(iii) The opening film was "Broadway Melody" with Charles King. It was followed by "Madame X" with Ruth Chatterton and "The Rgoue Song" with Lawrence Tibbett, one of the most popular of the early musical talkies.

(iv) The Criterion was opened as an M-G-M theatre with "The Big House" a powerful prison drama and a most impressive film.

virtue of their originality and general excellence, exercised a considerable appeal for the public despite the depressed times.

At the same time (December 1931), the long-rumoured amalgamation between Kinemas and Mr Schlesinger's associated companies took place, Metro now being faced with united opposition and, with the depression steadily intensifying, increased difficulties in development. Work on the Johannesburg site went on however and no detail was amended in the extravagant and elaborate plans that had been prepared. Simultaneously the construction of the Colosseum continued.

By February 1932, conditions had worsened to an appalling degree and continued to do so. Unemployment steadily increased and in Johannesburg alone, the Unemployment Association bought columns of The Star for its small advertisements seeking jobs for hundreds of men. The Governor-General (the Earl of Clarendon) offered to sacrifice 10% of his salary, civil servants suffered drastic cuts in their incomes, retrenchment of staff took place in every business and development ceased in almost every industry and enterprise. The Imperial Economic Conference held in Ottawa in July (1) raised the public's hopes of salvation for a depression that was strangling the country but, though numerous helpful measures were subsequently enforced, there was no immediate alleviation of the situation. Theatrical entertainment at first struggled against adverse circumstances but eventually almost completely disappeared. Theatres opened for short periods and closed for long. In a last attempt to provide entertainment for a perforcedly indifferent public, African Theatres used local talent in musical shows but when finally these failed, only a few bio-vaudeville houses carrying a small variety programme eked out by amateur effort in conjunction with films remained. Finally even these amateur turns disappeared and "double-feature" film programmes took their place.

The public itself was subtly changed in character. As at all other similar times, depressed conditions favoured depraved tastes and "escapist" mediums of every kind appeared. Throughout the year, a cult nudism in South African achieved intermittent publicity. Cigarette-

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(1) Apart from an official delegation, South Africa also sent numerous films to the Imperial Economic Conference to plead its cause.

smoking as a narcotic increased enormously and was extensively practiced by women for the first time. "Make-up", a compensatory reaction to depressed conditions, became a practice not only of the sophisticated and mondaine but of every type of woman. Means of distraction were sought by all types of society and where before the crossword puzzle and other thought-diverting pursuits had served, now there appeared the Yo-Yo which immediately achieved popularity amongst every class of person.(i)

At the height of the depression, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer opened their first super-cinema, the Metro Theatre in Johannesburg.(ii) Continuous performances were given all through the day until late at night; but before long, the Metro fell into line with the other cinemas and gave matinée and evenings performances only. Opening when it did, the Metro by its lavishness and luxury greatly indulged a harrowed public and, when they could afford to attend its performances, gave them a much-needed sense of well-being. In this insidious manner, the cinema ingratiated itself into the affection of the public with as much effect as through the films it showed. At the time, the Metro was the only cinema of its kind in Johannesburg and its opening certainly drew patronage away from those operated by African Theatres.

The financial situation now approached a climax. Distress and economic instability had attained such proportions that it was obvious the country could not long continue in its then state. The Nationalist-Labour Government had employed every conceivable method of relieving the situation but, while affecting temporary alleviation in a few spheres, had failed to influence the fundamentals. By the end of 1932, the position appeared desperate when suddenly Tielman Roose, previously a much-respected figure in South African politics, announced his

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(i) Professor Wheatley, Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Cape Town, was an acknowledged and widely-publicised expert. The Yo-Yo, a simple toy consisting of a slit circle of wood on a piece of string, was capable endlessly of diverting the thoughts of every section of the community from prevalent depressing conditions. Its vogue lasted just as long as the conditions themselves.

In this connection, it is of interest that the first historical appearance of the Yo-Yo was during the "Terror" of the French Revolution when the imprisoned aristocrats used it for their diversion. It figured momentarily in the Bastille scene of "Marie Antoinette" shown by Metro in South Africa in 1938.

(ii) Seating just under 3,000, this lavishly decorated theatre with its copies of French Impressionists, its objets d'art, its thick carpets and sumptuous cosmetic rooms created a considerable sensation in Johannesburg where the Plaza was the only modern cinema and the extravagant Colosseum had not yet arisen. It was

resignation as judge of the Appelate Court to re-enter politics and to save South Africa from disaster. His intention was to form a Coalition Government pledged to devaluation. This dramatic move was immediately successful and on the 27th December 1932, the Union went off the gold standard. The depression was over. Early in 1933, Generals Smuts and Hertzog formed a Fusion Government and South Africa entered a period of prosperity which gained in intensity as time went on.

The close of the period of depression found the South African cinema established in the hands of three organisations - African Consolidated Theatres and Films Ltd with their associated companies which controlled the maximum part of the exhibition and distribution of films in the Union; Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer S.A. (Pty) Ltd which had built one cinema of great capacity for the exhibition of M-G-M films and intended building more to form a small circuit of first-class theatres; and Union Theatres Ltd which, acting in liaison between the two other exhibiting interests, arranged the exhibition of M-G-M films in a circuit of cinemas other than those controlled by African Consolidated Theatres. On this basis, the South African cinema continued to develop. In previous years, the field had been over-developed by competition, an effect emphasised by depression conditions. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer made no ~~attempt~~ immediate move to build another large theatre and African Theatres proceeded with long-established plans. Meanwhile the already established position of cinema entertainment was enhanced by a new and unprecedented popularity which nascent prosperity engendered.

Though the period from 1933 to 1937 was distinguished more by development within the cinema itself (particularly in the non-commercia exhibition of films) than by any change in the status quo of the industry, considerable progress was made along the lines already laid down. "Atmospheric" theatres, for instance, increased in number and became an established rather than a rare institution in almost every or of the Union's largest towns. On the 4th October 1933, the Colosseum in Commissioner Street, Johannesburg was opened by General Smuts, Deputy

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Opened on the 4th November 1932 in the presence of a distinguished audience, the feature film being "The Passionate Plumber", a comedy featuring Buster Keaton, Polly Moran and Jummy Durante which was presumed apposite for the times.

The Metro's "Mighty Wurlitzer" played by Archie Parkhouse (one of the first cinema-organist personalities) was said to have cost £18,000 and competed in attraction with the Plaza's pioneering organ.

Prime Minister in the Fusion Government who, in common with the Prime Minister's speech at the opening of the Pretoria Capitol (i),described the enterprise as a magnificent gesture in the face of the depression current at its launching and still lingering in mitigated degree over the country.(ii)

In March 1934, Metro consolidated the attraction which its advent had had for the cinema-going public by announcing an arrangement to distribute not only M-G-M films but also United Artists, British and Dominion Films and London Films productions in South Africa. All these four firms produced admirable films and the local public was particularly attracted by the fine British productions of London Films (especiall Alexander Korda's productions). Metro's attractions were now of formidable quality.

Developing along progressive lines of exceptionally high quality considering the smallness of the white population, the cinema industry appeared to have attained lasting stability. Occasionally rumours were current that the quasi-rivals were at loggerheads. It was popularly believed (as in the case of Kinemas) that Mr Sachlesinger had obtained a controlling interest in Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (S.A.)Pty Ltd and there was considerable speculation over the possibilities of amalgamation to

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(i) See Page 291 (i).

(ii) This remarkable theatre in the "style of an old Scotch keep" seating 2,300 was said to have cost about £200,000. Amdist great local excitement, it was opened with the feature film "Rome Express" starring Conrad Veidt, Gordon Harker, Frank Vosper and Cedric Hardwicke, the supporting programme including the first coloured Mickey Mouse talkie shown in the Union.

An innovation was the Colosseum Orchestra, a body of about thirt musicians under the baton of Michael Doré (a noted violinist who assumed the conductorship in September 1934) which became a popular institution. The expense of its maintenance precluded the institution of similar orchestras elsewhere.

The Colosseum Orchestra was a unique feature in the South African cinema and endowed its theatre with peculiar prestige and impressiveness. On the 28th October 1936, its conductorship was assumed by Charles Manning, a well-known English musician whose inimitable personality and dynamic energy in public assured him of success equal to Lyell Tayler's. Under Charles Manning, the Colosseum Orchestra became more deeply entrenched in the public's affection. Publicised as "the Svengali of Music", Manning's sense of showmanship, his musical ability and handling of the orchestra gave the cinema a new and powerful attraction. Though confined to one theatre except on the rare occasions of its tours, the Colosseum Orchestra exercised a subtle influence in heightening the appeal of the cinema and maintaining the dissolution of the theatre proper. Its institution in 1933 was therefore of special significance in th general history of South African entertainment.

which sundry straws in the wind were alleged to give point.(i) On the 2nd January 1935 however, the Metro Theatre advertisement appeared with the superscription "OWNED AND OPERATED BY METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER" and the matter died down. During 1934, African Theatres sold the Orpheum on the corner of Jeppe and Joubert Streets for £80,000 (ii)and on the 1st January 1935, the last performance was given at this historic theatre which could no longer stand competition with the palatial Colosseum and Metro and the long-founded Plaza. In September 1936, the New Empire, almost opposite the Colosseum was opened in Commissioner Street and provided Johannesburg with its fourth "super-cinema". In Durban, African Theatres had opened the spectacular "Playhouse" in Smith Street on the 7th June 1935 (iii) and other large and imposing cinemas such as the Plaza in Cape Town and the Metro in Cape Town were opened by both companies and served to consolidate not only the popularity but the prestige and indispensableness of the

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(i) One such incident was the Metro Theatre's advertising on the 28th December 1934 the showing of "The Merry Widow" with Maurice Chevalier and Jeanette Macdonald "By arrangement with African Consolidated Theatres Ltd". Actually African Consolidated Theatres owned the South African rights to <u>any</u> performance of the play and the incident therefore had no real significance.

A further fact from which inferences were drawn was the discovery on New Year's Day 1935 of the body of Carl J. Sonin, Managing director of M-G-M(S.A.)Pty Ltd who had apparently shot himself through the head on New Year's Eve. The contents of the two letters he wrote before his death were never revealed.The day after this tragedy, the Metro Theatre advertised "Owned and Operated by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer".

During 1935, substance had been lent to reports that conflict existed between the exhibiting companies by the news that Sir Patrick Hastings had been briefed to defend a case in South Africa The nature of "the important action involving a large sum of money on the Rand" was never divulged but it was common knowledge that Sir Patrick Hastings had successfully defended Princess Youssoupof in the famous action brought by her against Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer on grounds of libel in their film "Rasputin". Mr Justice Avory awarded the Princess £25,000 damages and the case fundamentally affected all American production firms. To enable him to practice in South Africa, Sir Patrick had to pass an examination set by the University of South Africa. Sitting at the Union High Commissioners Office in London, he failed at the first attempt to the distraction of the South African public. At a second attempt in February 1936, Sir Patrick succeeded; but the news of his qualification was published simultaneously with the news of the withdrawal of the action in which he was to have appeared in a Transvaal court.

(ii) The Orpheum site was sold to Messrs Norman Ansteys who built the present eighteen-storey skyscraper.

(iii) The Playhouse with its novel design and decoration in Tudor style, its tea-rooms and restaurants, created a considerable sensation and became one of Durban's best-known attractions.

cinema.

The stabilisation of the South African cinema industry, the habituation of the public to going to established cinemas and, in addition, the difficulties of adequate sound-projection in rented and often unequipped halls, militated strongly against occasional independent enterprise. During I927, the success of Kinemas as an independent company had inspired sundry organisations to canvass public interest in isolated silent films (i); but during I928 when both Kinemas and Africa Theatres showed the best productions of almost every English, American and Continental firm, there was little of sufficiently novel interest to attract audiences away from established bioscopes. The advent of(iii talkies confirmed the public in this habit and when in I93I, amalgamation occurred and there seemed a possibility that standardised film entertainment might ensue and encourage attendance of individual films, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and the allied distributing company, Union Theatres appeared and once again attenuated the demand for unusual films. Accustomed for years to a plethora of cinema entertainment, the public no longer had a discriminating interest in films and had become the acquiescent victims of the habit of "going to the cinema", regardless of its programmes.

There existed however a very small proportion of the thinking public which realised the limited nature of current programmes and desired to see the better expressions of the cinema which were exhibited overseas. In Cape Town it was possible to organise a Film Society which, owing to the initiative of several enthusiasts notably the Misses H. Purwitsky and Roza van Gelderen, succeeded in attracting a fairly large membership. The society imported and showed to its members a limited number of outstanding feature films, mostly of Continental make. By I932, it had exhibited among others the Russian "Mother","Ivan the Terrible" and "The Postmaster"; the British "Underground" and "The Case of Sergeant Grischa"; and the German "The Blue Angel" several of

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(i) During I927, Anglia Films Ltd showed "Every Mother's Son"; the International Super-Film Co "The Cabinet of Dr Caligari" (a remarkably imaginative German film made in I9I9 and starring Conrad Veidt and the Pioneer Film Co. "Where is my Husband ?", a survival of the "moral drama".

(ii) During I928, the sole independent enterprise was the showing of "The Ends of the Road", a venereal diseases propaganda film by Independent Films. In I929, a real novelty had appeared in the Russian Film Distributors' showing of the world-famous Russian film "Mother". Shadow Plays World Tour also showed the supposedly sensational "Cocaine" and Nelson and Caro "Master and Man".

(iii) During I929, two unspecified enterprises showed "Deserted Mothers

which had been banned at the Cape prior to the institution of a National Censor Board in 1931.(i) The private showing of outstanding films began to attract notice and, while the membership of the Cape Town society increased and more films were imported, there seemed ever likelihood that similar societies might be instituted elsewhere and eventually constitute a competitive force to the commercial cinema. The Entertainments (Censorship) Act of 1931 obtained for public exhibition only and provided no charge for admission were made, a film society might import and show any film it pleased. The avowed aim of such societies was almost always purely artistic and cultural; but the fact that it might be otherwise and might admit of the propagation of subversive propaganda left a legislative loophole. In 1934, an amendment to the Act was passed which enforced censorship of films whether privately or publicly shown. This step which limited the scope of films available to a film society and increased its expenses through having to pay a censorship fee (there were no other societies elsewhere with which such expenses could be shared) crushed the Cape Town enterprise and for further examples were started.(ii)

The small esoteric public which persisted in the face of a flood of disreputable American talkies, was given little if any opportunity to indulge its preference for superior films. A few enterprises risked financial loss by showing special films in Town Halls(iii

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another survival of the "moral drama", and "Verdun", a well-known documentary of the Great War.

(i) The last outstanding film to be imported by the Cape Film Society was "Jeanne d'Arc", the "close-up" masterpiece of Carl Dreyer.

(ii) It was then possible that the Censor Board would ban entirely innocuous Russian films for fear of "communistic propaganda".
During 1938, '39 and '40, African Theatres showed a few French films "Mayerling", "Carnet de Bal", "Abus de Confiance" and "La Bete Humaine" with comparative success.
The Film Society idea was revived in 1945.

(iii) In 1932, the Real Art Film Co. toured the Russian "Earth", an outstanding production; and in 1934, "The Road to Life", also a Russian production. In 1933, J. Kalusky and his associates formed a company called British & Universal Pictures Ltd which proposed "road-showing" meritorious films. It succeeded in showing only "Maedchen in Uniform" produced by Leontine Sagan which had considerable success. Conditions weighing against the enterprise, its original plans were never executed.
In 1934, Columbia Pictures Ltd showed "Africa Speaks" and the Van Beuren Corporation "Bring 'em Back Alive", the latter of which was later taken over by African Theatres. In 1935, Nelson Films and Vandor Films road-showed "Don Quixote" starring Chaliapin; but once again it was evident that the public had been bludgeoned into indifference to good films other than recognised American and English successes shown in recognised cinemas. There now remained only cultural and other societies (such as the South African Zionist Association showing "Land of Promise" in 1935)

and a final effort was made by the "Cinemarte Film Co.", a local enterprise which, in I937, showed the famous French films "Poil de Carotte" "Le Golem", "Kermesse Heroique" etc in the Johannesburg City Hall. Despite arousing considerable enthusiasm in esoteric circles, these films had not sufficiently remunerative appeal and it was impossible to repeat the experiment. The "road-showing" of outstanding films thereupon ceased except for a few negligible instances and from I937 onwards, the South African commercial cinema purveyed established commercial successes.(i)

While it later became difficult to characterise it by definite features, the South African talkie cinema of I93I was characterised by two - sex and sordidness. "Sex appeal" had proved successful in the first light-hearted films but subsequently it was exploited with thoroughness and complete lack of scruple. Sordidness on the other hand, slowly but steadily declined. The ultra-realism of films such a "The Blue Angel" and "The Case of Sergeant Grischa"(ii) soon diminished and though "artistically" sordid films such as "Of Human Bondage" shown in I934 continued to be exhibited, the movement had not vitality per se. "Sex appeal" however, discarding the rather engaging "It" of Clara Bow and the "beach girl", became the leit motif of the entire fictional cinema. The influence of sex per se became so pervasive that the slightest innovation in films of I93I was acclaimed as "a welcome relief from this sex-ridden world". The "sex"of the cinema of the early thirties was in no way similar to the grotesque blatancy of

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(i) Almost all these independent ventures were the result of individual enterprise. Some were founded in ordinary commercial speculation but others marked a genuine desire to provide the public with more than standardised cinema entertainment. None had hope of survival against the crushing weight of the established cinema interests and the longstanding indifference of the general public. The esoteric public remained so small that its most enthusiastic support could not repay the cost of importing and road-showing outstanding films.

The case was identical with the few independent cinemas which periodically made their appearance (such as the Independent Film Distributors Ltd which opened the "Cameo" in Durban operated by Independent Picture Palaces Ltd, and "Prince's" in Johannesburg in I934). Within a few weeks, they either failed financially or were absorbed by the established purveyors of film entertainment.

(ii) Both these films were banned by the Cape Provincial Board of Censors but shown in the other provinces with much publicity attained thereby. During I93I, public outcry was raised by the profit made in other provinces through the bans inflicted by the Cape Board. "Catch-ads" publicised the fact that a film had been banned at the Cape and served to attract certain sections of the public. This disreputable type of publicity was severely censured and added yet another argument for the institution of a National Board of Censorship.

the "vamps" of the silent screen. It was a thing of insinuation and innuendo, a pervasive self-avowed theme which tainted every incident in fiction films with suggestiveness without rendering itself liable to direct accusation. In posture, dress and dialogue, "sex" stared out of every film without once trespassing on the borders of pornography.(i) Possibly a depraved reaction to the world-wide depression, the sex-theme sickened discriminating cinema-goers but undoubtedly appealed to the greater proportion of the public. It dominated the cinema (as it also did the overseams theatre at the time); but its predonderancy did not prevent the production of a few outstanding films of originality and imagination such as Sutton's Vane's "Outward Bound". At the beginning of 1932, the South African cinema was showing films of singularly undistinguished quality; but by the end, the ~~x~~ had greatly improved. Of the non-sex appeal films, light musical plot predominated in films of the type of "Sunshine Susy" and "Congress Dances" and there were also many fine British productions which ignored the sex theme completely such as "Hindle Wakes" and "The Ghost Train".

Despite the plaudits with which these types of films were received by both press and public and the opprobrium which was constantly cast at suggestive films, "sex appeal" continued to flourish and gradually attained an unparelleled audacity. The innuendo and insinuation of the early films was now displaced by down-right vulgarity and open eroticism. News of a rising tide of public indignation overseas was published in South Africa but, where a similar movement might have been started among the local public, discontent with current cinema fare was stilled by the frequent appearance of films of ingenuity, charm and originality. While the risqué character of many films disguised by American "slickness" did much to attract one section of the public to the cinema, another was equally attracted by the polished spectacle and fine quality of "prestige" productions such as "The Private Life of Henry VIIIth" shown in 1933.(ii)

(i) The sex-theme even pervaded cartoons. "Smutty" cartoons in which "Miss Mickey" or "Miss Blimbo" persistently shed their nether garments or undressed in public, increasingly figured on cinema programmes from 1932 onwards. Later "Betty Boop", a character of undeniable sexual significance, prolonged this tendency.

(ii) British productions such as "Sally in Our Alley", "Soldiers of the King", "Arms and the Man", "The Good Companions", "Cavalcade" etc did much to vitiate the prevalent sex theme and the opportunity of attending well-spoken, well-acted talkies still further

During 1934, the sex theme in films reached such an uninhibited degree that no soporific in the shape of original and technically perfect films could dull the public' sense of outrage. A great diversity and excellence in current films failed to counteract the unfortunate impression of the one persistent type. In May 1934, preceded by much publicity, African Theatres showed "She Done Him Wrong", the first Mae West (1) film at the Johannesburg Colosseum where it created a considerable sensation and was heralded as "something new in entertainment and in no sense is it more new than in the fact that at last we have a picture that men will enjoy more than women". Mae West, "the Blonde Bombshell of 1933", added yet another category to the steadily growing range of films and certainly increased the already enormous attraction of the cinema. The blatancy of her technique and her complete lack of subterfuge in exploiting sex qua sex marked the climax of the movement. In themselves, her films were merely an innovation which the public humorously applauded but it was soon obvious that their motif could not develop along the lines upon which it had embarked, although their success opened the door to further excesses in other productions. American comedies of the time were certainly funny but so unashamedly vulgar as to cause embarrassment among South African audiences and caustic comments in the Press. Producers exploited "sex" and other previously unmentionable aspects of human nature to the point of indecency. So widespread and thorough was this characteristic that censors were powerless to arrest it except by the wholesale banning of films for which they could give no good reason other than vulgarity or tastelessness, neither of which were adequately defined (or could be) in any Censorship Act. In American itself, agitation had grown in volume and whil South African audiences were getting their first taste of blatant sex and vulgarity, the movement towards cleansing the cinema was gathering impetus in the United States. During 1932-33, it reached its climax

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disposed the public in favour of cinema entertainment.

(1) Mae West, an artiste of no mean ability, was capable of skating on the thin ice of pornography; but her success emboldened less talented and more crude exponents of "sex appeal" to further exhibitions of vulgar suggestiveness. Pernicious to a negligible degree, Mae West's films, by their very success, facilitated the development of greater tastelessness than had yet characterised the cinema.

(I) though, as they were released later than overseas, offensive films continued to be shown in South Africa.(i) The institution of the Hays Production Code by which producers voluntarily agreed to abide by certain canons obviating all vulgarity and suggestiveness, automatically put an end to censorable production.(ii) In a year or two, the sex-theme in the South African cinema had ceased to exist and "love interest" had taken its place. Still later, the "boy meets girl"theme appeared.

By I934, the cinema as a whole had developed in every respect, notably the "star complex". Previously cinema stars had been popular; now they became a vogue. The first such star (as far as the South African public was concerned) was Marlene Dietrich whose "Blue Angel" had caused a country-wide stir in I93I.(iii) In I933, there was a vogue for Greta Garbo which persisted (iv) and in I934, the public seized on a dozen or more personalities for active adulation. Novelty and originality rather than acting ability, stimulated this ne feature of the cinema. Chronologically there appeared Bing Crosby (wh introduced "crooning"); Katherine Hepburn (whose raw-boned features and harsh voice first exercised their peculiar fascination in"Morning Glory"); Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire (who appeared in the first dancing musical film "Flying down to Rio" in which they performed the

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(i) By the end of I934, extremely vulgar scenes were still appearing in American comedies shown in South Africa - for instance, "Tenderfoot" shown in September I934 which, otherwise an extremel amusing film, included a long sequence showing the leading characters searching for a lavatory in a restaurant.
Walt Disney himself and other cartoonists were also accused o vulgarity and at this time too, "Betty Boop" began performing her reprehensive antics supported by a singularly insinuating voice and dialogue.

(ii) As a final flamboyant gesture, Hollywood produced "I00% Pure" (which fully and pointedly justified its title) starring Jean Harlow, lineal descendant of Clara Bow and, originator of the "platinum blonde", the outstanding "glamour girl" of the time.(She was tragically killed some time later.) This film was shown in South Africa (it was acknowledged on all hands to be exceedingly dull) and though it did not mark a sudden cessation of the deplor able type of film which had ended by characterising the cinema, i marked a rapid diminution.

(iii)"The Blue Angel" "made" Marlene Dietrich who was previously unknown even in Germany. Her novel personality immediately struck the public fancy and her every subsequent film was eagerly awaited

(iv) Greta Garbo was ofcourse a well-known star of the silent screen, many books having been written about her; but her talkie debut was anxiously awaited. "When Garbo talks, the whole world listens" wa a publicity line for"Romance" though "Anna Christie", her first talkie, was popularly known as "Garbo Garbled".

Carioca and later, in "The Gay Divorce", the Continental) achieving immediate and lasting popularity); Mae West who created the biggest sensation and whose mannerisms and speech were forthwith incorporated into every sphere of life; Eddie Cantor (whose "Roman Scandals" in 1935 was extremely popular); George Arliss and in 1935, Grace Moore (who made a triumphant success of "One Night of Love"); and Jeanette Macdonald and Nelson Eddy who made their South African debut in the record-breaking "Naughty Marietta" and continued appearing together in musical successes for many years after.(i)

During 1934, the variety and excellence of film programmes shown in South Africa was greater than ever before, particularly in respect of musical productions(ii) and the increased finesse of Walt Disney's cartoons, including the advent of the famous cartoon "The Three Little Pigs".During 1935, films were so heterogeneous in type that it was possible to distinguish only two - the historical (iii) which enjoyed a lengthy vogue and the musical (iv) which were of peculiar charm and

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(i) The "star complex" led to many abuses, notably the "typing" of players in the same or similar roles in film after film; but during the early thirties, it first emerged as a feature of the sound cinema and continued as such. (The later thirties were distinguished by ax vogue for Bette Davis, and Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh.)

(ii) Apart from the sex appeal of Mae West, Bing Crosby's crooning, Eddie Cantor's jazz fantaisias and other novel features, the musical film, particularly Grace Moore in "One Night of Love", Jan Kiepura in "My Song for You", etc provided a pleasing novelty to South African audiences in 1934. British films also provided both original and excellently produced entertainment. Films as a whole departed along unwontedly original and entertaining lines, particularly in the American comedy-drama such as "The Thin Man" and "It Happened One Night", and the British "Berkeley Square".

(iii) The historical film was shown in profusion in 1934-35. "The House of Rothschild", "The Iron Duke", "Cardinal Richelieu", "Catherine the Great" with Elizabeth Bergner and its travesty "The Scarlet Empress" with Marlene Dietrich, "Jew Suss" etc were however designed more for the glorification of George Arliss and other stars then in vogue than for the animation of history. While the public as a whole enjoyed them considerably, teachers complained bitterly of their adverse effect on school-instruction. After 1935, the historical film declined in number but its occasional appearances thereafter were characterised by the same prostitution of fact for the sake of "box office appeal". ("Rhodes of Africa" shown in 1936 and "Stanley and Livingstone" in 1940 were both grotesque distortions of historical fact.)

(iv) The musical film enjoyed unprecedent popularity in 1935. It was divided roughly into two types - the light comedy such as "The Gay Divorce" and "Roberta" with Rogers and Astaire (the latter containing the two popular songs "Lovely to look at" and "The Smoke gets into your Eyes"); and the operetta such as "One Night of Love" and "On Wings of Song" with Grace Moore and "Naughty Marietta" with Macdonald and Eddy. The immense popularity of these very delightful films characterised the South African cinema in 1935 and served to give it its highest standing in history.

and guilelessness and, in engaging the affection the largest proportion of the public than any other type of film, greatly enhanced the cinema's prestige. The enlivening and progressive tendencies were not maintained during 1936. The exigencies of the Hays Production Code were beginning to be felt by American producers and the cinema began t wear an aseptic look. At the beginning of the year, films continued t show imagination and originality; but towards the end, they deteriorated into a sequence of negligible productions with very few exceptions.(i) British films grew still fewer in 1937 and appeared but rarely in 1938. Continental productions had entirely disappeared owing to the difficulty of "dubbing" translated dialogue. American productions on the other hand, developed along lines of comedy-drama ("Thedora goes Wild", "Topper" etc) and musical films reached a new and remarkable height of popularity.(ii) Historical films periodicall appeared;(iii) but on the whole, by 1937, the cinema had become a thing of heterogeneity, its productions always perfect, its themes mostly negligible, its purpose purely entertainment.(iv) By 1938, the South African cinema could be characterised as "competent mediocrity" but by then, it was securely entrenched in the social structure.

During the period 1931-1937, the status of the cinema in society had fundamentally changed. Previously it had been a very popular form

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(i) During 1936, the musical film, particularly of the lighter type, continued to enjoy great popularity and was shown in considerable numbers. The historical film declined and its popularity was usurped by slick, modern comedy-dramas such as "Libelled Lady"and "My Man Godfrey". British films, though steadily decreasing in number were of outstanding quality, a notable example being H.G. Wells' "Things to Come".

(ii)A notable example was "Rainbow on the River" starring the child singer Bobby Breen which ran for eighteen weeks in Johannesburg and for other record-breaking seasons elsewhere. The Macdonald-Eddy films "Maytime" (which caused astonishing scenes at the Cape Town Plaza when thousands of people fought for admittance (2))and "Firefly" (which contained the catchy tune "The Donkey's Serenade and Deanna Durbin's first film "Three Smart Girls" were all very popular.

(iii) These included the English "Fire over England", the American "Parnell" with Clark Gable, "Marie Walewska" with Greta Garbo and "Victoria the Great" with Anna Neagle.

(iv) The newsreels of Kings George VIth's Coronation were a notable exception to the prevalent air of light entertainment surrounding the cinema. Historic circumstance endowed them with special significance and, themselves extraordinarily impressive, they were watched by packed audiences with the greatest attention.

theatre correspondingly declined. If the cinemas were apposite for the times and the theatre not, there were also other forms of entertainmen which intermittently satisfied contemporary taste. During I934 when the "cinema boom" reached astonishing proportions, there was a popular craze for greyhound racing which flourished in Johannesburg but soon declined elsewhere. In I936 there was a similar craze for dirt-track racing which, though immediately popular, rapidly declined and died. In I938, a further craze for motor-racing flared up and died. These public enthusiasms supplemented rather than competed with the contemporary craze for the cinemas a situation to which the theatre seemed incapable of accommodating itself. It was during I936 that the general public at last became reconciled to the fact that theatrical entertainment was effete and that the cinema alone predominated for social and all other purposes.

This South African phenomenon (which was bitterly remarked by overseas visitors of the time) was integrated in the continued development of mechanical utility, transport and communication and other factors disruptive of social equanimity. The popularisation of radio, the almost universal ability of the European population to drive a motor car and the talkie cinema itself all conspired to maintain a disturbed social consciousness and a chronic desire for unintelligent distraction on the part of urban populations. Symptomatic of this incapacity to deal with current conditions and the increased tempo of life was a marked increase in flat-dwelling and the large-scale abandonment of the settled, if more difficult, standards of home life. (i) Equally indicative of public impatience (or "the grasshopper mind") and the need of soporifics in the shape of distraction was the appearance during the I93I-37 period of "comic supplements" in newspapers which

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Metro.....2,800
Colosseum....2,300
Plaza.....2,000
Orpheum.....I,950
Bijou.....I,549
Palladium....I,I50
Standard.....I,046
I2,795

The maintenance of the cinema boom was to some extent indicated by the profits made by African Consolidated Theatres Ltd during this period. The following figures were ofcourse influenced by theatrical as well as cinema presentations but the former were so infrequen that the general impression remains correct :

Dividend Payments - Year ended 3Ist December I932 - £20,000
I933 - 70,000
I934 - 83,000
I935 - III,000
I936 - I74,000

(for (i) see over)

though first designed for children, were eventually aimed at adults by whom they were avidly read.(i) Together with a new popularisation of detective fiction (which was read with equal avidity by the intelligen as well as the customarily sensation-seeking) went a dew development in the appearance of the "tabloid magazine" (such as "The Reader's Digest", "Parade", "Lilliput", "Men Only", "Coronet" etc etc) which compressed much information and entertainment in a small space and obviated the necessity for consulting ponderous and inaccessible sources as well as pleasantly titillating the attention. While no sensational novelty appeared at this time, the trend of social consciousness remained emphatically towards effort-avoiding activities and distractions.

The anaesthetic effect of the "atmospheric" theatre operated on a comparatively small proportion of the cinema-going public but that of the talkie film itself was universal. In the context of a general public mentality to which thought in leisure time was abhorrent, sound particularly in the skilful employment of "incidental music", succeede in producing a new social phenomenon, the "cinema mind". The tendency of the talkie cinema was to shout its own praises and to dull discrim-ination in its audiences. Within a few months of their advent, talkies had so far hypnotised the public as to be capable of passing off grotesque improbability, inaccuracy and, in a considerable proportion of cases, sheer fatuity.(ii) Much was meretricious in the early talkies and if the "cinema mind" exerted itself at all to receive an

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((i) This movement continuously increased in scope and momentum so that by 1940, blocks of flats were to be found in the poorest quarters and the most out-lying suburbs, despite the ample availability of building lots.)

(i) This "escapist" diversion waxed rather than waned in popularity and those newspapers that did not daily publish a "comic strip", produced a week-end supplement in colour.
(The hold of the strip cartoon on adults was curiously evidenced in the film "Dodsworth" shown in South Africa in 1938, in which Walter Huston as a wealthy business man telephoned from Paris to New York which extremely expensive conversation with his manager he interrupted to enquire "how Flash Gordon got out of that last jam". "Brick Bradford", "Flash Gordon", "Jungle Jim", "The Captain and the Kids", "Pop-Eye" and other strip cartoon characters had become sublimatory social factors of considerable importance.)

(ii) As early as August 1932, Professor M.C.Botha, then Superintendent General of Education of the Cape Province, inveighed heavily against the cinema and protested against its "debased drama". Thence onwards the tendency intensified until sizeable audiences could be made to patronise and enjoy films whose little merits properly belonged to immature intelligence.

impression (which it frequently did in the case of glamorous stars such as Marlene Dietrich, Mae West, etc), it was usually to adopt a social or moral criterion of fictitious order. The gradual and final disappearance of theatrical drama rendered the public the more suscept ible. There was nothing concrete against which to measure the fatuity of the cinema and with the disappearance of the drama went the disappearance of discrimination (or at least the ability to distinguis anything other than the amusing or entertaining features of a film.)

If the addition of sound rendered the cinema more influential, it also rendered it more effective emotionally.(i) Sound also greatly supported the propaganda value of films, both beneficial and perniciou which was particularly evident in newsreels whose commentary developed a subtle touch of prppaganda and, while the public could probably not point to any definite cause for the orientation of its opinion, it was undoubtedly susceptible to such suggestion.(ii) Superficially the cinema exercised a widespread effect on dress and manners. It influenc ed the trend of feminine fashion and in matters of coiffure, dress and general tenue, it heightened the standard considerably. Available to every class of person, slick sound films greatly stimulated individual taste among women and a general "smartening" of the less affluent sections of the community was perceptible after the advent of talkies (iii

Of more fundamental importance was the talkie film's effect on language. The predominance of American films inculcated both slang an

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(i) "The Singing Fool", a crackling raucous talkie shown in 1929, could move thousands of people to tears, the cheapness of its "sobstuff totally escaping notice. Sound rendered audiences more susceptible and, capable of far greater play on the emotions than the familia silent film, severely taxed the impressionable. The pleasures of "a good weep" enjoyed by some sections of the community were increased but still greater demands were imposed by the "horror" films such as "Frankenstein". Audiences ultimately accommodated themselves to these increased emotional demands.

(ii) During 1937, the subtle propaganda effect of newsreel commentari was evident during the Abdication Crisis when dorp audiences surprisingly applauded Mr Baldwin and a film of the Duke of Windsor's wedding was voluntarily withdrawn by its distributors. Similarly, a semi-private showing of "The Defence of Madrid", a film of the Spanish Civil War, was regarded with suspicion by numerous people for fear of "communist propaganda". It was also known that the South African Board of Censors was scrutinising wi exceptional care the newsreel of the Italian campaign in Abyssini ostensibly for the purpose of preventing racial disturbance.

(iii) The unreality of the silent film and its glorification of impos ible characters in lavish and extravagant settings had retarded this influence previously. The talkie film with its impressive reality and its flesh-and-blood characters engendered a more acti desire for emulation. This influence was not confined to fashion only.(5) It was once stated that when Marlene Dietrich was seen t use a white telephone in a film, thousands of subscribers applied

mispronunciation as well as the habit of using catch-phrases such as "O.K.", "Soz You", "Oh Yeah", etc instead of King's English or pure Afrikaans.(i) Subsequently the cinema's influence on language was modified firstly by the growing number of British films which exercised a salutary effect on local pronunciation; and secondly (though only latterly in the period currently dealt with) by American production's acceptance of the fact that American pronunciation and twang had no universal appeal whereas a hybrid version of both American and English was acceptable to all audiences. This form, though indigenous to no country, was infinitely superior to the original "squawkies" and in time removed one of the major objections to sound films.(ii)The avid acceptance of slang and catch-phrases remained and from the advent of talkies onwards, continuously vitiated the purity of both English and Afrikaans.

The effect of the talkie cinema on children aroused regular protests and became a perennial item on the agenda of social welfare bodies, being discussed back and forth with monotonous regularity and futility. Particularly active in this respect was the National Council of Women whose Johannesburg branch arranged two experimental exhibitions of various films to children during 1937 and 1938 with the coöperation of African Consolidated Theatres and Films Ltd.(iii) These much

~~of the Berlin Telephone Exchange to be supplied with them.~~

(i) When Nicholas Hannen returned to London early in 1932 after a dramatic tour (with Athene Seyler) of the Union, he gave an address to the British Drama League in which he stigmatised "talkie twang in South Africa" and blamed the "Americanisation" of Union audiences on the lassitude of British film producers. At the time, it was common to speak of "slanguage".

(ii) It did not however prevent certain anomalies such as "Give me the vorse - vaise - varse" for vase openly spoken by the English actor David Niven in "Raffles" shown in 1940. Such compromises were seldom attempted in American productions and certain characteristic pronunciations remained. These however were in no danger of being incorporated into local language as they produced only amusement in Union audiences. Examples were hostil, docil, futil, dé-tail, corfee, skedule, etc.

(iii) It was argued that talkie films exercised a pernicious effect on children by unduly stimulating their emotions, that the indiscriminate attendance of cinemas by children rendered them liable to a number of subversive influences, notably "sex appeal" and the suggestiveness of gangster films, and that programmes of specially selected films should be arranged for non-adult audiences. (The total failure of this latter scheme on the many occasions of its practice in no way deterred its recurrent exponents.)

At the first National Council of Women experiment to test child reaction held in December 1937 (6), Dr E.G. Malherbe, director of the South African Bureau of Educational and Social Research, pointed out that erotic interest merely bored children; that though children might copy gangster methods, they did not have gangster motives; and that the real menace of talkie films was that they failed to enunciate a coherent or comprehensible set of values. It was further pointed out that the whole tendency of the talkie

publicised, ill-advised and uninstructed efforts of the N.C.W. tended to conceal the real though more subtle effects which the talkie cinema was having on children. The fact that agitation continued proved that the cinema had become indispensable to children.(i) The practice of sending children to the cinema regardless of what was shown, steadily grew. The "hustle" of contemporary life had a dual effect - parents no longer had either the time or the inclination to devote to their children's entertainment; and the children themselves, sophisticated by the wireless, the motor-car, etc, no longer derived amusement from simple means of distraction or were capable of employing their own initiative. The cinema suited both. However much the cinema's evil influences (particularly in juvenile delinquency) were justifiably belittled by trained investigators, the fact remained that apart from a considerable amount of eye-strain, films induced a pernicious degree of nervous excitement. The cinema tended to inculcate a need for diversion, a dissatisfaction with repose and a disinclination to rely on personal resources. It provided an accumulation of impressions and a vast uncoördinated mass of vicarious experience which left the child bewildered but avid for more momentary titillation. The direct evils of the cinema might be disproved but its indirect effect in confusion of mind and disintegration of personality remained.

Secondly, investigation showed that the indiscriminate attendance(ii) of cinemas by children instilled false or meretricious standards,

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screen was to play on the child's emotions and that where interest knitted personality, excitement merely disintegrated it.

Subsequently at their bi-ennial conference held at East London in April 1938, the National Council of Women stigmatised horrifying cartoons in which grotesque creatures such as spiders and giants were made to advance towards the audience until they enveloped the entire screen. This criticism was treated with levity by the Press, the Cape Times devoting a full-column leader entitled "Who's Afraid ?"(7) to the thesis that children thrive on horrors, the Sunday Times publishing a sub-leader entitled "Alice in Blunderland" (8) revolving round the question "Do the National Council of Women want the Censorship Board to sacrifice the enjoyment of the normal for the sake of the fearfulness of the abnormal etc etc.

(i) If parents considered the influence of the cinema pernicious, there was nothing easier than to prevent their children attending but - and this was the real evil - they did not. Instead they complained about the quality of films and condemned the very type ("cowboy" and other innocuously exciting films) that the British Film Institute expertly selected in its "List of Films Suitable for Children".

(ii) The British Film Institute pointed out in one of its reports that a film showing the interior of Buckingham Palace occasioned surprise in a child audience at its lack of ostentation.

This however was a remediable evil, experience in later life imposing more practicable criteria (though possibly more painfully). Thirdly, the sophisticating effect of the cinema prematurely aged children and if it made them knowledgeable about certain things before their time, it also robbed them not only of childish spontaneity but of initiativ and enterprise. Boredom was assuaged by the "bioscope" where boredom should never have existed. This subservience to a medium which annulled personal initiative was gradually integrated with the pattern of adult life. Finally the unscrupulous sentiments which prompted an increasing number of parents to send their children to the cinema "to get them out of the way" had a detrimental effect on family life as a whole and tended to dissociate the child from the influences which should have shaped its development. While there was at this time a tendency to over-estimate the importance of the cinema's pernicious effects on children, there was no tendency whatever to consider this aspect of the situation. It was not realised in any quarters (1) that child attendance of cinemas was enormously on the increase and that it was not only the less affluent members of the community who were anxious to get their children out of the way by sending them to the "bioscope". Parents of every class had admitted and established a habit which entailed their children going to the cinema every Saturday (the programme not being previously scrutinised) and, in many cases, at other times during the week. The gradual intrusion of this habit went unremarked while the minor effects of films themselves raised storms of fatuous protest. The fact that children thus suffered through the agency of the cinema was due more to the gradual appearance of shoddy social standards in place of the rigid criteria of reposeful times, than to any inherent defect. The contemporary unease and disquiet visited the cinema upon children and whatever evils it effected were owing to parents' inability to withstand the deteriorating influence of modern developments.

The cinema exercised both a competitive and paradoxically, an instigative effect on entertainment in general. As much as it

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(1) Except the film exhibiting companies which offered free ice-creams and other inducements to children to patronise special morning matinees, etc.

influences the phases in the decline of the commercial theatre, it inspired the development of amateur endeavour. The collapse of the commercial theatre occurred in 1932 at the height of the depression. During the first months of that year, African Theatres tried to sustain entertainment by importing excellent variety artists[1]; two dramatic companies led by Denis Neilson-Terry and Mary Glynne, and by Godfrey Kearle; and Nikita Balieff's "Chauve Souris" company. Alex. Cherniavsky presented Galli Curci and Homer Samuels. By the middle of the year, it was obvious that public support was no longer adequate to the cost of importing companies and after presenting Dante the magician (magic was always considered a perennially popular attraction), African Theatres attempted to exploit local resources. Their first enterprise was "Les Folies de Paris" produced with local talent and later, they sponsored Mary Holder, Jack Bligh and dramatic company in a farce which failed to meet the public taste. Thereafter all such enterprises were of a light musical order, "The Belle of New York" featuring Gladys Kenyon proving a decided success.

Meanwhile non-commercial activity was being enthusiastically pursued throughout the Union. The Little Theatre attached to the University of Cape Town (11) had been opened and embarked on an exceptionally successful career in the staging of drama and other theatrical enterprises. Amateur societies produced a steady succession of plays in the larger towns and in July 1932, the combined societies in Johannesbrug held a "Repertory Fortnight" of drama, operetta, variety etc at His Majesty's Theatre. A small esoteric public was sufficient to make amateur production practicable but, after the advent of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and the distribution of its films by Union Theatres , this public dwindled even more and was quite inadequate to sustain the financial demands of the commercial stage. Henceforward amateur enterprise, in the absence of any professional competition, prospered in the face of many inherent difficulties. Its appeal was entirely divergent from the cinemas and, so far from exercising a competitive effect, the cinema,

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(i) They included Ronald Frankau and his "Co-Optimists"; Florence Oldham; the"22 Ingenues", Nervo and Knox, Clarice Mayne and Max Miller.

(ii) The opening of the Little Theatre was largely due to W. ("Daddy") Bell, professor of music at the University of Cape Town. In 1939 and later, it staged ballet and even opera, finally becoming a focus of Cape Town's cultural endeavour.

by its very "tin-can drama" and soulless technical perfection, ~~disposed~~ disposed a great many people in its favour.

For long stretches during 1933, the cinema, apart from amateur endeavour, supplied the sole available entertainment. Its own and greatly superior presentation of variety had annhilated vaudeville which, in later years, made one or two abortive re-appearances in South Africa only in self-contained companies and not in a sustained succession of ~~xxxxxx~~ imported artistes. Throughout the year, amateur activity was consistently maintained and provided a small public with the opportunity at least of maintaining contact with the flesh-and-blood theatre (if not of witnessing drama produced as authors intended). African Theatres again attempted to titillate the public palate, firstly with "The Desert Song" played by a local company with London principals, then with Leontine Sagan and an all-women London cast in "Maeddhen in Uniform", "Nine till Six" etc; then with a tried favourite Percy Hutchison (1) and London company in Edgar Wallace plays; then Ruth Draper; and finally, in conjunction with the Australian promoters J.C. Williamson Ltd, a D'Oyley Carte company in Gilbert and Sullivan comic operas and a London musical company in "Rose Marie", "Lilac Time" etc. Few of these enterprises (except Leontine Sagan and Ruth Draper) scored any noteworthy success. Apart from the contemporary unpopularity of the theatre and the immense popularity of the cinema, the stage had now to admit the competition of amateur productions and the fact that owing to their frequent mediocrity, the public became prejudiced against professional drama.

The thorough decline of the theatre was maintained during 1934 and 1935. In 1934, while maintaining bio-vaudeville of an inferior order in its bigger houses, African Theatres presented at long intervals the South African favourite Olga Lindo and London company; the singer John MacCormack and Chefalo the magician with the Magda-Palermo Midgets; and in conjunction with Tom Arnold, a London musical company in "Waltzes from Vienna" and "Wild Violets"; with Alexander Levitoff, the Russian Ballet; and with Alex. Cherniavsky, a return

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(1) Describing his 1933 tour of the Union in his biography (9), Percy Hutchison spoke of "suffering from the rivalry of the Durban Repertory Theatre" which was then staging "Queer Cargo" written by a local inhabitant, Noel Langley, subsequently a successful dramatist and scenarist overseas. This admission reflects the remarkable advance made by indigenous effort and amateur activity

visit of Galli Curci. During 1935 where previously long intervals had separated theatrical presentations, now there were only half a dozen short-lived interruptions of continued deference to the cinema. African Theatres bent before the blast and presented only the magician Carter the Great, the world-famous violinist Yehudin Menuhin and Sara Sylvia leading a Yiddish company. With Tom Arnold, they presented George Clarke and a London vaudeville company and in conjunction with the Young Australia League, the "Forty Young Australians".(i) Levitoff's presentation of the singer Isa Kremer,and Cecil Thorne and Mackay Brothers' of Peter Dawson completed the full total of professional entertainment during 1935.(ii)

The opening of the Johannesburg Empire Exhibition in 1936 gave a temporary fillip to entertainment and prompted African Theatres to import some noteworthy but not wholly successful companies. Seymour Hicks (iii), Ailsen Marson and a London comedy company; René Blum's "Ballets de Monte Carlo"; Jack Payne and his Band (including variety artists); Rudy Starita and his Marimba Band; Jimmy Hunter's "Follies" with Rubyan's Marionettes; a London vaudeville company later led by Hetty King to open the new Johannesburg Empire Theatre(iv); and the pantomime "Cinderella" were presented; and, in co-operation with Alexander Levitoff, the famous Don Cossack Choir. Benno Moisevitch also gave piano recitals and an interesting theatrical event was the appearance in the large towns as well as the country of an Afrikaans dramatic company led by the pioneer Hendrik Hanekom and Berdine Grunewald in

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(i) "The Forty Young Australians" was an orchestra composed of children some of whom also gave turns, which achieved astonishing success.(The success of this very mediocre type of entertainment betokened the cheapening effect of the cinema on the theatre-going public.)

(ii) Not until the Second World War broke out in 1939 did the South African theatre reach such a low level.

(iii) Seymour Hicks and his wife Ellaline Terris subsequently settled at the Cape after he had been knighted. They celebrated their golden wedding there.

(iv) The Empire Theatre in Commissioner Street almost opposite the Colloseum in Johannesburg, was a palatial theatre depressingly decorated in grey. It was opened in 1936 as a theatre but subsequently served as a cinema as well.

"Oom Paul".(i)

Meanwhile the moribund though temporarily animated theatre was being assailed not only by the "cinema boom" but by the crazes for grey-hound racing, dirt-track racing and later motor-racing; but the stimulus it had received did not end with the closing of the Empire Exhibition. Having once again seen varied and fairly sustained entertainment, the public might be presumed to have had its interest re-awakened and accordingly during 1937, African Theatres again embarked on the presentation of the lightest possible entertainment in the hope of maintaining public patronage. "Straight" drama, the competition of the amateur theatre apart, was manifestly impossible; but the most elementary and crudely emotional melodrama had a chance of capturing popular taste. Eliot Makeham, Judy Kelly, Giles Ischam and a London melodramatic company was therefore presented in thrillers but once again, the public conceded unenthusiastic patronage. Other varied attractions were a vaudeville company led by Mollie Picon; George Doonan and an English company in revues; the Royal Carl Rosa Opera Company which met with an indifferent reception; the pianist Mark Hambourg and, heralded by unprecedent publicity, Bebe Daniels and her husband Ben Lyon (both famous film stars), Zelma O'Neill, Billy Costello (the voice of Pop-Eye in cartoons) and a London vaudeville company. African Theatres also presented the pantomime "Mother Goose" produced by Harold Mortlake (ii) with London principals. Pursuing the policy of presenting only the lightest and most acceptable entertainment, African Theatres also collaborated with Tom Arnold in presentin two London companies in revues led respectively by George Lacey and George Clarke. This entertainment of mediocre quality was sustained

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(i) Afrikaans dramatic companies had been touring the country since 1926 when Paul de Groot first inaugurated professional companies and the Hanekoms made their pioneering enterprises. They represented a considerable cultural force in the country where the deeply-ingrained religious and patriotic tenets of the Afrikaans-speaking community militated against wholehearted acceptance of the "bioscope" which was repugnant firstly in subject-matter and later additionally in language. The technique of these professional dramatic companies was very melodramatic and their productions being somewhat amateurish, their influence had remained rural. Henceforward however, Afrikaans companies improved in quality and increased in popularity. Towards the end of the thirties when the Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations greatly stimulated all Afrikaa endeavour, their activities became more widespread.

(ii) Harold Mortlake subsequently dramatised "The Pace of the Ox", a biography written by a South African, Marjorie Juta.

of Paul Kruger

only erratically and though temporarily piqued by its novelty, the public did not give it wholehearted support. It marked a final attempt to overcome the attractions of the cinema and in itself unworthy, it soon succumbed. Sporadic attempts to maintain theatrical entertainment were made during 1938 and 1939; but by 1940, all such efforts were abandonned and the theatres themselves were given over to cinema shows, The amateur theatre and one or two attempts to sponsor professional production of drama made by African Theatres alone survived. "Rooted in the circumstances of the times", the cinema prevailed; the theatre, with too small an esoteric public to sustain its possible experiments, succumbed.

The cinema's thorough impregnation of the social structure began in this period to be paralleled in the non-commercial field as well. The Film Division attached to the National Bureau of Educational and Social Research of the Department of Education instituted a service of educational films; national publicity was furthered by the making and showing of a large number of films by commercial firm municipalities etc, by the sending of films to the Imperial Economic Conference in Ottawa in 1932, by the visit of Sir Harry Lindsay, director of the Imperial Institute in 1936 and its provision with South African films and by the production of "They Built a Nation",a patriotic documentary and many publicity films by the Government; the forensic use of films by the South African Police; the legal use of films, the propaganda use of films in locally-sponsored Safety-First productions and other extensive exploitation of the cinema. In addition, African Consolidated Films Ltd instituted a 16mm Departmen which extended the use of films throughout South Africa. The cinema already impregnated South African social life. Films per se began now to touch it at almost every other point.(1)

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(1) All these other aspects are dealt with separately in relative chapters q.v..

Appendix to CHAPTER XII

The following represent the outstanding films shown each year :

1932 : "The Big House" (Wallace Beery, Chester Morris - Metro)
"Hell's Angels" (Jean Harlow)
"Le Million" (René Clair)
"Romance" (Greta Garbo - Metro)
"Abraham Lincoln" (Walter Huston)
"Hindle Wakes" (Sybil Thorndike)
"Moby Dick" (John Barrymore)
"Sunshine Susy" (Renate Muller)
"Earth" (Russian)
"Outward Bound" (Leslie Howard)
"The Smiling Lieutenant" (Maurice Chevalier)
"The Ghost Train" (Cicely Courtneidge, Angela Baddeley)
"Trader Horn" (Edwina Booth - Metro)
"Congress Dances" (Lillian Harvey)
"Ben Hur" (Ramon Novarro)
"Private Lives" (Norma Shearer, Robert Montgomery - Metro)
Many fine English films

"Congorilla" (Martin Johnson)

1933 : "Smilin' Thru" (Norma Shearer, Frederic March)
"Shanghai Express" (Marlene Dietrich, Warner Oland)
"Min and Bill" (Marie Dressler, Wallace Beery - Metro)
"Grand Hotel" (all star cast - Metro)
"Sally in Our Alley" (Gracie Fields)
"Frankenstein" (Boris Karloff, Colin Clive)
"Soldiers of the King" (Cicely Courtneidge, Jack Hulbert)
"Tell me Tonight" (Jan Kiepura)
"Gabriel over the White House" (Walter Huston)
"Arms and the Man" (English)
"The Good Companions" (Edmund Gwenn, Jessie Matthews)
"Rome Express" (Conrad Veidt)
"42nd Street"
"Dinner at Eight" (all star cast - Metro)
"Cavalcade" (Clive Brook, Diana Wynyard)
"The Private Life of Henry VIIIth"(Charles Laughton-LondonFilm

"East of Borneo"
Other documentaries

1934 : "The Sign of the Cross" (Cecil de Mille)
"Catherine the Great" (Elizabeth Bergner)
"Queen Christine" (Greta Garbo)
"Morning Glory" (Katherine Hepburn)
"The House of Rothschild" (George Arliss - Fox)
"The Thin Man" (William Powell, Myrna Loy - Metro)
"Berkeley Square" (Leslie Howard)
"It happened one Night" (Claudette Colbert, Clark Gable)
"100% Pure" (Jean Harlow)
"Of Human Bondage" (Leslie Howard, Bette Davis)
"The Barretts of Wimpole Street" (Charles Laughton,NormaShearer
"Jew Suss" (Conrad Veidt)
"Blossom Time" (Richard Tauber)
"My Song for You" (Jan Kiepura)
"The Merry Widow" (Jeanette Macdonald, Maurice Chevalier)
"Evensong" (Evelyn Laye)

"The Three Little Pigs" (Walt Disney)

"Igloo"
"Eskimo"
"Africa Speaks"
"Bring 'em Back Alive" (Frank Buck)
"Wild Cargo" (Frank Buck)

1935 : "Little Miss Marker" (Shirley Temple)
"Zoo in Budapest"
"Don Quixote" (Chaliapin, George Robey)
"I'm No Angel" (Mae West)
"The Scarlet Pimpernel" (Leslie Howard, Merle Oberon)
"Bengal Lancer" (Gary Cooper)
"One Night of Love" (Grace Moore)
"The Gay Divorce" (Ginger Rogers, Fred Astaire)
"Naughty Marietta" (Jeanette Macdonald, Nelson Eddy)
"Ruggles of Red Gap" (Charles Laughton)
"Sanders of the River" (Paul Robeson)
"Roberta" (Ginger Rogers, Fred Astaire, Irene Dunne)
"The Thirty Nine Steps" (Robert Donat)
"Escapade" (Luise Rainer)
"On Wings of Song" (Grace Moore)
"The Informer" (Victor McLaglen)
"Mutiny on the Bountry" (Charles Laughton, Clark Gable)
"Baboona" (Martin Johnson)

1936 : "A Night at the Opera" (the Marx Brothers)
"The Passing of the Third Floor Back" (Conrad Veidt)
"The Tunnel"
"The Ghost goes West" (Robert Donat - René Clair)
"Rose Marie" (Jeanette Macdonald, Nelson Eddy)
"The Petrified Forest" (Leslie Howard, Bette Davis)
"Rhodes of Africa" (Walter Huston, Oscar Homolka - G.British)
"Things to Come" (Raymond Massey - London Films)
"Captain Blood" (Errol Flynn - Warners)
"Louis Pasteur" (Paul Muni)
"Modern Times" (Charlie Chaplin)
"Mr Deeds goes to Town" (Gary Cooper - Frank Capra)
"The Great Ziegveld" (William Powell)
"Tudor Rose" (Nova Pilbeam)
"San Francisco" (Jeanette Macdonald, Spencer Tracey)
"My Man Godfrey" (William Powell, Carole Lombard)
"Showboat" (Irene Dunne, Paul Robeson)
"Romeo and Juliet" (Norma Shearer, Leslie Howard - Metro)

"The First World War" (Fox)

1937 : "Crime and Punishment"
"The Garden of Allah" (Marlene Dietrich, Charles Boyer)
"Born to Dance" (Eleanour Powell)
"Rembrandt" (Charles Laughton)
"Camille" (Greta Garbo, Robert Taylor)
"Three Smart Girls" (Deanna Durbin)
"The Good Earth" (Paul Muni, Luise Rainer)
"The Charge of the Light Brigade" (Errol Flynn)
"Fire over England" (Flora Robson)
"Maytime" (Jeanette Macdonald, Nelson Eddy)
"Rainbow on the River" (Bobby Breen)
"A Midsummer Night's Dream" (Elizabeth Bergner)
"Elephant Boy" (Sabu)
"Captains Courageous" (Spencer Tracey, Freddie Bartholomew)
"Parnell" (Clark Gable)
"King Solomon's Mines" (Caumont British)
"Theodora Goes Wild" (Irene Dunne)
"Topper" (Constance Bennett, Roland Young, Cary Grant)
"Craig's Wife" (John Boles, Rosalind Russell)
"Firefly" (Jeanette Macdonald, Allen Jones)
"Victoria the Great" (Anna Neagle - Herbert Wilcox)
"Marie Walewska" (Greta Garbo, Charles Boyer)

Films of King George VIth's Coronation.

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CHAPTER XIII

Advent of Twentieth Century-Fox and United Artists

The Film in Every Phase of National Life

1937-1940

CHAPTER XIII

Advent of Twentieth Century-Fox and United Artists

The Film in Every Phase of National Life

1937-1940

Owing to the necessity of finding overseas markets for their(1)

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(1) The development of sound films had resulted in a complete change of policy of the production firms throughout the world. Where previously a silent film might be adapted for exhibition in any foreign country by merely inserting translated captions, now the sound films with its unintelligibility to any audience except those of its language group, presented a considerably restricted market. Secondly, where previously the wild gesticulation and obvious theme of the silent film made it intelligible to almost every kind of audience, now restrained acting, increased finesse and subtlety of dialogue imposed a comparatively restricted public on the sound film.

This diminution of the cinema market and its consequent failure to guarantee the cost of production, fundamentally affected the entire industry. There were three ways of overcoming the restriction in audience which talkies implied - firstly, it was possible to make a film in several languages by using different principals or with particularly talented players, multilingual principals (some films were made in as many as five versions - English, Spanish, French, German and Italian); secondly it was possible to concentrate on what came to be known as "the international film" or one whose theme was as attractive and comprehensible to Continental as to English and American minds and whose appeal was little affected by "dubbing" or the intrusion of superimposed translated captions (many successful musical films were treated in this way); and thirdly, by exploiting territories where the supply of cinema entertainment had not yet reached saturation point.

The film produced in several language versions did not permit the finesse which most audiences had learnt to expect and its production was usually confined to "B" pictures and even lower types used for undiscriminating audiences, particularly in South America. The "international film" on the other hand, proved a great success and was shown throughout Europe and elsewhere. The American industry generally worked on the basis of the costs of production being guaranteed by the home market, the results of overseas exhibition representing the profits. This scheme worked with some success for the first few years of talkie production; but subsequently several factors intervened which made it less practicable.

In the first place, competition among production firms had developed in intensity. The advent of talkies with their expensive sound-recording equipment, a completely new technique necessitating qualified and highly-paid experts and many other expenses had automatically eliminated the many small production firms which had successfully produced silent films. To survive the revolutionary change in the cinema, the larger firms had been forced to amalgamate into powerful corporations whose vast resources had lifted competition on to a still high plane of financial outlay. To defray the now enormous costs of production, it was necessary to be assured of a constant and remunerative foreign market.

In the second place, though the "international film" became the production policy of every large American firm, there were signs that its first audiences would diminish in number. The nationalist tendencies which were gradually becoming glaring features of the totalitarian states of Europe made the showing of American films at least an oddity. The Abyssinian War and the imposition of sanctions by Britain and France made the position even more unhappy and eventually, when Italy banned the exhibition of films of certain American makes, it became obvious that the "international film" alone could not form a practicable basis for the American industry. The subsequent turn of events (such as the Spanish Civil War and Hitler's various Anschluesse) showed only

products, in March 1937 Arthur J. Kelley, vice-president of the United Artists Film Corporation arrived in South Africa "to make a study of local entertainment" and in April 1937, Otto W. Bolle of the Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation arrived in the Union for the purpose of arranging the exhibition and distribution of his company's films in South Africa and elsewhere. Remaining for two and a half months in the Union, Bolle returned to the United States to report to his principals. He landed again in South Africa in October 1937 and thenceforward the propagation of Twentieth Century-Fox's interests continued unbroken.

After the boom of the post-depression years, the South African cinema had settled down to a period of stable prosperity. Despite its magnificent "atmospheric" theatres and its widespread circuit of cinemas (Kinemas had endowed the smallest dorps with "bioscopes" and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer increased their number), the Union appeared to these representatives to present still further opportunity for development. In addition, the fact that African Consolidated Films Ltd no longer distributed Twentieth Century-Fox films and the public consequently had no opportunity of seeing such popular favourites as Shirley Temple, Sonja Henie, Tyrone Power, Henry Fonda, Loretta Young and other Fox stars, might be considered to have engendered a growing demand for their films. By May 1938, it was known that a company entitled Twentieth Century-Fox Film (S.A.) Pty Ltd (1) had been formed and that negotiations were already well under way in canvassing local

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too clearly that profits on American film production were likely seriously to be menaced. There was, in fact, every likelihood that almost the whole European market would disappear.

Accordingly there remained the third contingency - that of exploiting territories where cinema entertainment had not yet reached saturation point. These consisted mostly of the colonies and dominions of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and South Africa, although already amply supplied with cinemas for its small European population, was selected as one of the most likely terrains.

At the time (1936-1937), the major production firms in Americ were Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Twentieth Century-Fox (a new combine arising from William Fox's pioneering company), United Artists(one of the most powerful enterprises in the cinema industry), Radio Keith Orpheum (commonly known as R.K.O.), Paramount and Warner Brothers (lesser companies were Columbia, First National, Universa etc etc) almost all of whose films except M-G-M and United Artists were distributed and shown in South African by African Consolidate Theatres and Films Ltd. As the need for expansion of overseas markets grew acute, these firms were forced to consider outside development. (Warners for instance built their own cinema in Londo

(1) The director of Twentieth Century-Fox (S.A.)Pty Ltd were S.R.Kent, Walter J. Hutchinson, W.C. Michel, S. Towell, and Otto W. Bolle fo whom W. van Beveren alternated, all of the United States \

capital to build cinemas for the exhibition of Twentieth Century-Fox films. These negotiations were in progress throughout the Union and were particularly active on the Rand. The new company (which was purely a distributing organisation and had no intention of either owning or leasing cinemas except at the commencement of its operation, planned to distribute its films throughout the Union in theatres specially constructed for the purpose with the possibility of later exploiting the two Rhodesias, Kenya and Portuguese East Africa and an feasible ancillary territories. The prospect of the rapid appearance of new cinema theatres showing films of a make which had not been see for some time, considerably interested the cinema-going public which was also fully aware of the competitive nature of the enterprise.(i) Profit was made of the fact that the institution of the new circuit would give employment to South Africans and that, owing to the cinemas themselves being built by local enterprise, its financial success would benefit the country.(ii) On these and other points, Ott Bolle, managing director of Twentieth Century-Fox (S.A.) Pty Ltd expatiated fully to the Press in May 1938. There was much in the situation similar to Kinemas' debut eleven years previously but rapid though Kinemas' progress had been, the development of the new company plans was even more phenomenal.

The success with which Twentieth Century-Fox was able to canvass local capital exceeded even the most optimistic speculation on the part of the outside public (iii) and from August 1938, a steady

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(i) Public interest in the sensationally extensive plans of T.C-Fox was high, particularly in Johannesburg where, according to custom rumour-mongering ensued. It was reported that Mr Schlesinger's companies were in financial difficulties (to which the fact that construction work appeared to have ceased on the massive His Majesty's block in Eloff Street appeared to lend support), that African Theatres and Films had been bought by an Australian firm for £2,000,000, that Mr Schlesinger had reduced the price to a million and a half, that the Union Government would never allow the control of what had become a national institution to fall into outside hands, etc etc. So far from being moribund, Mr Schlesinger's companies shortly afterwards gave ample evidence of activity.

(ii) It was never mentioned, even by members of the local entertainment industry, that the existing structure improved on the Fox proposals insofar as the directors of cinema companies were almost all South Africans and had invested their own capital in enterprises. Fox, on the other hand, had no stake in the country.

(iii) The public, as always, was unaware of any lack in the cinema entertainment provided and the Union appeared to be very well supplied with cinemas. On the other hand, rising profits from commercial film exhibition indicated the possibilities of further exploitation.

succession of cinemas opened to form the new circuit. The first was the Twentieth Century Cinema in Durban owned and operated by Independent Picture Palaces Ltd which opened on the 15th August 1938 and shortly afterwards, there was a rapid succession of cinema-openings throughout the northern and central Union and particularly on the Rand.(1)

In October 1938, Bolle was joined by Walter J. Hutchinson, foreign manager of the Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation and one of the directors of Twentieth Century-Fox Film (S.A.) Pty Ltd , who

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(1) The following schedule records the opening of outlets for T.C-Fox films from May 1938 until September 1940 :
20th May 1938 - "The Palace", Boksburg, Transvaal
30th May 1938 - "The Metro", Bethlehem, O.F.S.
25th May 1938 - "Carlton", Witbank, Transvaal
2nd June 1938 - "Gil Vincente", Lourenco Marques, Mocambique
15th June 1938 - "Metro", Cradock, Cape
3rd August 1938 - "Metro", Umtata, Cape
22nd August 1938 - TWENTIETH CENTURY, Durban, Natal
10th October 1938 - "Metro", Klerksdorp, Transvaal
17th October 1938 - "Savoy", Queenstown, Cape
18th October 1938,- "Cine Ginasio", Beira, Mocambique
25th November 1938 - "New Radio", Germiston, Transvaal
16th December 1938 - "Apollo", Doornfontein, Johannesburg
19th December 1938 - "Astra", Orange Grove, Johannesburg
17th February 1939 - "Ritz", Mayfair, Johannesburg
30th March 1939 - New Town Hall, Winburg, O.F.S.
1st March 1939 - Paul Kruger Hall, Krugersdorp, Transvaal
10th April 1939 -"Plaza", Nelspruit, Transvaal
18th April 1939 - "Odeon", Rosebank, Johannesburg
24th April 1939 - "Dorny", Kroonstad, O.F.S.
1st May 1939 - "Savoy", Barberton, Transvaal
9th June 1939 - "Astor", Brakpan, Transvaal
9th June 1939 - "Royal", Durban, Natal
11th June 1939 - "Playhouse", Nairobi, Kenya
26th June 1939 - "Grand", Grahamstown, Cape
10th July 1939 - "Regal", Mombasa, Kenya
23rd July 1939 - "Empire", Dar-es-Salaam, Tanganyika
18th August 1939 - "Embassy", Port Elizabeth, Cape
20th September 1939 - "Ritz", Bloemfontein, O.F.S.
27th September 1939 - "Metro", Windhoek, South West Africa
30th September 1939 - "Avalon" (non-European), Durban, Natal
5th October 1939 - "Albert", Braamfontein, Johannesburg
20th October 1939 - "Savoy", Randfontein, Johannesburg
14th November 1939 - "Adelphi", Rosettenville, Johannesburg
17th November 1939 - "Century", Springs, Transvaal
24th November 1939 - "Argus", Ermelo, Transvaal
7th December 1939 - "Royal", Florida, Johannesburg
14th December 1939 - "Century", Roodepoort, Transvaal
16th December 1939 - "Odeon", Vereeniging, Transvaal
20th December 1939 - "President", Krugersdorp, Transvaal
21st December 1939 - "Lyric" (non-European), Fordsburg, Johannesbur
19th January 1940 - "Empire", Zanzibar
26th January 1940 - "Clarendon", Hillbrow, Johannesburg
23rd March 1940 - TWENTIETH CENTURY, Johannesburg
April 1940 - Seamen's Institute, Durban, Natal
23rd April 1940 - "Recreation Club", Messina, Transvaal
22nd July 1940 - "Rio" (non-European), Johannesburg
14th August 1940 -"Nyanza", Kisumu, Kenya
16th September 1940 - "Victory", Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia.

Many of these cinemas at first showed Twentieth Century-Fox films in conjunction with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and African Consolidated Films programmes. Some of the earlier outlets were ofcourse abandonned when new cinemas were subsequently built.

was then completing a tour of every foreign outlet for his firm's film Hutchinson surveyed the South African cinema market and early in December 1938, was able to announce an agreement arising from the earlier visit of Arthur W. Kelley, vice-president and foreign manager of United Artists, by which United Artists films were to be distributed along the circuit of cinemas supplied by Twentieth Century Fox (S.A.) Pty Ltd.(1) In July 1939, A.A. Lowe arrived in South Africa to establish distributing offices for United Artists' films in Johannesburg. While the two firms had arranged to distribute films on a coöperative basis (the products of the Twentieth Century studios being insufficient to maintain the circuit, many of whose country houses changed programmes three times a week), United Artists maintained a separate office. This merging of interest gave the combined opposition of the two companies a formidable quality and it was obvious that competition was to be of a serious order, surpassing even that originally offered by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

By this time, the Twentieth Century-Fox circuit was already firmly established by the opening of a number of cinemas, the giving of exhibitions in temporarily-leased halls and the construction of new houses. A number of small, privately financed companies had been formed to supply the necessary capital and one or two larger organisations such as Cinema Theatre Investments Pty Ltd which propounded more ambitious plans of building capacious cinemas in the larger towns of the Union. The astonishing development inspired by the advent of Twentieth Century-Fox (S.A.) Pty Ltd was most apparent on the Rand where their cinemas opened with such frequency that newspaper reports were head-lined with "AND STILL THEY COME", "YET ANOTHER CINEMA FOR THE REEF", etc. Pending the building of cinemas, Twentieth Century-Fox leased the Paul Kruger Hall at Krugersdorp and the Town Hall at Springs and other halls elsewhere; but this temporary expedient was soon obviated by the amazingly rapid appearance of their own cinemas,

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(1) This arrangement was confirmed in April 1939 but not before the public had been considerably confused by African Theatres' announcement in March of the completion of a contract with United Artists to show the films it controlled as well as Alexander Korda and Walter Wanger productions. These films were duly shown during 1939 and 1940 (notably "The Drum", "Stella Dallas", "Dead End", "The Adventures of Marco Polo", "Algiers" etc); but the contract held only for finished productions and the later stock of United Artists was exhibited in cinemas showing Twentieth Century-Fox films.

particularly in the Transvaal.(i) Concurrently African Consolidated Theatres and Films Ltd were equally active.

In 1938, Mr Schlesinger's entertainment companies had celebrated their Silver Jubilee (ii). During 1937 and 1938, they had proceeded with long-established plans of expansion and had opened several cinemas in the Union, notably the Gaiety at Oudtshoorn; the Savoy in Rosebank, Cape; the Scala in Claremont, Cape; and the super-cinema,

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(i) By March 1939, the new distributing company supplied films to the following cinemas :

"Astra", Orange Grove, Johannesburg
"Apollo", Doornfontein, Johannesburg
"Palace", Boksburg
"New Radio", Germiston
"Ritz", Mayfair, Johannesburg
"Metro", Bethelem, O.F.S.
"Twentieth Century", Durban
Paul Kruger Hall, West Krugersdorp
"Metro", Klerksdorp
"Savoy", Queenstown
"Carlton", Witbank
Town Hall, Kroonstad
Town Hall, Winburg
"Metro", Cradock
"Metro", Umtata
"Gil Vincente", Lourenco Marques
Sport Lisboa e Beira, Beira

To these were shortly added :
"Ritz", Bloemfontein
"Odeon", Rosebank, Johannesburg
"Astor", Brakpan
"Theatre Royal", Durban
"Avalon", Durban
"Globe", Port Elizabeth

In addition, construction work had already begun or was planned on :
"Twentieth Century", von Brandis Streets Johannesburg
"Albert", Braamfontein, Johannesburg
"Adelphi", Rosettenville, Johannesburg
"Clarendon", Hillbrow, Johannesburg
Pretoria (Twentieth Century)
Port Elizabeth (West End)
Krugersdorp
Springs
Randfontein
Roodepoort
Vereeniging
Alberton,
Woodstock, Cape
Wynberg, Cape

(ii) The occasion might have been used for a spectacular display of specially imported theatrical companies and outstanding films; but it was signalised instead by full-page articles of uninspiring character in the Daily Press and a record 64-page supplement of the Sunday Express (owned by Mr Schlesinger) of the 18th December 1938. A more striking manifestation might have lessened the public curiosity which had now become attached to the Twentieth Century-Fox circuit; but, on the other hand, it might have proved unnecessarily expensive.

the Colosseum in St George's Street, Cape Town.(i) The successful appearance of Twentieth Century-Fox cinemas in Johannesburg at the end of 1938 inspired African Theatres to make a competitive announcement (ii) early in 1939. The plans of a building scheme to provide Johannesburg and the Reef with four more "luxury theatres" were released and in due course, the Curzon in Hillbrow, the Royal in Orange Grove, the Savoy in Roodepoort and the Plaza in Primrose appeared.(ii) Simultaneously, African Theatres announced the building of other cinemas elsewhere notably the Protea at Paarl, Cape (opened in October 1939), the

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(i) The Cape Town Colosseum marked a new departure in cinema architecture and decor. The era of the "atmospheric" theatre was now past and the Colosseum embodied more modern features of dignified simplicity executed in chromium and black glass, mirrors and glass bricks. South Africa's first "atmospheric" theatre, the Alhambra in Cape Town now receded in prestige and became the city's second major cinema.

(ii) The following table gives some indication of the rate of expansion on the Rand alone, all cinemas except where otherwise indicated, distributing Twentieth Century-Fox films :

20th May 1938 - "Palace", Boksburg
25th November 1938 - "New Radio", Germiston
16th December 1938 - "Apollo", Doornfontein(T'vaal Theatre Enter-
19th December 1938 - "Astra",Orange Grove(New Era Theatres)prises)
17th February 1939 - "Ritz", Mayfair
1st March 1939 - Paul Kruger Hall, Krugersdorp (lease T.C.Fox)
—23rd March 1939 - "Plaza", Primrose (African Theatres)
18th April 1939 - Town Hall, Springs (leased T.C.Fox)
18th April 1939 -"Odeon" Rosebank (Transvaal Theatre Enterprises)
7th June 1939 -"Astor", Brakpan
—28th August 1939 - "Savoy", Roodepoort (African Theatres)
5th October 1939 - "Albert", Braamfontein (Cinema Theatre Invest-
16th October 1939 -"Royal", Orange Grove(African Theatres) ments)
20th October 1939 - "Savoy", Randfontein (T.& M. Theatres)
14th November 1939 - "Adelphi", Rosettenville (New Era Theatres)
17th November 1939 - "Century", Springs (Cinema Theatre Investment
—1st December 1939 - "Curzon", Hillbrow (African Theatres)
7th December 1939 - "Royal", Florida
14th December 1939 - "Century", Roodepoort (Century Theatres Ltd)
18th December 1939 - "Odeon", Vereeniging (J.D. Dickinson)
20th December 1939 - "President", Krugersdorp (T.& M. Theatres)
25th January 1940 - "Clarendon", Hillbrow (Cinema Theatre Invest
15th March 1940 - "TWENTIETH CENTURY",Johannesburg " ment
—23rd September 1940 - "Lake", Parkview (African Theatres)

Twentieth Century-Fox concentrated its activities on Johannesburg and competitive building activity reach almost ludicrous proportions. The appearance of a Fox cinema was almost immediately followed by a Schlesinger house or vice versa (viz "Astra"-"Royal" at Orange Grove; "Curzon" - "Clarendon" at Hillbrow; "Savoy" - "Century" at Roodepoort; etc) In several cases, these cinemas were a stone's throw from each other so that the cinema-going public came considerably to be influenced by the cinema with the best parking space.

Grand in Maitland, Cape (opened in August 1940), and other houses in Salt River, Muizenberg, and Kalk Bay, Cape.(i) So far from dissuading the rival company from promoting its interests in these areas, development continued and Cape Town in particular was advised to expect ne cinemas showing Twentieth Century-Fox films at Sea Point and Wynberg. By now saturation point seemed already to have been reached(ii); but, while African Theatres made no more public announcements of expansion the new company continued to promote its interests and to inspire the erection of cinemas throughout the Union.

The extraordinary expansion of outlets for Twentieth Century-Fox (S.A.) Pty Ltd continued throughout 1939 and the beginning of 1940. The outbreak of war and the subsequent complete closure of the European Market except for one or two minor areas such as Portugal, and Great Britain, made the need for an outlet for American productio the more vital. Hollywood's market was said to have been halved (3) and it was obvious that desperate attempts would soon have to be made to make good the deficiency. South Africa as a suitable terrain now assumed additional importance. It was doubtful whether the country with its comparatively inconsiderable European cinema-going public at the low wage level of its non-European population, could possibly stand further exploitation. Many observers considered that saturation point had been reached; but Twentieth Century-Fox continued to expres its desire for further outlets and particularly for a "major" house in the centre of Cape Town.

The novelty of Twentieth Century-Fox films undoubtedly attracted audiences at first. Few of the public noticed that the firs releases were dated 1937 or earlier (the company had about two years' production in hand) and soon a small number of feature films appeared to be circulating continuously round Johannesburg and Reef cinemas whereas African Theatres, working in conjunction with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer through Union Theatres, appeared to have a varied programme to offer at any time. The inferior quality of a great many Twentieth

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(i) Owing to war and other exigencies, some of these cinemas were not opened until two or three years later.

(ii) In Johannesburg alone, the proportion of cinemas to European population exceeded almost any other town in the British Commonwealth. Toronto for instance, with a population of more than half a million, had 112 cinemas; Johannesburg, with a population of about a quarter of a million, had more than sixty, that is, Toronto had one cinema per 5,636 population and Johannesburg had one cinema per approximately 4,000 population.

Century-Fox films was discounted by the attractions of the new cinema themselves.(i); but soon competition began to reach an appreciably desperate state of intensity. The war news prejudiced a considerable proportion of the public against patronising the cinema and, by the end of 1939, it was known that all the cinema interests were striving unduly for public support. The competition of the radio attained formidable proportions - people at first preferred to remain at home to listen to the broadcast news rather than go out to cinemas. In February 1940, African Theatres reduced the prices of admission to their "second circuit" cinemas such as the Plaza in Johannesburg and, despite the imposition of an increase in the Entertainments Tax later in the year, the reduction remained. Two weeks later, the intense competition which had made the cinema one of Johannesburg's most remarkable features was accentuated by the opening of the "Twentieth Century" in von Brandis Street and President Streets, a stone's throw from the Empire, Colosseum, Plaza and Metro, each of which seated well over 2,000.(ii) African Theatres' immediate reaction to this enterprise was a full-page advertisement in The Star of its coming attractions published on the opening night of the Twentieth Century. The press publicity given the opening of this cinema exceeded any previous cinema-opening and the public, knowing that it was being desperately cozened for support, paid little attention to these appeals for its patronage. A plethora of cinemas more than

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(i) The Adelphi at Rosettenville, for instance, would have been an outstanding cinema in a large town and greatly graced its previously unfavoured suburb. Other modern and well-designed cinemas appeared in suburbs where previously shoddy halls had sufficed.

(ii) Seating nearly 3,000, the Twentieth Century was opened on the 15th March 1940 by the Minister for the Interior, Mr Harry Lawrence, the feature film being "Stanley and Livingstone"(4). This remarkable theatre, built and decorated in ultra-modern style was constructed in record time for Cinema Theatres Investments Ltd. It consistently showed "first-release" films and owned the only four-manual organ in the country played by Dean Herrick, a popular cinema and broadcast personality.

The attractions of the Twentieth Century equalled (except in point of the Colosseum's orchestra) those of the adjacent super-cinemas and its advent provided the Johannesburg cinema-going public with the finest choice of cinema entertainment it had ever possessed.

On the other hand, it suffered the temporary disadvantage of lacking "subscribers". The Colosseum, Plaza and Metro had for years a large and constant public of subscribers with permanently booked seats for opening and Friday nights.

met its needs and engendered a more indifferent and undiscriminating attitude than previously.

Apart from routine publicising of outstanding films and the countering of a particular attraction at one cinema by the presentatio of an even greaterx at another, African Theatres encouraged the subtle development of different types of cinemas. The "second circuit" cinemas (such as the Plaza in Johannesburg, Princes in Durban, the Alhambra in Cape Town, etc) were "family theatres" specialising in horror, light musical, criminal drama and Wild West films. Now there appeared an approximation to the repertory cinema in the Curzon in Johannesburg which occasionally showed French films such as "Escape from Yesterday", "Abus de Confiance", "La Bête Humaine" etc under the sub-title "From the Curzon, London to the Curzon, Johannesburg" and at other times, outstanding films of previous years.(i) African Theatres also sought to endow other theatres such as the Empire in Johannesburg with a special reputation for showing good films and by careful selection of comedy favourites (such as "Q Planes", "Good Girls go to Paris", etc) and other films, they succeeded.(ii) This emphasis on reputation and the provision of specialised film entertainment in certain cinemas was a minor advantage lacked by the other companies and the public to a certain extent appreciated it. African Theatres increased its advantages in July 1940 by concluding a contract with Columbia Films permitting the exhibition of many outstanding comedies which were providentially apposite for the times.

1940 saw the South African cinema industry entering difficult times to which the ordinary hazards of war (such as the sinking of ships carrying films etc, shortage of equipment, etc) were of less importance than other factors. The departure of thousands of South African troops for the north not only subtracted their numbers from cinema audiences but reduced the remaining potential audience for economic reasons. Soldiers' dependants could not be considered a consistent contributor to cinema audiences. Secondly the war itself wit

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(i) The Curzon, a small and attractive theatre, caught the public fancy and its French seasons in particular were very successful.

(ii) The reputation so painstakingly built up around the Empire and other theatres for specialised cinema entertainment was frequently destroyed by the staging of theatrical shows (and particularly the Christmas pantomime) so that it was difficult to maintain a definit character.

its frequent occasion for horrifying and depressing news did not at first encourage consistent cinema-going. Thirdly, the erratic arrival pf overseas mails at first prevented the regular exhibition of newsreels, one of the most popular and attractive features on cinema programmes; and fourthly an increase in the price of petrol deterred a considerable amount of country and suburban audiences from patronising cinemas as much as before. Finally, though at first the cost of living rose but little and there was no need for immediate and stringent economy, it was thought that economic distress was a calculable factor of the future. The immediate effect of the war therefore was to intensify competitive effort and, particularly among the smaller cinemas, to engender fears for the future.(i)

The advent of the Twentieth Century-Fox and United Artists distributing agencies finally put an end to the independent ventures (ii) which had flickered on since the organisation of the industry in 1913. It was now impossible to canvass support from the general cinema

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(i) The war subsequently engendered a comparative boom in cinema entertainment.

(ii) In April 1938, Jack Sneider leased the Johannesburg City Hall to show "What becomes of the Children ?", a revived "moral drama" made by Sentinel; and later "Stowaway", a Twentieth Century-Fox film starring Shirley Temple (absent from the South African screen for some time) in celebration of her birthday. On the 17th August 1939, Sneider opened his own cinema, the "Savoy" in Wanderers Street, Johannesburg with "Stagecoach", a Twentieth Century-Fox production which ran for several weeks. Subsequently the Savoy showed a few unusual films such as "Moonlight Sonata" with Paderewski and Marie Tempest; but during 1940, Sneider entered into an arrangement with African Consolidated Films Ltd and the independent nature of his enterprise ceased.

In 1938 a further independent project appeared in "Associated Films (Pty) Ltd" which offered to supply independent showmen with regular weekly programmes, documentary films being its special feature. Exhibiting first in the Zionist Hall in Cape Town and later in its own cinema, the "Forum" in Longmarket Street, this company survived only a few months.

At other times, attempts were made independently to show films imported by the few small film-distributing agences which opened offices in the Union. One of these was "General Film Services Ltd" directed by the Kalusky brothers who imported and sold films from its head office in Johannesburg. It supplied a few cinemas such as the Royal in Germiston which, opened in June 1940, stood on the site of the old Vaudette. Another was the"Modern Film Corporation", also of Johannesburg.

These organisations distributed films only, "road-showing by independent exhibitors having completely ceased. The excessive exploitation of the Union by the three large cinema interests made their success almost impossible.

going public; but it was possible to canvass the esoteric public that had forcefully declared itself prior to and during the Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations of 1938. This public consisted of a predominantly suburban and rural section of the community which was passionately addicted to everything indigenous to the country provided it were expressed in Afrikaans and bore no trace of "jingo" influence.(i) As far as the cinema was concerned, Afrikaner interest had been considerably aroused by the showing throughout the union of ~~'n Nasie~~ " 'N Nasie hou Koers", a lengthy film of the Centenary Celebrations produced by scores of amateur cameramen under the supervision of Dr Hans Rompel. Commentated in Afrikaans, this film was first shown in Reef towns in August 1939 (5) and thenceforward was exhibited at special functions such as braaivleisaande throughout the Union to exceptionally enthusiastic audiences.(ii)

The intensely nationalistic movement stimulated by the Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations and accentuated by division of opinion over participation in the Second World War, resulted in the formation of the "Reddingsdaadbond", an organisation pledged to the "salvation" or rise of Afrikanerdom in every one of its aspects and particularly the economic. The Bond instituted a number of subsidiary branches which sponsored and propagandised Afrikaner trade, culture, sport, etc (iii) and in July 1940, Dr N. Diedrichs, "Hooforganisasieleier" of the Reddingsdaadbond, launched a further branch to deal with film production.(6)(iv) The "Reddingsdaadbond-Amateur-Rolprentorganisasie" or RARO as it was called, was an organisation by which amateur cameramen were encouraged to make, not fiction feature-length films, but short newsfilms and "interest shorts" which could be used in cinema supporting

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(i) The movement was enormously stimulated by the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 which precipitated a sharp division of opinion in the Union and revitalised the racial issue which it was hoped the Fusion Government had finally extinguished.

(ii) At its first anniversary in 1940, Die Transvaler (7) computed tha "'N Nasie hou Koers" had been shown 285 times in 144 places to at least 50,000 people. So far from its interest's waning, audiences grew larger and more enthusiastic as the anti-Government and pro-Afrikaner movement gathered way after the outbreak of war.

(iii) The Reddingsdaadbond also formed a branch to encourage professional theatrical activities and one or two companies toured under its aegis, notably the Hanekoms, Siegfried Mynhardt, etc.

(iv) Part of the proceeds from the exhibition of "'N Nasie hou Koers" whose cost of production ha d already been covered, were devoted to the funds of the Reddingsdaadbond.

programmes. It originated from Dr Rompel's earlier "Volksrolprentbond scheme which had produced "'N Nasie houw Koers" and was an extensive scheme. RARO proposed to establish branches wherever a minimum of five amateur cameramen were to be found, such branches to take full advantage of the facilities provided by the Reddingsdaadbond itself. The technical equipment of each branch was to be available to its members and coöperation between the branches would ensure both economy and fluent circulation, as well as the covering of noteworthy events by a large number of cameramen. (i) All this activity was confined to the I6mm gauge owing to the amateur nature of cameramen.

Meanwhile a film-distributing organisation , the "Volksbioskop-Maatskappy Beperk" or VOBI had been founded.(ii) It operated entirely in I6mm and advertised a circuit including 300 schools, Reddingsdaad-bond branches and commercial cinemas. It offered for distribution a number of sub-standard feature films (of the sensational type design-ed for American "hick" audiences) made in the United States and supporting programmes of Afrikaans short films made by amateurs. The firm was also an agency for projectors and electrical installations as well as for film-renting to schools, cultural organisations, etc. RARO and VOBI resulted in the appearance of the "Reddingsdaadbond Bioskope" which began giving exhibitions in Reef towns in August I940. It showed an "Afrikaanse Voorprogramme" made by RARO and one or two of VOBI's feature films such as "The Girl of the Limberlost" and Jackie Cooper in "Boy of the Streets". Its published slogan was "Ondersteun U Eie Ondernemings" or "Support your own Undertakings". These shows were given in various halls, including schools.

The potential competitive effect of these enterprises was at this early stage incalculable. It was obvious however that, so far from suffering from the effects of the war as in the case of the established cinema interests, they would prosper by them in point of audiences. In point of equipment, development, etc, they would be at equal disadvantage. Their public would inevitably remain small and a

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(i) RARO's first film was the documentation of the burial of Dr N.J. van der Merwe, a prominent apostle of Afrikaner ideals, at Bloemfontein by three of its member.

(ii) VOBI was registered about the middle of I940 under the direction of J.G. van der Merwe, N. Diedrichs (founder of RARO), P.J. Baden horst, W. Louw, T. Blok and C.F. Visser.(8) Its guiding principle was that the film is more powerful than force - "die klankprent deurdringende invloed van die klankprent is oneindig sterker en meer oorweldigend as wrede vernietiging".

considerable proportion still patronise established cinemas; but, contingent on the quality of their film supply (i), there was no reason why these enterprises should not develop and, engaging the patronage of the predominant Afrikaans-speaking section of the public for which no special film provision had ever been made, institute a formidable opposition to the orthodox cinema interests.

There was much alien to the Afrikaner attitude in the current cinema and the outbreak of war emphasised features found objectionable By 1938, the South African cinema had become highly specialised , its sources of supply being strictly canalised.(ii) Not only was there a complete absence of Continental films (iii) but also there were very few British films and no documentaries as of previous years. The prevalent motif of production was "love interest" which expressed a return to simplicity and purity after the flamboyant excesses of "sex appeal". The rigorous application of the Hays Production Code to the American industry had devitalised the cinema and had resulted in the steady production of completely innocuous and comparatively pointless films. The slightest originality (such as "The Yank at Oxford") was enthusiastically acclaimed and, if films failed to appeal through imaginativeness, they were forced to rely on impressiveness (i.e. the lengthy "Marie Antoinette" and the spectacular "Robin Hood", the latter an extremely popular film). The historical film declined to the point of ngligible appearances and, among a considerably reduced number of musicals, the sole outstanding films were Deanna Durbin's "100 Men and a Girl" and "Mad about Music". New features of ordinary fiction film production were the"Dr Kildare" series made by Metro and the appearance of out-of-door romantic films featuring Dorothy Lamour in a sarong as "a child of the wilds", tropics, jungle, etc, an "escapist" type which had great popular appeal. The only outstanding film of the year was Walt Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" which, though completed

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(i) VOBI announced that it would "nie op su louere rus nie" but intended presenting films in the near future showing the people their own Afrikaner films stars. This proposal gave the organisation great potential importance but while war conditions impeded its development, little could be done in its execution.

(ii) Annappendix at the end of this chapter details the outstanding films of each year.

(iii) The only Continental film shown in 1938 was the Yiddish "Der Dybbuk" made in Poland by Warsaw Studios and shown by African Theatres. It was a remarkable film which aroused much interest.

many months before, was shown in South Africa only in August 1938.(i) During 1938 (the year of "competent mediocrity"(9)) films exhibited no identifiable tendency except a certain maladroitness in American production which the "cinema mind", bludgeoned into a state of all-acquiescing apperception, failed to detect.

During 1939, considerable improvement was detectable, increasin towards the end of the year. American maladroitness waned and achieved a final deplorable expression in "The Adventures of Marco Polo"(ii Musical films disappeared almost completely (iii) and the historical film which had suffered total eclipse showed signs of revival through the success of Warner's biographical "Juarez". The Continental film was enterprisingly and successfully revived by African Theatres in "Mayerling" and "Carnet de Bal". There were several excellent films produced by the English studios of American firms and numerous impressive British films such as "The Citadel", "South Riding" and "Pygmalion" (one of the most popular films of the year). Technically "The Wizard of Oz"(iv) provided an innovation by animatin a fantastic fairy story. American production continued along technically perfect lines and tended on the one hand towards Wild West drama which for the first time in many years was shown in major cinemas(v) and on the other, to a sudden and surprising courage and originality which had previously been conspicuous by their absence

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(i) Running to record seasons (four weeks in Johannesburg), this film feature-length cartoon provided a welcome innovation in a year distinguished by its lack of originality.

(ii) The playing of the name-part by Gary Cooper, the manifest American accent of the chief characters and the "Hollywood touch" in harem and other scenes antagonised discriminating spectators.

(iii) The first Gilbert and Sullivan production, "The Mikado" produced in Technicolor with excellent voices and decor, had a disappointing reception.

(iv) The screen-play of "The Wizard of Oz" was written by the South African Noel Langley. A remarkable film in concept and originality, it failed to make deserving impression.

(v) "Union Pacific" marked in length and spectacular scope the clima of a movement which included "Dodge City", "Stagecoach" and "Come and Get It".

and which now contrived to give the cinema something of its proper significance.(i)

The appearance of the propaganda film marked a new and highly(ii) significant departure; but apart from one or two fiction films with a war relevance, the effect of the outbreak of war on feature films was not immediately apparent. The year 1940 was distinguished by a remarkably consistent tendency towards films production of popular books and famous biographies.(iii) A second feature-length cartoon appeared in Max Fleischer's "Gulliver's Travels" which, having little novel to offer, was not particularly successful and African Theatres, inspired by previous success, presented the three French films "Escape from Yesterday", "Abus de Confiance" and "La Bête Humaine". An indentifiabl tendency of 1940 was the lengthening of feature films (possibly throug the success of the 4-hour "Gone with the Wind") to two hours or more. In almost all these cases, the subjects were drawn from popular books worthy of extensive treament; but the tendency came also to apply to a great many trivial films. Towards the middle of the year, numerous light-hearted comedies were shown to combat the depressing war atmosphere and though many were laboured owing to the removal of restriction on length, they served their purpose and later increased in number(IO). On the whole, the South African cinema began to display far more animating characteristics than it had done for several years. Its films were more purposeful and had more substance and stimulating quality than previously and though much of their value was lost through the persistence of the "cinema mind" with its undiscriminating and unreceptive attitude, the significance of the cinema under war circumstances began increasingly to be appreciated by the general public.

This had been apparent even before the actual outbreak of hostilities. During 1938, public opinion in the United States had been

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(i) Particularly noteworthy were the efforts of the two firms, Warner Brothers and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Metro made two interesting experiments in "The Wizard of Oz" and "On Borrowed Time" (both of which failed to attain exceptional popularity in South Africa), and produced numerous original films such as "Idiot's Delight" and "The Women" which also failed to strike the South African public's fanc Warners produced a number of novel dramas and comedies which expressed a welcome courage in breaking away from the conventional "boy meets girl" theme. Their most signal achievement was the production of "Confessions of a Nazi Spy" which timeously introduced a new type of film to the South African cinema.

(ii) Detailed treatment follows.

(iii) Among the former were the four-hour "Gone with the Wind" for which specially raised admission prices were charged and which

shocked by the revelation of a network of Nazi organisations throughout the country and the subsequent prosecution of a number of its officials on charges of espionage, etc. The sensational effect of the Press reports of the proceedings was itensified by the subsequent appearance of a book entitled "~~Confessions of a Nazi Spy~~ The Nazi Spy Conspiracy in America" written by Leon Tourrou, one of the "G-men" in charge of the investigations who had resigned his official position for the purpose of writing the account. Shortly afterwards, it was announced that Warner Brothers intended making a film of the book and that they had met with much obstruction and threats of violence. When"Confessions of a Nazi Spy" was shown in the United States and England, it created a profound impression and its advent in South Africa was eagerly awaited. Though it was then not publicly known, African Consolidated Films Ltd had bought the exhibition rights and African Consolidated Theatres intended showing it along their circuit. The film was a straightforward documentation of the facts exposed by the book and, produced in the face of violent opposition, continued to cause a widespread sensation in the United States where the trial of its chief characters, which had aroused intense national interest, remained fresh in the public's mind.

The Union Board of Censors banned the exhibition of "Confessions of a Nazi Spy in August 1939 and an outcry was forthwith raised.(11) Public feeling had previously been aroused by the Prime Minister's (General Hertzog) apology to the German Government for certain derogatory remarks made by the Mayor of Port Elizabeth (Councillor Maclean in a public speech. Indignation was expressed at the Union Government's apparently propitiatory attitude into which the banning of "Confessions of a Nazi Spy" seemed perfectly to fit. The fact that the book itself was sold and read throughout the Union made the Censor Board's decision the more inconsistent. The film had been seen overseas by numerous South Africans who were at pains to make known both in the Press and in private the favourable impression it had created. Direct appeals were made in the correspondence and other columns for

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proved an outstanding success; "The Stars Look Down"; "Northwest Passage", "Rebecca"; "Wuthering Heights"; "The Rains Came"; "The Grapes of Wrath"; "All This and Heaven Too"; "Pride and Prejudice etc etc. Among the latter were the related "Young Tom Edison" and "Edison the Man"; "Elizabeth and Essex"; "Stanley and Livingstone "The Story of Alexander Graham Bell"; "Dr Ehrlich" etc etc. The musical film, apart from Deanna Durbin's "First Love" and Jascha Heifetz "They Shall Have Music", was poorly represented.

the release of the film and the opportunity was used to abuse the Censor Board. The outbreak of war early in September 1939 and the resignation of General Hertzog as Prime Minister intensified public indignation; but it was not until October that the ban was withdrawn and the film released for public exhibition.

On the 18th October 1939, "Confessions of a Nazi Spy" was first shown in South Africa at the Empire Theatre in Johannesburg where it ran for six weeks and for long seasons elsewhere. It is impossible to assess the effect of its showing. It appeared at a crucial time when public opinion was sharply divided between allegianc to General Hertzog and his horror of war and support of General Smuts and his avowed enmity to Nazism. The cleavage was deep and bitter; but there undoubtedly existed a considerable body of waverers. It is possible that "Confessions of a Nazi Spy" served to convert at least a proportion of these people to anti-Nazi sentiments and it is certain that it served to confirm a great many others in their determination to support the South African war effort. If the effects of the film could not be assessed in appreciable terms, it is at least certain that it had a subtle influence on every type of opinion and, though its thesis might have been rejected by recalcitrants and its details forgotten, a residuum of impressiveness remained. Unlike its successors, the film was straightforward and lacking in self-consciousness or undue pointedness. No prejudice could discount its impressiveness and something of its import was bound to remain.

The sudden significance of the cinema was sustained when in November 1939, the British propaganda film "The Lion has Wings" was first shown in South Africa. This was a hastily and shoddily produced film which aroused enthusiasm in the anti-Nazi public and derision in others.(1) In January 1940, "Beasts of Berlin" had its South African premiere in Durban at Prince's. Produced cheaply and shoddily by a band of refugees, this film appeared on the screen without reputation or the saving grace of the name of a known production firm. It have a

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(1) At the investigation into the damage done to Potchefstroom University College by soldiers of the adjacent camp held in September 1940, the manager of a cinema revealed (12)that when"The Lion has Wings" was shown there, a certain section of the audience cheered the appearance of Hitler which the soldiers actively resented. He was forced to mount the stage and demand order after stopping the performance. After its first performance in Lourenco Marques, the further showing of the film was banned by the police in Portuguese East Africa. The propaganda effect of the film was negligible.

straightforward and horrifying portrayal of brutal Nazi methods but the amateurish quality of its production annulled its potential effect. Despite considerable local publicity, the propaganda value of this film was negligible. "Professor Mamlock" which was shown in July 1940 was widely publicised, prominence being given to the fact that Soviet Russia had attempted to withdraw it from circulation after the signing of the Russo-German agreement. Excellently produced this film might have had an appreciable propaganda effect had it not been for the irritation caused by its English captions and the fact that the public now looked to the cinema for distraction only. Cinemas had begun to advertise feature films "This is NOT a War Film "An Englishman's Home" shown in May 1940 was a poor modernisation of Guy du Maurier's famous imaginative play of pre-Great War years. It was banned in its original form by the British Air Ministry but appeared in South Africa at an extremely appropriate time when Nazi parachute troops were invading Holland and Belgium. Its theme however was handled with such extraordinary clumsiness that its effect was more depressing than inspiring. Of other fiction propaganda films, "The Mortal Storm" shown by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer from September 1940 onwards was outstanding for its straightforward and unlaboured production.(i) "Four Sons" on the other hand lacked finesse and subtlet Other films were more melodramatic than purposeful. Their effect was generally to confirm the converted and to irritate or amuse the pro-Nazi element. On the whole, with the exception of "Confessions of a Nazi Spy", the first feature-length propaganda films cannot be said to have had positive results. The public regarded the cinema, except for the newsreels in the supporting programme, essentially as entertainment and the few earnest-minded addicts who were receptive to the suggestion of propaganda films, were already potential converts to the cause advocated. On the much larger public with anti-Nazi sentiments, propaganda films probably exercised a subtle though comparatively unimportant effect in maintaining hatred, anger and determination; but to the small section with pro-Nazi and anti-Government sympathies, they were subjects for derision. With the

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(i) Despite the official policy of neutrality of the United States Government, American film producers immediately and forthrightly engaged in anti-Nazi propaganda, not only for the sake of appealing to the audiences of belligerent countries but also, to their credit, on principle.

exception of "Nazi Spy","Professor Mamlock", and "Mortal Storm", the propaganda purpose of these films was clumsy to a degree and, on the public they were intended most to impress, they exercised an opposite effect.

The most powerful propaganda influence of the cinema both before and during the war was exercised by actuality films i.e. newsreels, documentaries such as "The March of Time", and officially-inspired "shorts" such as "Ring of Steel", "Britannia" is a Woman", etc. The political significance of newsreels was emphasised at the end of 1937 when the famous "Panay" incident occurred(1); but a more consistent influence was that of "The March of Time", a monthly documentary on various significant subjects many of whose issues were shown in South Africa by African Theatres. Differing from the newsreel's purely factual presentation with descriptive rather than inspired commentary, "The March of Time" forthrightly expressed a policy and a sense of values which its films were carefully selected to illustrate. In many respects, it resembled the leading article and the newsreel the ordinary press report. The definite and unequivocal opinions of this documentary greatly impressed Union audiences and its introduction to cinema programmes was enthusiastically welcomed. By the beginning of 1938, it was, apart from the cartoon, the most popular item in supporting programmes. As long as "The March of Time" confined itself to what for South African audiences, were uncontroversial affairs, no official notice was taken of its subject-matter; but in time it treated with the Sino-Japanese War, the Italo-Abyssinian campaign; the Austrian Anschluss and the "September Crisis" of 1938 in so unprevaricating a manner that certain members of the Union Parliament began to regard it with suspicion. At the time, the policy of the Union Government as shaped by General Hertzog was devoted towards maintaining good relations with Nazi Germany. The policy of "The March of Time" was directly

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(1) The "Panay" was a United States' gunboat which the Japanese bombed from the air and shelled from the land without provocation when she was leaving the war zone at Nanking. Twenty officers and men were killed and many were seriously wounded. The incident inflamed public opinion in the United States and despite the fear of mounting "war fever", a newsreel graphically showing the action (by chance, a cameraman had been present) was officially sanctioned for exhibition. It was said to have been ensured for £60,000 and made a considerable sensation overseas. Its exhibition in South Africa in January 1938 aroused great interest.
Similar influence on public emotion had been exercised by isolated newsreels such as the lengthy films of the Coronation of King George VI shown in May 1937.

opposed to such propitiation and questions regarding its adequate censoring (as well as that of newsreels) began to be asked in the House of Assembly early in 1939. By February, "March of Time" issues had been shown dealing trenchantly with contemporary problems and including "Britain and Peace" (embodying the rise of the Third Reich and Britain's dangerous complaisance), "Refugees of Today and Tomorrow" (showing Chinese, Spanish and Jewish refugees and expatiating on the suffering caused by Nazi aggression and anti-Semitism) and shortly afterwards, "Inside the Maginot Line". All these films greatly impressed Union audiences; but, apart from current approbation of "The March of Time", newspapers published paragraphs such as the following (13) :

HITLER BOOED AND CHEERED IN CINEMA

"Theatre-goers booed and hissed during the showing of a newsfilm "Refugees" at the Colosseum Theatre, Cape Town, this week. This pictur was awarded a 1939 Academy prize and had been rushed to South Africa to show what is happening to refugees in Europe. Derisive jeers greete the appearance of Hitler dressed in his bullet-proof coat. On one night however, it was noticed that there were both booing and cheers at the appearance of the German leader. Those who applauded and those who booed kept their tempers however and no untoward incident took place."(1)

Subsequent to the outbreak of war and the resignation of the Hertzog Cabinet, few significant issues were shown. These included "Japan at War", "The Battle Fleets of England" (which was appositely shown in November 1939) and "Vatican City" (which, shown subsequent to Italy's entry into the war, emphasised the Pope's efforts for peace). By that time, the newsreel had assumed a greatly increased importance.

The vitalising effect of the newsreel was never more deeply appreciated than from the outbreak of war onwards. Bare news, as

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(1) This particular incident provoked Mr F.C. Erasmus, Nationalist member for Morreesburg, to ask the Minister of the Interior, Mr R. Stuttaford, whether the film in question could not be withdrawn from circulation. It contained, he said(14), grossly prejudiced propaganda against a friendly state, namely Germany, and such expressions as "Hitler's Drama of Hate goes on", "the blackest chapter of history is being written in Germany", etc. Dr van Nierop M.P. was associated with this protest but, the film having been passed by the Censor Board, it could not be withdrawn. At other times, protests were made in the House of Assembly; but the showing of "The March of Time" continued and the public was not deprived of its considerable influence.

published in the Press, had a tendency to react only superficially and to produce no coherent realisation of the state of affairs. The newsreel, arriving by airmail a few days later, illustrated by picture and commentary the situation which the newspaper could only partially describe.(1) With the abandonment of the airmail service and the disorganisation of sea transport, newsreels began to arrive only at erratic intervals which, if anything, heightened their interest. The operation of official cameramen with the fighting forces greatly enhanced their contents and many actual battles in the air and at sea were shown. All these films were avidly watched by the South African public of every shade of opinion and, their intrinsic interest apart, the propaganda note in their commentary which had been a soon development after the outbreak of war, found a mark in an appreciable number of cases.

Finally there was a very small class of actuality films which gav information of a war relevance. It included Paramount's "Ring of Steel" dealing with the British Navy and Movietone's "Britannia is a Woman" dealing with the war activity of British women, both hastily produced and uncoördinated sequences of war activity with a clumsy propaganda content. Of the several films known to have been sponsored by the British Ministry of Information, none was shown in South Africa though the country presented an exceptionally fruitful field for propaganda.(ii)

A similar delay in using the film for war information purposes was attributable to the Union Government which in 1938, had released a full-length propaganda film entitled "They Built a Nation - Die Bou van 'n Nasie" (iii) as part of the Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations. Produced by African Film Productions Ltd for the Publicity and Travel Department of the South African Railways, Harbours and Railways, this ambitious historical film was intended to engender national spirit and the ideal of the Fusion Government; but its actual effect was widely

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(i) The first war newsreels showed the French Army going into action and manning the Maginot Line, the German warship"Schleswig-Holstein" bombarding the Westerplatte fort at Danzig, the Firth of Forth air raid by German pilots, scenes of British troops in France, air battles, the withdrawal of Allied troops from Norway, and (one of the most striking items) the battle of the River Plate ending in the destruction of the "Graf Spee".

(ii) From 1941 onwards, the British Ministry of Information maintained a steady supply to South Africa of war information. The Film Section had taken some time to organised and to produce films.

(iii) The production of "They Built a Nation - Die Bou van 'n Nasie" is dealt with in detail in the chapter on Film Production

divergent and it served more to perpetuate than to bridge the racial cleavage which the Celebrations had served more emphatically to declare.(i) This maladroit attempt to exploit the propaganda value of the film dissuaded the Union Government from an active policy of production to combat the propaganda films produced by less myopic governments. By May 1938, it was known that Nazi Germany proposed(15) producing films dealing with German colonial endeavour in Africa (ii) and in December 1939 (after the outbreak of war), news was published in the South African Press to the effect that the Nazi Propaganda Ministry had faked a film showing the oppression of whites by blacks in South Africa and other travestied scenes (16). In October 1940, the Manchester Guardian stated (17) that the German state-controlled film industry was making a film about Paul Kruger with Emil Jannings in the title-role which was expected to emerge as "a violent piece of anti-British propaganda".(iii) Finally the Reddingsdaadbond' and other organisations' indifferent attitude to the war and the consistent sponsoring of "Afrikaner" ideals at the expense of patriotism through films etc commanded attention.

It was not until June 1940 that the Union Government actively took advantage of film propaganda. Previously it had been left to the "African Mirror", a commercial weekly newsreel produced by African Film Productions Ltd to stimulate the war effort by patriotic items and inspiring commentary. The Bureau of Information attached to the Ministry of the Interior then commissioned African Film Productions Ltd to make a short documentary embodying the outstanding aspects of military and general war activity. Entitled "Fighters of the Veld"

(i) Running for more than two hours, the magnitude of its conception far exceeded its production resources(it was once described as"a talkie film produced with silent technique"). The English version bored its audiences while the Afrikaans aroused the wildest enthusiasm among certain sections, the appearance of Rhodes, British soldiers, General Smuts, etc being heartily hissed and booed while Kruger, Piet Retief, Andries Pretorius etc were enthusiastically applauded. The film was eventually withdrawn.

(ii) General von Epp, leader of the Reich Colonial League, offered a prize equivalent to £400 for the best scenario for a film on the colonies.

(iii) Furthermore it was known that Nazi Germany had used films with impressive effect in the subjugation of Denmark and Norway and in the prosecution of her interests in Spain and elsewhere. The showing of "Baptism of Fire" depicting the juggernaut effect of German arms in Poland cowed diplomatic and other representatives. Other such films were subsequently made and shown.

and consisting mainly of material edited from the "African Mirror", this film was released by special arrangement with all three cinema interests, for showing throughout the Union on the 31st July 1940.(i) Meanwhile the Bureau of Information had obtaining the commissioning of an African Film Productions cameraman, F.D. Dixon, to film scenes of South African troops in East and North Africa. The appearance of "Fighters of the Veld" undoubtedly stimulated official interest in information films and, though it was several months before another officially-sponsored film was released for public exhibition, towards the end of the year various departments (notably Defence) commissioned special productions. The Union Unity Fund with its subsidiary branches, the Union Unity Truth Service and Truth Legion which were founded to combat subversive propaganda and to propagate the aims and ideals of the Smuts Government, also produced both English- and Afrikaans-sounded films towards the end of 1940.(ii)

These pronounced developments in the use of films under war circumstances tended fundamentally to alter public reaction to the cinema in general. The over-exploitation of the South African cinema which had re-commenced in 1938, had tended to perpetuate the "cinema mind" with its almost complete lack of discrimination and its passive recipience of the soporofic quality of films. The "escape" which the cinema had at first offered was now a deeply-ingrained social habit and (iii) by 1938, owing to restrictions on American production, films were forced to be so aseptic in character that they could present little

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(i) Undistinguished in conception and photography, "Fighters of the Veld" made little impression and though dutifully eulogised by the Daily Press, was adversely reviewed in The Forum.(18) Copies of the film were distributed in Great Britain and throughout the Commonwealth of Nations and an Afrikaans version was prepared. The film served a very useful purpose in accentuating the need for further South African information films.

(ii) These productions are dealt with in detail in the chapter on Film Production.

(iii) The old custom of "going to the bioscope on Saturday night" had, for thousands of people in the urban areas (particularly on the Witwatersrand), been changed into "Tuesday and Friday are my cinema nights" or "Let's go to the cinema...'at least once or twice a week. The advent of Twentieth Century-Fox cinemas and the social competition they involved (the social superiority of "have you seen the new Fox film ? I have." was an appreciable factor) raised the figures of cinema attendance still higher and rendered more widespread and intensified the characteristics of the "cinema mind".

that was stimulating or significant.(i) The specific effect of various types of films however varied in accordance to both time and place. This was particularly evident in the case of newsreels whose propagand bias was evident both to the predisposed and the opposed elements of audiences. Towards the end of 1938, British newsreels were much occupied with publicising the activities of the new King of England (especially apropos the royal visits to France and the United States), a preponderance which considerably irritated Afrikaner and other elements and though it was frequently pointed out that "cinema exits are always open", irritation continued. Resentment against publicity of the British royal house was accentuated during the Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations when a wave of intense nationalism swept the country. The propaganda content of newsreels increased from 1938 onwards and was intensified by the outbreak of war. Concomitantly both enthusiasm and irritation increased according to the predilections of various sections of an audience.(ii)

The influence of clumsy propaganda(which was particularly resented by the country public) was further heightened by controversy over the playing of "God Save the King" at the conclusion of cinema performances.(iii) In May 1940, the question was aired in the House of

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(i) In turn such films forced their audiences into passive acceptance of trivial amusement and where previously people would readily giv their opinions on the merit of a film, now, taxed with lack of discrimination, they would querulously reply "I go to the cinema t be amused, not to be critical". This debasing tendency was the mos characteristic feature of the fictional cinema of the times.
Though this tendency was universally effective, the effect of certain films was by no means consistent in South Africa. As elsewhere in the world, Union audiences differed in taste from town to town and, in the largest towns, from cinema to cinema. In Johannesburg for instance, the Plaza audience had quite different predilections to the Colosseum. These variations are inexplicable even to th officials of the industry.

(ii) Immediately after the outbreak of war, some audiences (particularl in Cape Town where the Great War film "The Dawn Patrol" was then showing) exhibited a boisterousness and excessive enthusiasm for t new war effort which distressed the most favourably disposed sections. The clumsy propaganda of the average newsreel soon began to achieve a directly opposed effect in South Africa. Typical of feeling current in 1940 is this extract from a letter to Die Volksblad (19) - "Formerly my wife and I went regularly once a wee to the bioscope. Since the jingo spirit prevailed and Empire propaganda in every possible form was stuck down our throats, we stayed away. The small sum which we otherwise would have paid out on this, we enclose for the Reddingsdaadfonds."

(iii) This had always been stigmatised as a "cheapening" of the National Anthem and when the Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations first revived racial cleavage in the Union, the issue was once again raised and bitterly contested. The outbreak of war with its intensification of dissension, increased prevalent dissatisfaction and the foundation of Afrikaner organisations such as the Reddingsdaad

Assembly where previously it had frequently been discussed, the Prime Minister, General Smuts, refusing to introduced legislation forbidding the playing of "God Save the King" at cinemas, concerts and other performances and declaring "Die Stem van Suid Afrika" the only National Anthem of the Union. The anthem continued to be an irritating feature of the South African cinema.(i) Politically therefore, the cinema exercised a sustained irritating effect on part of the South African public and a sustained stimulating effect on another. Its appeal sui generis was largely emotional and the later rational rather than emotional information and propaganda films arrived too late successfully to combat the stigma of "propaganda".

Apart from this influence on the general public and the inculcation of the "cinema mind" (or quiescent acceptance of film fare), there remained only the suggestive influence of the cinema on immature intelligence, which expressed itself on rare occasions in emulation of famous "crook" characters such as "The Saint", "The Spider" etc; and its beneficial influence on reading. The large number of biographical films and productions of famous books which characterised the cinema of 1940 greatly stimulating reading in Public Library subscribers as well as influencing the sale of books.(ii) The influence of the cinema on children continued along the lines inaugurated by talkies. Its evils, so far from abating, were increased by the more widespread attendance of children and the failure of parents either to break the cinema habit or to choose suitable films. These facts attracted less and less consideration as the habit became a social sine qua non and, apart from one or two appeals by probation officers (particularly for the appointment of an educational or a psychological expert to the

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bond carried feeling to still greater heights. In March 1940, a press report (20) under the heading "Culture bans Cinemas", announced that an Afrikaner cultural society had decided that true Afrikaners did not patronise cinemas, its members objecting to the playing of "God Save the King" and maintaining that until Afrikaners built a cinema for themselves, they should not patronise those existing.

(i) The official enquiry into the damage done by soldiers to the Potchefstroom University College in September 1940 revealed to what extent the playing of the anthem was resented by a certain section of the community.

(ii) Previously cinemas used to advertise "The Film of the Book". Now booksellers advertised well-known classics (such as "Wathering Heights" etc) as "The Book of the Film".

the Censor Board), the problem appeared to have fallen into abeyance. The thorough incorporation of the cinema into every aspect of social life made its revival almost an anchronism.

The period 1938-1940 is of exceptional interest in the history of South African entertainment in that the relation between the cinema and the theatre showed signs of change. During this period, English professionally-played drama completely disappeared; but despite its absence, interest in the theatre gradually grew until by the end of 1940, the renaissance of the dramatic stage seemed imminent. This revival in the face of unprecedently adverse factors of which the outbreak of war was only one, was largely effected through five agencies - by the unremitting activities of amateurs and the formation in 1938 of the National Federation of Amateur Theatrical Societies; by the arrival in June 1939 of Leontine Sagan, the famous producers; by the support of African Consolidated Theatres of various types of dramatic activity; by the arrival in April 1940 of the well-known actresses Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies and Marda Vanne; and finally, by the constant and continuously improving efforts of the Afrikaans professional stage. These factors combined to prove that the cinema's hold on the public was not irrevocable.

The overpowering effect which the talkie cinema had had on the South African professional theatre relentlessly continued from 1937 onwards and no other form of entertainment, with the possible and variable exception of music, could successfully claim payable audience (i). During 1938, African Theatres' attempts to provide suitable theatrical entertainment dwindled still further and became of even lower quality (ii); but as much as the professional theatre declined,

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(i) Early in 1938, it was computed that owing to the enormous popularity of the cinema, the Cape Town Municipal Orchestra represented a loss to City revenue of £13,000 a year.(21)

(ii) Their sole noteworthy success was the presentation of the "Marcus Revue", a type of Folies-Bergeres show which caught the public fancy, particularly in Johannesburg, in surprising manner. The success of this meretricious type of entertainment indicated the low estate to which public taste had fallen and the cinema's debasing effect on discrimination. The presentation of Renée Houston leading an imported vaudeville company which included the Hungarian Gypsy Boys Band achieved by no means equal success and though African Theatres presented several other well-known variety stars such as Larry Adler and the locally-born Afrique, almost all eventually descended to performing their turns as items in cinema programmes. The Olympic Circus and the pantomime "Aladdin" attained only moderate success though the presentation of Joseph Szgetti, the eminent violinist, demonstrated that distinguished performers could still command sizeable audiences. It was obvious however that professional drama was now extinct, vaudeville a hopeless proposit

the amateur theatre continued to prosper. During 1938, amateur activity reached unprecedented intensity throughout the Union(i) and, with the additional stimulus of the Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations with their inculcation of an urge towards indigenous forms of culture, eventually concatenated in the formation of the South African Federation of Amateur Theatrical Societies (ii), a scheme which had been mooted for some time. Based on principles of coöperative assistance, the federation was pledged to heightening the standard of amateur theatrical presentationand to encouraging local authorship of plays, the dominating ideal behind its foundation being the sponsoring of an indigenous theatre.

The Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations also greatly stimulated the development of the Afrikaans professional and amateur stage. André Huguenet, Hendrik Hanekom, Henri van Wyk, Anton Ackerman, Willem van Zyl, Johan Fourie and others with their associated actresses such as Pikkie Uys, Nena Naude, Lydia Lindeque, Berdine Grunewald, Mercia Minaar, continued leading their professional dramatic companies on tours through almost all the country towns, seldom presenting indigenous Afrikaans plays and confining themselves for the most part to translated dramas and melodramas whose qualities were calculated to appeal to the action-loving public. Simultaneously Afrikaans amateur dramatic societies increased their activities. Both professional and amateur development continued and at the end of 1939 when the war broke out, received added impetus by the sudden outburst of Afrikaner consciousness which the resultant division of opinion involved. Professional companies now began to play to exceptionally large audience

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ion and light musical shows (particularly if they were slightly risqué) the only feasible possibility.

(i) Not only was a constant succession of plays presented by societie in almost all the large towns but ambitious schemes were propounde of founding a National Theatre to stage both Afrikaans and English drama. In many cases, enthusiasm ran away with discretion and many a society, founded with the most worthy objects, fell a victim to its own ambition. Few of their apostles appreciated that in condemning the cinema, they had neglected the mote in their own ey There was however no denying the vitality of the movement and the fact that the much-vaunted competition of the cinema was proving ineffectual.

(ii) This scheme was enterprisingly promoted by one of the Union's most active and progressive societies - the Krugersdorp Municipal Dramatic and Operatic Society which, in December 1938, called a conference of delegates of numerous societies throughout the Union which founded the Federation of Amateur Theatrical Societies of South Africa.

and, apart from exploiting still more extensive suburban and country terrains (no school hall was too small to house a touring company, however exalted its ptetentions), it now became by no means unusual for Afrikaans touring companies to perform in Town and City Halls in all the large towns.(i) African Theatres also began occasionally to sponsor Afrikaans companies playing in the Standard Theatre, Johannesburg.

This amateur and professional vitality which pronouncedly denied the hegemony of the cinema, was not reflected in the professional English stage. Pursuing conventional methods of appeal, African Theatres failed to capture noteworthy public support during 1939.(ii) An attempt to resuscitate interestm in drama failed though amateur activity continued unabated and was stimulated by the arrival in Cape Town in April 1939 by Leontine Sagan, the renowned producer, who staged very successful productions using amateur talent.(iii) The

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(i)The enormous capacity of the Cape Town City Hall was once or twice inadequate the crowds which patronised Afrikaans drama.

(ii) Magic and music were tried again and though Chang the magician proved a consistent success, the light musical shows which were presented throughout the year were not similarly favoured. Two revue companies were imported - the one led by Leslie Henson and Ivy Tresmand (the latter of whom remained in South Africa and subsequently assisted greatly in the entertainment of troops),the other by the Duncan Sisters. "Switzerland", a skating revue on real ice, betokened enterprise which was not conspicuously rewarded. The outstanding theatrical event of the year was the presentation of Richard Tauber in "Land of Smiles" which had the misfortune to open two weeks after the outbreak of war. After short seasons, Tauber engaged in a series of concerts with considerable success. African Theatres also presented a few variety artistes such as Hedy Haas and the Spanish dancer La Joselita, the routine pantomime "Robinson Crusoe" and an abortive attempt to resuscitate drama by sponsoring Natala Korel's productions of "George and Margaret" and "The Dominant Sex" in Johannesburg. The unpolished nature of this enterprise seriously prejudiced the public against professionally-played drama.

Symptomatic of the public's sustained appreciation of music ~~despite~~ despite both cinema and radio was the success of African Theatres presentation of Arthur Rubinstein and Alex Cherniavsky's of Richard Crooks (who was favoured with excellent audiences everywhere).

(iii) At the instigation of Professor Donald Inskip, controller of the Little Theatre of the University of Cape Town, Miss Sagan intended directing amateur talent in plays to be staged at the Little Theatre and giving a series of lectures in the Union. Shortly afterwards it was announced that her services had been retained by the Johannesburg Repertory Players, one of the most distinguished amateur dramatic societies in South Africa.

In June 1939, "The Corn is Green" (Cape Town Repertory Theatre Society) and "The Old Maid" (Speech Training Students of the University of Cape Town) produced by Miss Sagan were staged at the Little Theatre. Both were memorable productions and played to packed houses. Both greatly stimulated amateur activity and public interest in the stage, not only in Cape Town but throughout the Union where Miss Sagan's reputation and the excellence of her local productions became the subject of discussion among the

revelation of the existence of a theatre-loving public at the Cape and on the Rand provoked no immediate action, largely owing to the outbreak of war in September. In November, it was announced that Miss Sagan was associating with the well-known Afrikaans actor-manager-producer André Huguenet, in the production of two English plays "The Corn is Green" and "Night Must Fall" which it was proposed to take on tour under the aegis of African Theatres. The casts consisted almost exclusively of Johannesburg Repertory Players and the announcement of the enterprise evoked enthusiastic comment and correspondence in the Press. Opening in Pretoria on the Ist January 1940, the company later played in Durban, Johannesburg, Kimberley, Bloemfontein, Grahamstown, Queenstown, Kingwilliamstown, Port Elizabeth etc, returning in April after a veritable tour de force.(i) Though the moment appeared propitious to develop the English professional dramatic stage with its existing luminaries, African Theatres made no

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esoteric theatre-loving public.

In August and September 1939, Miss Sagan produced "They Walk Alone" and "The Corn is Green" for the Johannesburg Repertory Players in the Library Theatre with outstanding success. The performances were attended by hundreds of people who had not been to the theatre for years. It was definitely proved that drama well staged and acted (the Repertory Players included exceptionally good talent) could command audiences and prove ineffectual the supposed competition of the cinema.

(i) The company opened at the Opera House, Pretoria on the Ist January 1940 with "Night Must Fall", Miss Sagan making her first appearance as an actress since her Fraülein von Bernberg in "Maedchen in Uniform" of 1933. It was followed by "The Corn is Green", both of which aroused considerable enthusiasm and excellent patronage. The company then moved to the Criterion Theatre, Durban and thence to the Standard Theatre, Johannesburg where it met with such success that its season had to be extended. Early in February, it went on tour.

Interviewed by the Rand Daily Mail (22) on her return, Miss Sagan said - "People felt that we pursued an ideal, the ideal of bringing back the legitimate stage to South Africa. We had to capture audiences that had almost lost contact with dramatic art, audiences to whom theatre meant cinema. Audiences, small or large had to be conquered. And conquered they were.....It was devilish when, in a first act, a thunderstorm came hurling over the corrugated iron roof of our Town Hall obliterating all sound and, after waiting for the elements to calm down, we had to start the first act all over again; or when an infant began squeaking at the back of the stalls during my most quiet scene. But compensations were never lacking. It was my greatest delight when I received letters from young people who had never seen a straight play before and who found themselves suddenly facing a new world; or from elderly men and women whose memories of bye-gone theatre day were dimmed and who now happily enjoyed the past in the present. Every town reacted differently. Port Elizabeth responded so much livelier than Durban. Why ? Queenstown, Kingwilliamstown, Grahamstown understood us from the moment the curtain went up. Bloemfontein had to be besieged. Kimberley, famous for its old days of "roughing it", would not sit on unupholstered chairs. All these problems had to be conquered...."

immediate move and Miss Sagan returned to her amateur obligations.(i) Almost a year later, African Theatres presented Henry Mollison and Lina Basquette in "Private Lives", "Black Limelight" and "Good Mornin Bill" in Johannesburg and later on tour; but again unpolished production and undistinguished talent prejudiced the public against the professional presentation of drama and much of the ground gained by Miss Sagan's enterprises was thereby lost. Discarding all prospect of the consistent sponsoring of drama, African Theatres now engaged on a new departure in entertainment - the presentation of bio-vaudeville beginning in March 1940. Consisting at first of"revuedeville" produced by Philip Levard with local talent and later with imported variety artists, this enterprise slowly petered out, the public having no taste for an effete type of entertainment revived in a new guise.(ii)

The competition of the many cinemas supplied by Twentieth Century-Fox Film (S.A.) Pty Ltd (and particularly of the capacious Twentieth Century Cinema in Johannesburg) which had pushed the cinema into unexampled prominence and canvassed an unprecedentedly large proportion of the public within their doors, militated against theatrical enterprise. Furthermore, the war news of the time, particularly the invasion of the Low Countries and the Fall of France, was not conducive to theatre-going or the launching of new entertainment projects. Finally the cinema's exceptional attraction of topical newsreels paradoxically coupled with "escapist" distraction temporarily discounted the renascent attraction of the theatre and even previously popular amateur shows began to be poorly patronised.

At this time (April 1940), the world-famous actress Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies and Marda Vanne (iii) arrived in Pretoria inter ali

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(i) Miss Sagan went to Cape Town to produce "Amphitryon 38" at the Little Theatre which met with a mixed reception and returned to Johannesburg to produce "They Fly by Twilight" for the Johannesburg Repertory Players when unfortunately she fell ill. The progress which she had so spectacularly made and the hopes it had engendered, appeared to have evaporated.

(ii) Thereafter, apart from the presentation of the violinist Bronislaw Huberman in a series of successful concerts and the holding of numerous "Talent Competitions", African Theatres made no effort bo provide any but cinema entertainment. In this year, the South African professional theatre reached its lowest ebb.

(iii) Marda Vanne was the South African-born "Scrappie" van Hulsteyn who had embarked on a theatrical career in South Africa in Leonard Rayne's and Stephen Black's companies (she had played in the famous "Love and the Hyphen" and "Helena's Hope") and had subsequently established a distinguished reputation on the London stage, her last appearance having been in Charles Morgan's "The Flashing Stream".

to assist the Pretoria Repertory Society in several productions.(i) The impending association of these two distinguished professional actresses with amateur endeavour had a stimulating effect not only in Pretoria but elsewhere where it was felt that their attention to amateur endeavour was both a compliment to its standing and an encouragement towards development. Their first two productions (ii) were an outstanding success.

In October 1940, all the forces making for the renaissance of the South African dramatic stage concatenated in one week - African Theatres presented "Major Barbara" produced by Leontine Sagan (who also played a leading part) with Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies in the title role at the Standard Theatre in Johannesburg (iii) and the Federation of Amateur Theatrical Societies of South Africa held its second annual

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(i) This event was in part owing to the instrumentality of Miles Bourke, founder of the Pretoria Repertory Society and an enthusiastic protagonist of the Repertory Theatre movement in South Africa. Apart from these interests, he had played the leading role of Piet Retief in both the English "They Built a Nation" and the Afrikaans "Die Bou van 'n Nasie". Shortly after the arrival of the Misses Ffrangcon-Davies and Vanne, he was appointed Director of the Army Entertainment Unit.

(ii) In June 1940, the Pretoria Repertory Theatre presented "I Have Been Here Before" produced by Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies and Marda Vanne with conspicuous success. In September, it staged "To See Ourselves" produced by Miss Davies with Marda Vanne in the leading role which was lyrically reviewed. These productions aroused widespread interest and the manifest efforts by which Miss Davies and Miss Vanne continued to arouse interest in the revival of the local stage were given eager attention by both Press and public.

(iii) "Major Barbara" was the first polished professional performance to be given on the English stage in South Africa since the Seymour Hicks-Aileen Marson London Comedy company played "Vintage Wine" and other plays in 1936. Its production by Leontine Sagan with Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies in the lead would have been a theatrical event of importance in London itself; but, symptomatic of the ingrained influence of cinema-going and the prejudicial effect of previous shoddy soi-disant professional performances, the public failed to realise its significance before its opening. Subsequent to its first performance to a packed house (which usually greeted theatrical companies but was never sustained), the public realised that "Major Barbara" represented the theatre proper and not the quasi-professional subterfuge of the past. Its success under adverse circumstances of uninspired publicity, depressing war news and established prejudice, was remarkable. After a short season in Johannesburg, the company successfully played at Pretoria.

Though much was lacking in the production (the decor, for instance, was not adequate to the standard set by the Johannesburg Repertory Players and reflected adversely on African Theatres), it served to indicate public appreciation of the theatre and thenceforward it was confidently hoped that with the advantages then at hand in the persons of the Misses Sagan, Ffrangcon-Davies and Vanne, the English professional stage would be revived.

Play Festival at the Library Theatre, Johannesburg where Marda Vanne adjudicated, both Miss Davies and Miss Vanne attending and addressing the Federation's conferences. Enthusiasm for the renascent English stage was considerably stimulated and the proposal to found a "National Theatre" continued to be canvassed.

The general effect of these tendencies to which were added the specific influences of the radio and special war-time circumstances was to challenge the sufficiency of the cinema in South Africa. The social pattern was changing and while "humanity was on the march" throughout the world, in South Africa there were social permutations to which the cinema would have both to accommodate itself and to make contributions.

Appendix to CHAPTER XIII

The following represent the outstanding films shown each year :

1938 : "100 Men and a Girl" (Deanna Durbin, Adolph Menjou)
"A Yank at Oxford" (Robert Taylor - M-G-M)
"Der Dybbuk" (Polish)
"Robin Hood" (Errol Flynn- Warner's)
"White Banners" (Claude Rains, Fay Bainter - Wanners)
"Mad About Music" (Deanna Durbin)
"You're Only Young Once" (M-G-M)
"Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" (Walt Disney)
"Boys' Town" (Mickey Rooney, Spencer Tracey - M-G-M)
"Her Jungle Love" (Dorothy Lamour)
"Marie Antoinette" (Norma Shearer - M-G-M)
"Dodsworth" (Walter Huston, Ruth Chatterton)
"The Lady Vanishes" (Hitchcock - English)
"Young Doctor Kildare" (Lew Ayres, Lionel Barrymore - M-G-M)
"It's in the Air" (George Formby)

1939 : "Mayerling" (Danielle Darrieux, Charles Boyer - French)
"The Citadel" (Ralph Richardson, Robert Donat, Rosalind Russell
"Pygmalion" (Wendy Hiller, Leslie Howard)
"Idiot's Delight" (Norma Shearer - M-G-M)
"Carnet de Bal" (French)
"South Riding" (Edna Best, Ralph Richardson)
"Dark Victory" (Bette Davis - Warners)
"Goodbye Mr Chips" (Robert Donat - M-G-M)
"Union Pacific"
"Stagecoach"
"Juarez" (Paul Muni, Brian Aherne, Bette Davis - Wanners)
"Gunga Din"
"The Wizard of Oz" (Judy Garland, Ray Bolger - M-G-M)
"The Women" (all star cast - M-G-M)
"Shipyard Sally" (Gracie Fields - Fox) (1)

"Dark Rapture" (Leila Roosevelt - Denis Armand Expedition)

"Confessions of a Nazi Spy" (Warners)
"The Lion has Wings"

1940 : "Elizabeth and Essex" (Bette Davis, Errol Flynn - Warners)
"Stanley and Livingstone" (Spencer Tracey, Cedric Hardwicke-Fox
"Balalaika" (Ilona Massey, Nelson Eddy - M-G-M)
"First Love" (Deanna Durbin)
"Abus de Confiance" (Danielle Darrieuz - French)
"The Little Princess" (Shirley Temple - Fox)
"GONE WITH THE WIND" (Vivienne Leigh, Clark Gable - Selznick)
"Four Feathers" (Ralph Richardson - London Films)
"The Stars look Down"
"Gulliver's Travels" (Max Fleischer)
"Northwest Passage" (Spencer Tracey, Robert Young - M-G-M)
"Rebecca" (Joan Fontaine, Lawrence Olivier - Goldwyn)
"Dr Ehrlich" (Edward Robinson - Warners)
"Destry Rides Again "(Marlene Dietrich, James Stewart)
"Wuthering Heights" (Merle Oberon, Lawrence Olivier - Goldwyn)
"Young Tom Edison" (Mickey Rooney - M-G-M)
"Edison the Man" (Spencer Tracey - M-G-M)
"The Rains Came" (Myrna Loy, George Brent - Fox)
"Nurse Edith Cavell" (Anna Neagle - Herbert Wilcox)
"La Bete Humaine" (French)
"The Grapes of Wrath" (Henry Fonda - Fox)
"They Shall have Music" (Jascha Heifetz)
"All This and Heaven Too" (Bette Davis, Charles Boyer)
"Pride and Prejudice" (Greer Garson - M-G-M)
"Mr Smith Goes to Washington" (James Stewart, Jean Arthur)
"The Mortal Storm" (Margaret Sullivan, Frank Morgan,James Stewa

"Professor Mamlock" (Russian)
"An Englishman's Home" (English)
"Beasts of Berlin" (American)
"Four Sons" (Fox)
"I was a Captive of Nazi Germany"

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(1) This film contained the song "Wish me Luck" used for recruiting.

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CHAPTER XIV

The History of Film Censorship in South Africa

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The History of Film Censorship in South Africa

Historically, film censorship in South Africa began on the I4th February I898 when the Cape Press indignantly condemned Frank Fillis' showing of the"Temptation of St Anthony" at his circus in Cape Town.(i); but, apart from the active protest against the showing of the "Spanish Inquisition" scenes at the Good Hope Hall in Cape Town in August I906 (ii), moving pictures remained immune from attack for ten years, despite deteriorating to the point of pornography. The "representations as in life" bore no recognisable relation to reality and, jerking and flickering in a frenzied world of their own, fell outside the sphere of serious consideration and, nox matter how tasteless or vulgar their contents, continued to remain there.

Between I909 and I9I0, the character of the cinema began to change with the institution of permanent "picture palaces" and the attendance of audiences of more mature intelligence than the initial devotees.For some time, fiction films continued to be regarded as "otherworldly" but the menace of the cinema to public welfare in actuality films was quickly appreciated and the banning of the Burns-Hohnson fight film in I9I0 resulted.(iii) The protests against the showing of this film on the grounds of its provocation of racial disturbance presaged a steady stream of protests against the cinema's vulgarity and suggestiveness. During I9I0, I9II and I9I2, this movement gathered way particularly at the Cape where in April I9I3, it culminated in the formation of a voluntary vigilance committee.

The formation of the Bioscope Advisory Committee in Cape Town originated directly from the Social Reform Association which was founded in Cape Town in I900 and itself originated directly from the

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(i) see Page 40 et seq..

(ii)see Page I02 (iii)

(iii) see Page I48 et seq..

social conditions prevalent during and after the Boer War.(i) The earliest endeavours of this association were directed towards, not the quality of the films shown in the first "picture palaces" but the actual conditions under which "bioscope exhibitions" were given.(ii) Finding bioscope proprietors coöperative on the whole, the Association was able to effect a great many improvements(iii); but with "movie madness" waxing rather than waning (as many anticipated), it soon became apparent that moral as well as physical evils jeopardised the welfare of bioscope audiences. Before long, a wave of popular indignation began to rise throughout the Union (iv) and by 1911, the Social Reform Association was actively occupped with combatting the menace of films as well as prevalent social problems.

The sole control of "bioscopes" was vested in municipal councils which confined their attention to the physical rather than the moral

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(i) At this time, Cape Town was a sink of iniquity (see Page 69(1)) which was particularly notorious for its organised "white slave traffic" and its prostitution industry. The Association was formed in an attempt to combat these existing evils, its first agent and later secretary being Mr Robert George Ross who came to Cape Town from Ireland in the nineties.
Originally occupied with the abolition of street solicitation brothels, white slave traffickers (In 1901, the Association's officers discovered three houses in Loop, Harrington and Burg Streets where white girls were sold to brothel owners(I)) and the coterie of pimps and prostitutes which made Cape Town one of the most disreputable cities in the world, the Association later devoted itself to less urgent social problems such as housing, drunkeness, native welfare and the "bioscope".

(ii) The rush to capitalise on "movie madness" (see Chapters IV and V) resulted in the appearance of extremely crudely equipped "picture palaces" whose original functions (such as warehouses, stores, auction rooms etc) had, in point of ventilation, lighting etc, no pretentions towards houses of entertainment. Their rough benches and fetid atmosphere were the least of associated evils.Hygienicall they sufferednot only from an almost total lack of ventilation but also from the close proximity of hastily-constructed lavatories of dubious efficiency. Their audiences consisted largely of disreputable and frequently diseased elements whose habits were not calculated to improve hygienic conditions. Morally, there was a variety of evils which were encouraged by the total darkness of the auditorium upon which the weak and flickering light of the screen had little effect. Drunken individuals were admitted regardless of their unwelcome attentions on more sober members of the audience and adolescents were crowded together in an atmosphere thoroughly conducive to pernicious practices. Immoral acts did in fact take place in "bioscopes" and furnished one of the first causes of attracting the attention of the Social Reform Association A further evil was the behaviour of coloured audiences which,being rowdy and difficult to control, presented a special problem. Finally and at first of paramount importance, was the danger of fire against which the early proprietors took little or no precaution, despite the frequent publication of news of fatal tragedies in cinema fires overseas.

(iii) For instance, the Association circularised proprietors with a "black list" of disreputable characters who were to be refused admission.

(iv) See Page 175 et seq..

dangers of "bioscope exhibitions", the quality of which did not appear to fall within their terms of reference. The movement towards censorship took the form of innumerable letters to the Press and constant representations to municipal authorities by social welfare organisations.(i) R.G. Ross, secretary of the Social Reform Association was already actively engaged in mooting the idea of a Censor(ii) Board. Soon churches of every denomination began to be associated with the growing volume of protest. The National Council of Women, the Young Women's Christian Association, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Child Life Protection Society and many other such bodies joined their pleas to the general demand for censorship whose urgency was sometimes emphasised by reference to the "Black Peril"(iii)wave which was sweeping the Transvaal and particularly the Witwatersrand towards the middle of 1912.

As the port of entry of all films and usually the place of

(i) In October 1911, the Corporation Public Health and Building Regulation Committee of the Cape Town City Council submitted the following minute the the Council (2) - "That your committee have again considered representations which have been made to them as to the exercise by the Council of some control over the subjects displayed for exhibition at the several bioscopes within the City and, whilst your Committee again express the opinion that this is a matter which should be dealt with by the Government under the special statutory powers dealing with the indecent and obscene publication of pictures and that it would be impolitic for the Council to undertake the duties of censorship in this connection, yet the Committee feel that the Council might with advantage stipulate on the licences issued that the same may be cancelled without notice should the licensee be convicted of exhibiting indecent or obscene pictures or should the display be of such a nature as not to meet with the approval of the Police Authorities, and they beg to recommend accordingly. Should this recommendation meet with the approval of the Council, your Committee further recommend that notice of the terms be communicated to all bioscope managers within the city and that an endorsement to this effect be made upon all licences issued by the Council in future."

This recommendation, though adopted by the Council, had little or no effect and it was left to the Social Reform Association and other interested bodies to urge the institution of an adequate censorship of films.

(ii) In September 1911, R.G. Ross sent a letter describing the National Board of Censors of Motion Pictures which covered the entire American industry to a number of South African newspapers (3) Though arousing a considerable amount of interest, the prospect of instituting a similar board locally appeared no nearer. Nor was the Association able to enlist the assistance of suburban and country municipal councils in the project of enforcing control of bioscopes on an organised basis.

(iii) When the Commission appointed to investigate the sudden increase of assaults with intent to rape on white women by natives, issued its report in June 1913, it strongly advocated the institution of strict censorship of all pictures exhibited to mixed audiences.(4)

their first exhibition, Cape Town became the centre of the censorship movement.(1) The Church in particular actively pressed the matter(ii and, faced with a rising tide of public indignation, the cinema trade itself was by no means antagonistic. In May 1912, A.C. Smith, one of the biggest film importers, presided at a meeting of interested parties and thence onward, the trade lent every assistance to any body interested in founding a censorship committee. By now, the "bioscope" was regarded in such a detrimental light that commercially it was expedient; but, despite numerous resolutions by church and lay bodies to appoint representative committees drawn from various religious and social welfare organisations, nothing positive emerged. Throughout the Union, such steps were advocated but rarely taken. In November 1912, for instance, the Town Council of Kingwilliamstown instituted a municipal censor board, a step which was regarded with some misgiving some people maintaining that Town Councillors were not qualified to be"moral mentor's" however urgent the need for censorship. In December 1912, the United Municipal Association discussed the now extremely vexed question of censorship of bioscope pictures and referred the matter to the Executive Committee for report; but once again, the movement proved abortive. Already it was felt that the problem was too large and too general for municipal powers and that the Central or Provincial Government should undertake it. These reverses did not dissuade the Social Reform Association in Cape Town from pursuing the matter on its own account and the increasingly objectionable character of current films (iii) assured it of public support.

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(1) The "crisis up north" (see Chapter VI) was impending and the disorganisation of the bioscope industry which resulted in the formation of the African Theatres Trust Ltd and the African Films Trust Ltd tended still more to focalise interest in the movement at the Cape.

(ii) When the Diocesan Synod met in Cape Town in October 1912, it was discussed at length, the Rector of Observatory (the Rev. Gresley who had previously participated in attempts to institute film censorship) moving "that the Synod hereby utters its emphatic protest against the public exhibition on a bioscope in Cape Town of scenes representing the Passion and Death of Our Divine Lord"(5), a motion which was much debated and finally abandonned. The film in question "From Manger to Cross", subsequently impelled the institution of censorship.

(iii) The universally low quality of films of about 1911, 1912 and 1913 made it difficult to identify objectionable tendencies other than vulgarity, suggestiveness, morbid sensationalism and an utter absence of taste. Frequent instances of these tendencies were scenes showing men rushing out of restaurants or bedrooms holding their stomachs and, obviously in search of lavatories, bursting into women's rooms etc; men in the last stages of intoxication pawing women; lascivious dances; suggestive

décolletage, etc etc. Added to these obviously unsavoury scenes were others showing criminal acts which, themselves practicable, were liable to inspire emulation in impressionable youths.

The following excerpts from summaries of films censored by the National Board of Censorship of Motion Pictures, New York,(6) early in 1913 indicates the general trend of both American and European production and the demand for censorship it inspired in South Africa :

"Gold and Dross" (American) eliminate the entire final scene where the woman is shown lying dead on the desert surrounded by bones. This scene is unnecessary to the story and only adds a grewsome detail. In the previous part of the picture, the end of the young woman is indicated by the fact that she goes out to die of starvation in the desert.

"Life's Lottery" (Italian) - eliminate the incident in the last part of the second reel of the picture where the young woman puts a drug into the glass of wine as she sits dining with the count.

"Nemesis" (American) - eliminate the entire scene where the young women are shown in one-piece bathing suits.

"Salome" (American) - eliminate that part of the film where Herodias puts the drug into Herod's drink. Also where Herodias goes out of the room in the embrace of the slave just as they start to walk towards the door in each other's embrace. Also wher Salome is dancing before Herod in the red-tinted part of the picture, there is an enlarged view - the objectionable parts of this dance should be cut. Also where Salome throws herself to the floor and embraces the head of John the Baptist, the film should be cut up to the point where the soldiers cover her with their shields - this eliminates all her movements as she lies on the ground embracing the head of John the Baptist which are extremely objectionable.

"The Smuggler's Revenge" (Italian) - eliminate two or three short scenes in which the smuggler ties the coastguard to the railroad track and the scene in which the train runs over the rope which ties the guard's hands.

"The Iconoclast" (American) - eliminate the two or three feet of film where the priest approaches the crucifix in the final scene of the picture and draws down the sheet from the rich rancher's head and then throws it up again, turning away in disgust.

"Miss Simpkin's Jewels" (American) - eliminate that part of the scene following the sub-title "Drugged" which shows the young woman pouring knock-out drops into the man's food.

"The Two Engine-Drivers" (Italian) - eliminate (1) the scene showing the villain sawing the Westinghouse brake lever and a sub-title telling that he has disabled in some way the brake. Thus we should see the villain entering the cab of the engine and leaving it, everything coming between being eliminated. (2) The scene showing the train running over the bodies of the workingmen should be cut when the engine is some distance away from the bodies. The view of the bodies after the train has passed should be reduced to a flash.(3) All mad-house scenes except the final one in which the hero recovers his senses by coming in contact with his relatives should be eliminated. Thus we should see nothing of the hero from the time he is taken away in the locomotive to the insane asylum until this final scene.(4) The scene showing the train running over the body of the villain should be eliminated. Thus we should see the villain hurl himself from the bridge after which we should see nothing more of the villain. All references in the sub-titles of this picture which would indicate exactly what the villain has done to disable the brake should be changed, making them indefinite

"On Fortune's Wheel" - eliminate the scene in which the man is shown shut up in the safe and is brought up in close view to the camera as he suffocates. Also the final scene of the picture where the corpse is shown on the wheel partially burned.

"The Pawned Bracelet" (American) - eliminate a few feet of the film in the early part of the picture where the lady in her boudoir dress draws her chair forward and by leaning forward, unduly exposes her breast.

"Billy's Honeymoon" (American) - eliminate part of the scene where Billy comes across the pushcart with the lingerie and proceeds to hold up various articles of clothing.

"The Great Circus Disaster" (American) - eliminate the scene in Nellie Dore's room in which the excessive love affair occurs. We would ask that the cut be made from the point where the lover

In June 1912, the South African Teachers' Conference met in conferenc at Cape Town, the chairman Mr Christopher, delivering an unequivoval indictment of the bioscope.(1) This opportunity was used by the Socia

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advances to take her in his arms, eliminating the subsequent passionate love-making.
"The Shadow" (American) - eliminate those portions of the carousing scenes of the servants in which the maids are sitting in the laps of the men as they kiss them and wave the beer bottles in th air. Also the rough handling of the woman by the villain in her husband's room. This scene should be cut as the man approaches to lay hands on her and should not begin again until the others ente the room.
"The Wandering Folk" (American) - eliminate all the violent love-making scenes between the villain and the bar maid. This means al indecently passionate kissing episodes.
"His Brand" (American) - eliminate the branding of the woman, the cut to extend from where he takes the branding iron from the fire to after he has branded the woman.
"Mabel's Dramatic Career" (American) - eliminate portions of two or three scenes in which the man's trousers slip down and display his underclothing. Also from the last scene of the picture the suggestion made by the husband to the mother that the baby's underclothing needs to be changed.
"Mabel's New Hero" (American) - eliminate all scenes showing Mabel's shadow on the pane of glass. All scenes showing Mabel in a one-piece bathing suit skin tight. All scenes showing the villain peeking through the door at the girls in their bathing house. All portions of the struggle between Mabel and the villain in which she is shown straddling him across the waist and biting his ear. It is not so much the struggle as the position which she assumes in the struggle, especially in view of the fact of her being in a bathing suit.

Not one of these films could in themselves provide a reason for public outcry; but consistent exhibition of the type maintained a steady volume of general protest.

(1) "If you take a walk through some of our streets at a late hour", he said (7), "you will find boys and girls of quite tender years walking about quite unchaperoned. Nowadays the common rendezvous of these precocious youths is the bioscope theatre. I grant that many interesting and educative subjects are exhibited in these places but there are other subjects which had a pernicious influence upon the lives and characters of our youths. (Cheers) A strong public feeling has arisen that the youth of this country should be protected from the infliction of questionable and often immoral rubbish which no parent would dream of allowing them to read in books. A certain correspondent in the "Argus" is to be commended for his letter on this question. I am quite in agreement with him when he says that an efficient censorship is needed. This is a very serious matter and the morals of our youth is being undermined by the objectionable and sensational pictures now shown. I would urge this Conference during its sittings to pass a resolution condemning in strong terms the quality of some of the pictures thrown on screens at these entertainments, stories of crime and intrigue, of slayings, betrayals, abductions, suicides and druggings, stories in which every phase of life's seamy side is depicted and almost every imaginable villainy portrayed. (Cheers) If the influence of this class of entertainment is not nipped in the bud, what of the future of our boys and girls ?...."

The address concluded with a powerful indictment of parents' indifference, especially of mothers who "draw the curtains for a quiet game of cards" and send their children out "to amuse themselves".

Reform Association through its agent R.G. Ross, to press for the institution of a Censor Board through letters to the Press. In July, the Cape Provincial Council considered a letter from the South African Teachers Association embodying their resolution in favour of this step; but again nothing constructive was done (1) and it was left to private endeavour to take immediate steps. Towards the end of 1912, philanthropic individuals were particularly active in attempting to organise control of the bioscope, representatives of the various churches predominating. Early in September, the Clerical Society called a meeting of ministers of religion to consider the question. This meeting decided to invite importers of films and bioscope proprietors to attend a conference which duly took place on the 13th September, one film importer, A.G. Smith, and only one of thirty invited bioscopes proprietors attending. R.G. Ross of the Social Reform Association was invited and spoke at length, Mr Smith also taking part in extensive discussion. This meeting resolved (8) "that a sub-committee be appointed to confer on the Cinematograph Film together with Mr Ross and the Film Importers and to report to this committee which now stands adjourned". The sub-committee was very representatively constituted, consisting of members of almost every denomination, the police, teachers, etc etc. A deputation was nominated to interview the City Council to ascertain its views and obtain its assistance but, owing to only two members appearing at the appointed time, this proposal was not fulfilled. Such dilatoriness, though typical of private efforts, could not retard the movement and its mor

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(1) The sole measure adopted by the Provincial Council was the Cape Provincial Ordinance No.10 of 1912 which, promulgated on the 24th September, was designed "to consolidate and amend the law relating to municipalities". By its provisions, a municipal council was empowered to function as follows :
(90) for regulating and licensing (without the power to impose an fee) theatres, music-halls, public halls and bioscopes...or other places of entertainment of like kind;
(91) for preventing indecent, offensive, brutal or demoralising exhibitions, exhibits, shows, contests, feats and the like;
(92) for controlling bioscope or other performances, and the pictures to be exhibited, and prohibiting such as may be considered indecent, offensive or improper or other objectionable or claculated to produce a pernicious effect on morals or to exercise an evil or dangerous influence on the minds of the audience or any section or portion thereof or likely to cause a breach of the peace;
and further provisions controlling peep-show machines, photographs and other types of exhibition.
Though these provisions gave municipal councils explicit powers, they did not also provide the necessary machinery for their exercise and the actual position remained much the same as previously.

fervent apostles, particularly R.G. Ross and the Rev. Dr McClure (a very well known and extremely energetic social worker) continued undeterred. On the 13th December 1912, a further meeting was held, called this time by Ross, the Rev. Dr McClure being in the chair. Fourteen interested individuals were presented and it was decided to form a representative vigilance committee forthwith, its members meeting on the 20th December.(i) Under the chairmanship of Dr McClure, this committee was accorded the collaborative assistance of the film-importing agencies which, now seriously menaced by the increasing odium of the bioscope, were anxious to clear it of its evil name. Numerous conferences were held and, the idea of a vigilance committee having been accepted on all hands, much time was spent in discussing its form, modus operandi and relation with the trade. Early in February it was hoped that this committee would come into operation on the 1st March; but it was not until the 1st April that the final agreement was signed and in the meantime, impetus was added to the movement by a national outcry over the showing in Johannesburg of the religious film "From Manger to Cross".(ii)

(i) This committee was to be constituted of the following invited members : two representatives of the English Church, two of the Roman Catholic Church, the Dutch Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Wesleyan Church, the Congregational and Baptist Churches, the Social Reform Association, the Y.M.C.A.; one representative of the City Council, the Police, the Chamber of Commerce, the School Board, the South African College, the Women's Christian Temperance League, the Temperance Alliance, the Y.W.C.A., the Mothers' Union; the Secretary of the General Post Office, Mr Abrahams; the Rev. W.P. Watkins; the Rev. J. Lavis (for the coloured community); the Society of Christian Endeavour; the English Church Missionary Society; the Rev. L. Clements of District Six; and one representative from each suburban municipal council.

(ii) On the 29th January 1913, the news appeared of a private showing at the Empire Theatre, Johannesburg of the sacred picture "From Manger to Cross". Representative members of the clergy and Press were invited and David Foote, the Rand's famous conductor, was said to have summoned a large orchestra to accompany the film with special sacred music. The impressions of this audience were faithfully recorded and reported throughout the Union.

Locally anticipation was heightened by the knowledge that exceptional arrangements were being made for the single public performance on Sunday evening the 9th February. Apart from Mr Foote's large orchestra which was to play suitable music from the great masters such as Handel, Gounod, Schubert, Thorne and other Herr J. Tressi, one of the best known of Johannesburg's musicians, was to play selected organ solos. No smoking was to be allowed and during the whole performance of one hour and forty five minutes (the film was 7,000 feet long), there was to be no interval.

Within a day or two of the original announcement, almost the whole of the Empire Theatre was booked up. Together with popular curiosity, a feeling of resentment was abroad - it was not thought right to give public performances, even of sacred pictures, on a Sunday. The police authorities made representations and on the 6th, the management let it be known that the film would be shown on Saturday evening, the 8th February instead of Sunday the 9th.

At 10 o'clock on the morning of the showing, the Mayor was

Public interest in the film was provoked, not only by press reports but by the fact that it had been the subject of discussion for some time.(1) Among responsible and intelligent people, the strongest feelings of antipathy were freely aired and on the 5th February (before the film had been shown in Johannesburg), Mr C.F. Cleghorn, a well known social worker, wrote to the Cape Times appealing for legislative

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forced to convene a special meeting of the Town Council. Six of its members had signed a special requisition "for the purpose of considering the advisability or otherwise of prohibiting the production of the film entitled "From Manger to Cross" at the Empire." The meeting was a debacle. Only three of the councillors who had signed the requisition were present and, on one of them moving the prohibition, his speech was openly derided and one or two of the councillors drifted surreptitiously out of the room. Failing to constitute a quorum, the meeting could not continue. After waiting the necessary five minutes, the Mayor bitterly remarked that the councillors prostituted their duties and closed the proceedings. The attempt at prohibition have proved a fiasco, the Empire held the performance,the theatre being packed in every part mostly with women. The gallery however was crowded with men several of whom studiously avoided the request that there should be no smoking. There was no applause and no other kind of demonstration. The success of the showing was such that a repeat performance was given the following Saturday and on the 3rd March "From Manger to Cross" returned to Johannesburg and was shown every night for a week at the old Bijou in Jeppe Street.

The sensation caused by the showing of the film in Johanne burg produced violent repercussions elsewhere. Prior to itspubli exhibition at the Empire, the Cape Times published a long reprint fron the Transvaal Leader (9) which, in reviewing the film, remarked - "Such histrionic deficiencies as exist are of slight importance as compared with the very grave and indeed fatal blemishes in the film. In the latter part, we see Judas hanging from the bough of a tree, Christ being scourged, black weals being distinguishable on his body and limbs and Herod with his men at war setting Him at naught and mocking him....The soldiers hit Him with their spear-handles and the crowd throws all kind of rubbish on Him. Later He is seen staggering along under the weight of the Cross, the mob meanwhile lashing His body. Most gruesome of all are the Crucifixion scenes in which one sees the nails driven into His hands and a sponge soaked in vinegar placed in His mouth. Even to one who has witnessed much of the brutal realism of life, these scenes are revolting; to one possessing the averggo measure of human feeling, they must have been nauseat ing in the extreme. That sane Christian ministers could have given certificates of commendation to the film is to the writer unaccountable; but that the authorities in one or two large cities in England stopped its exhibition can readily be understoo

The Mail says - "The grandeur and beauty of the New Testamen story have been destroyed; the miracles - and this is said with all respect - have been reduced to the level of conjuring feats. The great story of Jesus has been belittled, if one may use the word, because of the limitations of those engaged in the performande and the vastness of the subject...."(The Star gave the film unequivocal commendation)

The Leader publishes some interesting views of clergymen and Town Councillors. The Rev. Trevor Benson (Anglican) said - "I think it will be a great work lost for Christianity if the film is barred." The Rev. Andrew Brown (Presbyterian) : "I hold that the Christian religion is too serious, too good, too great to be prostitued in this or in any other country for the mere making of money and I humbly suggest that the theatres leave Jesus alone." Rabbi Dr Landau thinks the production of the film should be prohibited. Councillors J.W. Treu and Major Allan approve of the production."

(1) see Page 385 (11)

sanction to empower the voluntary vigilance committee which was about to come into operation, to prohibit the exhibition of the film. Feeling continued to run high at the Cape when subsequent to the film's showing in Johannesburg, it became apparent that there was little to prevent its being shown elsewhere. Towards the end of February, a petition signed by many influential people including Lord de Villiers and Sir James and Lady Rose Innes, and quoting the Transvaal Leader was prepared in triplicate and presented to the Minister of the Interior, the Administrator of the Cape Province (Sir Frederic de Waal and the Mayor and Council of the City of Cape Town. The inadequacy of municipal machinery for controlling the exhibition of bioscope films, the state of public feeling and other reasons impelled the Cape Provincial Council to take immediate action and on the 31st March 1913 the "Religious Performances Prevention Ordinance (No.3 of 1913)" -"to provide for the prohibition of certain performances and exhibitions of a religious character", was promulgated. By its terms, the Administrator by letter or by telegram, could prohibit the giving of any public entertainment (theatre, bioscope or otherwise) "calculated to give offence to religious convictions or feelings of any section of the public". This ordinance in principle and application was ineffective. It affected only an infrequently shown type of films, it endowed the Administrator with arbitrary powers and single responsibility, its modus operandi was prejudicial to the trade, and finally it completely ignored the more urgently censorable types of films.(1) On the other hand, the Union-wide agitation raised by "From Manger to Cross" (which, though banned at the Cape was shown in the other provinces) favoured the impending formation of a cinema vigilance committee in Cape Town with publicity and the support of both the public and the trade. Negotiations to place it on a practicable basis were energetically pursued and on the 1st April 1913, an agreement between the trade and the "Bioscope Advisory Committee" (as the voluntary organisation was

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(1) Commenting disapprovingly on Sir Frederic's high-handed manner in passing "panic legislation" without even seeing the provocative film, the Cape Times (10) remarked in a leader - "On the whole, we are disposed to think that the hasty enactment rushed through the Provincial Council on the 27th March will be regarded a few years hence as a curiosity of the statute book."
This surmise was correct but the deficiencies of the measure were to a large extent compensated by private activities.

called) was signed.(1)

The Bioscope Advisory Committee consisted of about 150 members (men and women) all of whom were devoted to its purpose and who worked

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(1) The terms of the agreement which gave the newly-formed Bioscope Advisory Committee some sort of sanction and standing were as follows (II) :
(1) The Tivoli Film Agency (Stodel) and Messrs Smith's Film Agency Ltd agree to furnish the secretary of the Bioscope Advisory Committee weekly with a copy of the synopsis they receive of all pictures advised as coming through their respective agencies. Synopses of pictures booked by other members of the Western Province Cinematograph Association will be given when available.
(2) Information giving the date of arrival and the halls at which the pictures will first be shown to be given to the secretary of the Committee; Messrs Pathé Freres to allow three representatives of the Committee to attend their weekly exhibition of advanced pictures held at their show-room, Castle Street; time and date to be advised. Any objections referring to pictures shown by Messrs Pathé Freres to be handed to the secretary of the Western Province Cinematograph Association in writing on the following day.
(3) All objections made in reference to pictures being exhibited by members of the W.P.C.A. to be handed to the secretary of that association, the nature of such objections to be fully stated in writing. Provided that the objection to any picture cannot be mutually settled by the joint secretaries, the picture to be withdrawn from the programme and shown to a joint committee consisting of two representatives of each association. If no majority decision can be arrived at by the joint committee, such committee to appoin an impartial referee and his decision to be accepted as final. It being mutually agreed that all objections must be handed to the secretary of the W.P.C.A. before 12 o'clock on any day following the date of exhibition. If not received before this time, no alteration in the programme can be demanded that day. Further any picture to which objections have been received in the terms of the above paragraph shall be judged by the joint committee the same day. The W.P.C.A. have arranged with Messrs Pathé Freres for the use of their showroom and machines and also agree to supply the operator. The Bioscope Advisory Committee agree to pay as their share of the expense Messrs Pathé Freres' charge for the supply of electric light.
(4) Should the synopsis of any picture, in the opinion of the Bioscope Advisory Committee, be objectionable, it is agreed that provided the film in question be delivered in Cape Town to the ~~xxx~~ office of the agency importing same before 11.30 on the date of exhibition, such picture shall be privately shown to the joint committee appointed for such emergencies, provided always that the committee meets not later than 12 p.m. on the day of exhibition.

This Agreement to remain in force for a period of twelve months from April the first nineteen hundred and thirteen, and it is understood that so long as this arrangement is in force, the Bioscope Advisory Committee will not take action in any other form or through any channel other than the ones herein agreed on.
signed as from the first day of April in the year nineteen hundred and thirteen
JOHN S. McCLURE D.D.
(representing the Bioscope Advisory Committee
A.GEORGE SMITH
(representing the Western Province Cinematograph Association)
Witnessed :
F.O.M. WATTERS
I.C. GAMPKIN

wholeheartedly towards its furtherance.(i) It was financed by a grant of £100 from the Cape Provincial Council and £20 from the Cape Town City Council. Various other small contributions were accepted and in 1914, the newly-formed African Films Trust donated an annual grant of ten guineas. The operation of the committee at Cape Town, the port of entry of films, entailed a great deal of organisation. Bioscope programmes were rapidly changed and the time factor was of paramount importance. About twelve feature films were reviewed per week, each being scrutinised by two members who reported by post-card to the secretary.(ii) If necessary, the secretary approached the film importers to have objectionable items excised which, in the great majority of cases, was done according to the terms of the agreement. The Committee did not concern itself only with the censoring of current films but devoted a good deal of attention to the general amelioratio of bioscope exhibitions, being particularly concerned with their effect on children.(iii) Its main efforts however were devoted toward the propagating of its operations. In an attempt to propagandise its work throughout the Union, it circularised a large number of Municipa Councils but the response was poor, most councils adopting a dog-in-the-manger attitude and manifesting an obvious desire to be left to their own devices in the matter of controlling bioscope displays. The Committee worked in close collaboration with the Provincial authorit-

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(i) The chairman was the Rev.J. McClure, the vice-chairman the Rev.Dr R.S. Welch, the chairman of the finance committee Mr A.F.Robertso the honorary treasurer Mr W. Coldicott Gardener, and the secretar Mr R.G. Ross to whose efforts the institution of the Bioscope Advisory Committee was to a large extent due. The salary of the secretary, though only £100 per annum, was frequently in arrears.

(ii) During the five years of its existence, the Bioscope Advisory Committee performed prodigies of work which in virtue of its amateur status, was the more remarkable. During the year 1914-1915 its members scrutinised 2,150,000 feet of film spending 1,864 hour in the process. They elided objectionable incidents from 15 films and received 24 complaints. In 1915-1916, they scrutinised 2,100,000 feet of film, condemned 2 films, passed 12 subjects to elimination and advised against 112 being shown to children. They were always assured of the coöperation of the African Films Trust both in South Africa and London where the firm exercised an unofficial censorship of films to be sent to the Union, rejecting a considerable number before exportation.

(iii)In May 1913, with the collaboration of J.H. Stodel and Potts who owned the Alhambra in Cape Town, the committee attempted to organise Children's Matinees of specially selected films. These however were not a success and like all subsequent such enterprises, had to be abandonned.

ies (i) and never ceased to press for the official institution of bioscope censorship. The Minister of the Interior was frequently approached to introduce legislation establishing a National Board but invariably referred the matter to the local government authorities which, apathetic except for the Cape since the first staging of bioscope shows, took no constructive steps.

The situation was highly unsatisfactory even at the Cape. There was nothing to prevent an exhibitor showing a film banned by the Committee either at the Cape or elsewhere; nor was it obligatory on th African Theatres Trust to abide by its decisions anywhere else but at the Cape. The entire structure of current film censorship (except for religious films covered by the Provincial Ordinance of 1913 and the virtually impossible "obscene" pictures covered by the Act of 1892) was based on goodwill and though the Cape enjoyed a measure of immuni from objectionable films through this arrangement, the other Province did not. For some years, no flagrant exploitation of this situation occurred and the Bioscope Advisory Committee energetically attempted t remove the possibility by sending deputations to the Municipal Congress and other influential gatherings imploring a proper realisation of the problem and an official institution of censorship, as well as invoking the support of the National Council of Women and other social welfare organisations.

Support however came from unexpected quarters. In April 1916, a Pretoria Dutch newspaper, Die Volkstem, published the news from its London correspondent that a film of "The Dop Doctor"(ii) made by Pathé was about to be shown in England and probably later in South Africa. The prospect of its misrepresentation of the Boer character being published on the screen throughout the world incensed local opinion and, following the paper's lead, a great deal of hostile correspondence was published in Die Volkstem and feeling began to run

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(i) In 1916, the Arbitration Committee established by the agreement was abolished, the Administrator being accepted as arbitrator by both sides.

(ii) "The Dop Doctor" by Richard Dehan was an extremely popular roman à clef (it was republished for about the tenth time in 1937) dealing with the siege of Mafeking during the Boer War. (Baden-Powell Lady Sarah Wilson and numerous other characters are easily recognisable.) Written in extravagant over-sentimental style by an obviously "jingo" Englishwoman, the novel was much resented by a great many Afrikaners.

high. The Congress of the Women's Nationalist Party then in session discussed the matter at length and with acrimony, one of the members suggesting that it should petition the Union Government to request the Imperial Government to prohibit the publication of the film. Within a few days, Afrikaner patriots throughout the Union were up in arms and direct representations were made to the Prime Minister General Botha, to prevent the showing of the film. Since it was neither of a religious character or obscene, no legal machinery for its prohibition existed. In the face of a nation-wide appeal, General Botha had no alternative but to take immediate steps and, cabling the Union High Commissioner in London, received the assurance that the film would not be shown.(i) This episode again drew attention to the problem of censorship but again, nothing was done except at the Cape.

After some discussion, the Cape Provincial Council passed the Public Performances Control Ordinance (No.9 of 1916) which, promulgated on the 9th June 1916, provided for the prohibition of performances and exhibitions calculated to bring any section of the public into ridicule or contempt, the Administrator being empowered to prevent such exhibitions by letter or telegram. The passing of this measure was variously received, the Cape Times again censuring what was obviously "panic" and not constructive legislation.(ii) In Natal, on

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(i) The text of the cable (as translated from Die Volkstem where it was first published) was as follows (12) - "Van Struwen London correspondent of De Volkstem, mentions that Richard Dehan's novel "The Dop Doctor" in England and probably here too is to be shown on the bioscope. This novel wrongly represents Boers as cheats, immoral and of low character. Such representations cannot fail to cause serious exasperation and trouble in South Africa. I am sure that public of Union never will allow such a show to be given here. As regards England, we cannot interfere but only request that steps shall be taken to prevent such misleading and low representations of Boer character being given in public. I am sure that Government in England will not allow it if its attention is drawn to it. When on a previous occasion a similar plan existed, I personally protested most strongly and, thanks to your valuable assistance, I then succeeded in stopping it. If you are not able to stop production, be kind enough to protest against it as strongly as possible. I know of nothing that would cause more serious exasperation than this matter. Kindly give matter therefore your most serious attention."

(ii) "The occasion for the introduction of this Ordinance", said the Cape Times in a sub-leader(13), "is doubtless the recent production of a film showing "The Dop Doctor" regarding which strong comments have appeared in many Dutch-writing journals throughout the country. We could mention some performances of Dutch-written plays during the past eighteen months to which sensitive Englishmen might take exception on similar grounds. It is certainly highly undesirable that film or any other class of exhibition calculated to wound the susceptibilities of any section of the public should be displayed; but we are travelling rather far if we are to thrust upon the Administrator which ofcourse means the Administrator-in-Council, the functions of dramatic censor.Field-

the other hand, a motion in the Provincial Council by Mr Taylor, Mayor of Maritzburg, urging the Executive to take immediate steps to control bioscopes owing inter alia to their pennicious effects on children as instanced in recent reports by school principals, was defeated by II votes to 9. The movement towards instituting adequate censorship continued to gain volume and impetus, the School Advisory Board, the National Council of Women, the clergy as a whole, and numerous other powerful social forces pressing continuously for official consideration of the matter.(1) Though many public expressions were made, no further steps were taken until the Fishers showed "Enlighten Thy Daughter" in defiance of the Bioscope Advisory Committee's decision in Cape Town in July 1917.(11) This fact emphasised beyond the point of evasion that a sanctionless censorship was no longer practicable and in due course, the Administrator of the Cape Province, Sir Frederic de Waal, introduced legislation intended to put the control

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ing's pasquinades against political personages were, it is interesting to recall, primarily responsible for the institution of the Lord Chamberlain as a censor of plays; but no Lord Chamberlain would dream today of prohibiting a play merely on the ground that it brought any person or group of persons into ridicule. Most comedies aim moreorless at doing so. These things are far better left to the commonsense and good taste of the public. If a film or a theatrical performance or exhibition of any kind is in obviously bad taste, its career is not likely to be a long one. We are certain that the Administrator, whether in propria persona or in council, has quite enough to do without the anxieties of exercising a censorship of the kind proposed."

(1) Public indignation had steadily increased. The war years were characterised by sordid sexual films masquerading as "moral dramas" which, originally applauded as an innovation, soon became an extremely objectionable feature of the cinema. Public feeling against current film programmes was emphatically expressed on numerous occasions. In Durban, for instance, a conference of interested private individuals approached the Town Council towards the end of 1916 appealing for action. The Council announced its intention of appointing a board of censorship under the powers granted by the Provincial Council Ordinance (this was never achieved); but the conference went further and appealed directly to the Minister of Justice for the institution of legislation covering the whole Union. In December 1916, the Municipal Congress meeting at Queenstown, again discussed the matter but again nothing was done. In March 1917, the Child Welfare Association met in conference in Cape Town and again recommended adequate censorship. There were many other such representations.

(11) See Page 196 et seq..

of bioscopes films on a permanently sound basis.(i)

The Cinematograph Film Ordinance (no.2I of I9I7) promulgated on the 22nd August I9I7 repealed the previous ordinances of I9I3 and I9I6 and was designed "to regulate and control places of recreation and amusement by prohibiting the exhibition therein of any cinematograph film not approved and to provide for the granting or refusal of such approval". It was a thorough-going attempt to cover every and any censorsxable point in a film (ii), leaving no loophole in its specifications and allowing for no elasticity whatever in their interpretation. Its main achievement was the appointment by the Administrator of a Board of Inspectors empowered to signifiey its approval of a film by means of a certificate. If the Board were undecdded about a film, the members could refer it to the Administrator himself whose decision was

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(i) He was empowered to do so by the Financial Relations Act of I9I3 (No.IO) to whose second schedule (specifying the sources of revenu transferred from the Union to the several provinces together with the power to legislate in respect thereof) was added by the Financial Relations Act Extension of I9I7 (No.9) a further paragraph (thirteen) - "the licensing, regulation and control of places of amusement and recreation within the province and the imposition of a duty upon the licensee in respect of the takings thereat or a charge based upon the payments for admission thereto" (According to the latter portion of the provision, provincial authorities were empowered to levy an "Amusements Tax" - a fact which was widely resented at its first imposition at the Cape in I9I8.) This Act which delegated to the Provincial Administrations the powers of control of entertainment previously held by the Central Government, was of paramount importance in the history of censorship and served to delay the long-sought for national censorship.

(ii) The principles of the measure were wholeheartedly applauded by the Provincial Councillors, the trade and the public; but its details provoked long and contentious debate. It was urged inter alia that people could not be made moral by legislation; that mothers' disregard of their children was far more pernicious than the bioscope's influence; that censorship was a matter of taste ar not explicit specification; that children should be protected; tha child attendance at bioscopes should be controlled; that film censorship should be exercised by the Union and not the Provincial Government; etc etc. The instructions to the Board of Inspectors which finally emerged from the debate were of such meticulousness as to cause derision among members. They were as follows :

"(5) Approval shall not be given in the case of any film which depicts any matter that is against the safety of the realm or is likely to offend against the public order or common decency; and in general, approval shall not be given to films depicting :

(a) improper impersonation of the King;
(b) irreverent treatment of death;
(c) Nude Figures;
(d) excessively passionate love scenes;
(e) scenes purporting to illustrate"night life";
(f) scenes containing reference to controversial internationa politics;
(g) scenes representing antagonistic relations of Capital and Labour;
(h) scenes tending to disparage public characters or to create public alarm;
(i) Vampire Women; the Drug Habit; White Slave Traffic;
(j) materialisation of the conventional figure of Christ;
(k) scenes holding up the King's uniform to ridicule or

final. This Board was selected from the members of the Bioscope Advisory Committee which, having after five years achieved the official end it desired, automatically ceased to exist.

The passing of this ordinance marked a great step forward in the adequate control of "bioscope displays"; but, while it protected the Cape Province from the exhibition of pernicious films, it also served to emphasise the lack of legislation elsewhere. Its institution at the same time rendered more remote the prospect of establishing a National Board of Censors and exposed its own decisions to abuse.(i) That this anomalous state should have persisted for fourteen years is the more remarkable when it is considered that throughout that time, the Press, the public and the trade itself continuously protested against it. Persistent appeals both to the Union and Provincial authorities had no effect and it was only when the effects of the anomaly became so striking through the advent of talkie films which were freely shown in some provinces though banned at the Cape, that action was finally taken.(ii)

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contempt;
(l) scenes calculated to give offence to the religious convictions or the feelings of any section of the public;
(m) scenes calculated to bring any section of the public into ridicule or contempt;
(n) pugilistic encounters between European and non-Europeans.

(i) On numerous occasions, the ban imposed on a film by the Cape Board of Censors, so far from pronouncing its demerits, was used as an added inducement to the public in the other provinces to attend its showing. The original pernicious qualities of the film were increased by this blatant suggestion of the peculiar pleasures of forbidden fruit.

(ii) During those fourteen years, both public and trade suffered through the absence of national censorship. Hardly a month passed but that some kind of public protest was made against the anomaly of the situation. One the one hand, exhibitors were pilloried for their display of objectionable posters; on the other, the exhibitors themselves implored the Central Government to establish a National Board.

Separate censorship arrangements had to be made in each province. In the Transvaal, for instance, African Theatres came to an arrangement with the Administrator by which, if a film had been banned by the Cape Board, it would be scrutinised by the Administrator's nominee - at first, Colonel Douglas - before exhibition. In this event, it was frequently passed in spite of the decision of the Cape Board.

On the one hand again, social welfare organisations such as the National Council of Women, the Child Life Protection Society, the Child Welfare Association etc as well as various Church Synods, appealed for stricter censorship of films and posters; on the other, the Administrator of the Free State arbitrarily banned the showing of "Way Down East" in September 1923 without seeing it himself and after it had been shown in all the other provinces and in parts of the Free State itself.

The sole attempt to ameliorate the situation was made in 1922 when another paragraph (fourteen) was added to the Financial Relations Act of 1913 (No.10). By the Financial Relations Fourth Extension Act of 1922 (No.4), the second schedule of the original act was increased by a further paragraph : "the control and

regulation of posters, pictures and advertisements outside or in connection with places of amusement or entertainment or recreation and the prohibition of any such posters, pictures or advertisements as are indecent or calculated to excite racial prejudice or subversive of good morals."

By this time, it was obvious that the delegation of authority to control cinema exhibitions from the Union to the Provincial Governments had been by no means wise. The Cape and the Cape alone had instituted an adequate means of exercising its powers. In the Transvaal, the Provincial Government had transferred its censorship function to the Police whose decisions were frequently at variance with the Cape Board's. "I understand that the inspection is not nearly as complete in the Transvaal as it is in the Cape", said the Rev. G.S. Malam a member of the Cape Board when giving evidence to the Select Committee on the Entertainments (Censorship) Bill in March 1931 (14),"in the Transvaal, there is sometimes only one policeman entrusted with the duty of inspecting films and I understand that sometimes the police authorities there judge a film merely on the general report it receives from the Press." The number of cases in which the police (the Transvaal Board of Censors consisted of Colonel R.S. Godley and two assistants officers) permitted the showing of films banned by the Cape Board was said to be due to that province's lack of coloured audiences. The Free State had delegated its powers to municipal councils some of which instituted censorship committees; and, in Natal, though no special legislation had been passed, in practice the decisions of the Cape Board were enforced.

Apart from mounting public indignation at the films that were permitted to be shown in all the other provinces but the Cape, the trade began to press more urgently its pleas for a national board of censors or at least some regularisation of the situation. Kinemas proved the greatest sufferers. Giving evidence before the Select Committee, Joseph Kalusky, their circuit manager stated (15) -"An anomaly is created by the diverse censor boards in banning various films in the Cape which have been acclaimed as films of the greatest merit in the other provinces. We would like to mention "Moulin Rouge" which was one of the most artistic silent films ever produced and has enjoyed practically world-wide exhibition. In no instance was this picture banned or in the least interfered with by any censor board in any part of the world. This film has been banned in the Cape but was greatly appreciated and highly commented on by the Press and the public in other provinces. "Tosha" was likewise a most artistic film depicting a very high moral tone and was also banned in the Cape and passed in the other provinces. Other films banned in the Cape and passed in the other provinces were "The Return of the Rat", "Zero", "Devil's Maze", and "The Road to Ruin". The last-mentioned film was run in conjunction with many societies throughout the world for the protection of young women and in the Transvaal, it was run under the auspices of the Red Cross Society and the Medical Officer of Health and under the patronage of the mayor and municipality. This film in particular was more in the form of an educational subject of very high moral tone and portrayed the penalty of indiscretion....."

Similarly African Theatres showed "What Price Glory", "Troubles inthe Ark"(an Aesop's Fable cartoon), "Women to Woman" "Mr Wu", etc etc with every success in the other provinces though totally banned at the Cape.

Both firms suffered financial loss through this anomaly. Customs duty on films was levied for the whole Union and the banning of a film in the Cape reduced its returns to a point which made profit difficult. When the Cape Board first came into operation, a large number of films were banned and African Theatres (then in complete control of the cinema industry except for the Fishers) suffered considerable financial loss. Subsequently (as the Rev.G.S. Malan, an original member of the Cape Board stated (16)), "when the companies began to see that the new board carried out the standard laid down by the Ordinance and that they were losing a good deal of money buying films which they were debarred from showing, they gave instructions to their buyers overseas not to buy certain types of films which transgressed the standards required here and they further entered into an agreement with the companies that sold them the films under which those companies agreed to take back films if they were turned down by the board of inspectors."

In February 1927, the Cape Board's banning of the German film "Vaudeville" starring Emil Jannings aroused keen public interest (i) and, on the other hand, protests continued to be made against posters, bioscopes films, the inadequacy of the Provincial Ordinance, etc etc. (ii) In November 1927, it was revealed that a direct protest to the Department of Labour by the Kimberley Juvenile Affairs Board which had circularised other boards with a view to taking steps to prevent the cinema's pernicious effect on children, had resulted in a letter from the Secretary announcing that the Minister was considering the question of a national censorship. Early in January 1928, apropos these representations, it was announced that the Minister of the Interior, Dr D.F. Malan, proposed drafting legislation embodying the institution of a Union Board of Censors. Thence onwards nothing more was heard of the Government's response to urgent and persistent requests though provocative instances rapidly multiplied. In February 1928, considerable public interest was aroused by the British Board of Film Censors banning of "Dawn", a biographical film of Edith Cavell produced by Herbert Wilcox with Sybil Thorndike in the lead.(iii) The ban was inflicted for the preservation of good relations with Germany and in

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(i) At first the public mistakenly assumed that the ban affected the whole country; but when African Theatres released the film in the remaining provinces (and in an expurgated form at the Cape), it was attended by exceptional audiences.

(ii) These conditions exasperated the Cape Times into publishing a full-column sub-leader entitled "Sterilised Amusements" which expressed the general opinion that the Ordinance was impossible to interpret literally, its provisions being far too comprehensive. Published on the 16th April 1927, the leader concluded with - "As hoardings, advertisements and programmes show, the injunctions contained in this Ordinance have remained, as one might have known they would, a dead letter. In the quiet of the archives, they slumber undisturbed and Pola Negri goes her way a-vamping and the "dramatic thunderbolts of stormy passion" succeed each other until even the babies are blasé over them and nobody worrses, not even, one would guess, the Film Censor Board. But there one would be wrong. For, as one of their number once exclaimed to some caviller at things they had allowed to pass - "If only you knew how much we cut out !". Yet, conscientious a body as they are known to be, no one could defend either on aesthetic, moral, or commonsense grounds much that escapes their net. It may well be that the sheer absurdity of the present regulations makes the task of the Film Censor Board impossibly difficult. Fresh provisions, free from vagueness and from cant, would seem to be a real public need."

(iii) Madame Bovart, friend and co-spy of Edith Cavell (who was also condemned to death but sentenced to life-imprisonment on account of her two children) also played a leading part in the film. On hearing of the ban on its exhibition, she returned her O.B.E. to the Foreign Secretary, Sir Austen Chamberlain.

South Africa, it was discovered that the Transvaal Provincial authorities had indicated to the police that the film should be banned.(1) This Provincial interpreation of State policy raised further acrimonious comment. During 1929, Natal joined issue and in May, Mr S.S. Brisker moved at the Natal Provincial Council meeting at Maritzburg that a Board of Film Censors be appointed for Natal but though there was lively interest in the debate and the idea of instituting a National Board was supported, nothing positive emerged. In November 1929, a profound sensation was caused in Cape Town by the Cape Board's dilatory treatment of the semi-religious film "Martin Luther". It was not until a large audience had gathered in the Railway Institute to attend the showing organised by the Deutsche St. Martini-Gemeinde that the Censor Board announced that it had not yet decided whether it would pass the film for exhibition.(11)In December 1929,it became known that after many years of consistent agitation in

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(1) Overseas there was much popular indignation over this seemingly arbitrary banning which was reflected in South Africa where the possible appearance of the film called for an enquiry into contemporary methods of censorship. This revealed that in the Transvaal, in terms of Ordinance No.I of 1920, "the Administrator may give notice in writing or by telegram to the proprietor of any place of amusement prohibiting the exhibition of any film or picture or the performance of any play or other form of entertainment which, in his opinion, is contrary to good morals or public policy". Further the Provincial authorities had intimated to Colonel Godley who with two other police officers, constituted the Local Censor Board, that a ban on the film would be advisable.

Commenting on the position, The Star remarked (17) : "It is apparently on the grounds of public policy that the exhibition of "Dawn" is considered inexpedient....The Public Entertainment Ordinance possesses an interest all its own. It confers autocratic powers on the Administrator. So often "the Administrator" in an ordinance really means the Executive Committee; but in this measure, it means what it says. If Pampoenfontein threatens to transgress proprieties or Vrededorp rehearses a play which might affect our relations with Moscow, the Administrator need not summon his cabinet. All he need do is to send a telegram prohibiting the performance. Clause 4 provides for a severe penalty for disregard of the prohibition, the maximum penalty being £75 or three months with or without hard labour."

(11) The audience immediately resolved itself into a meeting of protest and appointed a deputation consisting of Mr.C.F. Schmidt Advocate Boehmke, Dr D.F. Weber and Mr Gatz to interview the Administrator and to protest against the action of the Censor Board. This deputation represented not only German but Scandinavian Lutherans. The Administrator referred the deputation to the Board which entertained its demands with every consideration while making no excuse for its dilatoriness except on the score of inadequate time. Meanwhile the Catholic community was actively organising opposition to the showing of the film, Chevalier John B. Callanan, editor of "The Southern Cross", maintaining that when they were directly attacked in their religion, the Catholic had to defend themselves. Basing their case on the Cinematograph Film Ordinance No.21 of 1917, Section 5, Clause II which specified that "approval is not to be given to scenes calculated to give offence to religious convictions or to the feelings of any section of the public", the Catholic Federation of the Union

which social welfare bodies (especially women's) had persistently joined, the Minister of the Interior, Dr D.F. Malan, had laid the matter of film censorship before the provincial administrations all of which had decided that it transcended their functions and properl belonged the the Central Government. The Minister had then drafted a Censorship Bill which was submitted to African Theatres and Kinemas for discussion and suggestion, both companies signifiying their approval of the proposed institution of a National Board of Censors.

On the 5th March 1930, Dr Malan introduced the Bill to the House of Assembly.(i) It provided little consolation to the opponents of allegedly arbitrary censorship, its provisions (against which both film companies had advised) being so exacting that their rigorous enforcement could permit no film to escape whole or partial banning. (ii) After its first reading, other Government business prevented further discussion of the Bill and it was not until 1931 that it was re-introduced. During this time, the necessity for legislation was emphasised still further.

By 1930, the excesses of "sex-appeal" and the prevalent vogue for sordid dramas (iii) made the institution of adequate censorship imperative. In the Transvaal, an over-burdened police force objected to the further duty of censoring films and approached the Administrator with a view to relieving them of a function for which they wer

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appointed a deputation consisting of its chairman, Mr John Devitt and Chevalier Callanan to interview the Administrator. The Administrator also referred this deputation to the Censor Board which, faced by contrary currents from two sections of th community, compromised by cutting the film and releasing it for exhibition. (If the film were eventually shown in its cut form, it was neither advertised nor publicly reviewed.) The affair had caused very bad feeling in Cape Town, particularly as it had developed into a contest between rival religions with political implications. The folly of specific instructions to a Censor Board was once again apparent but ultimately exercised no effec on the framing of the Entertainments (Censorship) Act.

(i) Simultaneously there was bitter feeling at the Cape owing to th Provincial Censor Board's banning of "The Return of the Rat", a British film featuring Ivor Novello and already shown elsewhere Complaints against "Sunday School Treatment" were freely voiced and the tide of resentment against apparently arbitrary censorship continued to rise.

(ii) "The nature of the discretionary powers of the proposed Board" said The Star in an editorial leader (18), "may be judged from the list of prohibited films. The list is little short of amazing and if the provisions were narrowly interpreted, most of the films which come to South Africa would be liable to rejection....Surely it is a mistake to dictate beforehand and in such detail what is and what is not to be allowed."

(iii) see Page 297

neither fitted nor endowed with adequate time. Taking immediate steps the Administrator drafted a "Public Entertainments (Censorship) Ordinance" which was to repeal the Public Entertainments Ordinance of 1920. This was published in the Provincial Gazette on the 1st August 1930 and immediately raised a chorus of adverse comment. It was generally known that the Draft Bill framed by the Minister of the Interior had been read in Parliament and the Transvaal Administrator's proposal to anticipate its powers merely imported further anomaly into an already vexed problem. The Draft Ordinance was in time withdrawn but not without succeeding in making confusion worse confounded.

In January 1931, before the Draft Bill could be re-introduced, the Cape Board banned the showing of "The Blue Angel"(1) and a month later, "The Case of Sergeant Grischa" which, it was maintained, was no more unsuitable than "All Quiet on the Western Front" and other war films which had been passed for exhibition. Both these films, though passed for exhibition in the Transvaal and Natal were banned out of hand by the Board of Censors of the Free State, its chairman Major Manning, admitting that the Board had seen neither. These occasions provided excellent argument for the Draft Bill which was re-introduced to the House of Assembly on the 2nd February 1931 by Dr Malan, Minister of the Interior, Education and Public Health.

The "Entertainments (Censorship) Bill" was a lengthy document designed "to regulate and control the public exhibition and advertisement of cinematograph films and of pictures and the performance of public entertainments" and provided for the institution of a national board of censors whose approval was necessary before any film or film advertisement could be publicly shown, the grounds for such approval being negatively defined in a lengthy list of detailed specifications On the 19th February, Dr Malan moved that the Bill be read a second

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(1) "The Blue Angel" was a sordid but artistically handled German sound film featuring Marlene Dietrich and Emil Jannings and had been imported by Kinemas. It had made a great sensation overseas and, preceded by a resounding if somewhat questionable reputation was eagerly awaited by Union cinema audiences. The Cape public, among whom were scores who, going overseas to see the Passion Pla in Germany in 1930, had already seen the film, were incensed at their supposed susceptibility to pernicious suggestion.
Subject to the decision of a representative committee assembled by Kinemas owing to the Mayor's (Mr.F.Dey) attempting to have it withdrawn, "The Blue Angel" was shown in Pretoria in March 1931 amidst much publicity and became a cause celebre among the cinema-going public. Its illustration of the anomalies attached to the prevalent censorship situation was very apposite and furnished the Select Committee on Dr Malan's measure with much useful material.

time and after proceedings which the Minister described as frivolous and unhelpful (i), it was agreed to and the Bill referred to a Select Committee for consideration and report. (ii) On the 25th March the

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(i) Outlining the position of film censorship in the Union, Dr Malan emphasised that the control of cinemas delegated by the Union Government to the Provincial authorities by the 1917 and 1922 Extensions to the Financial Relations Act of 1913, had caused an exceedingly anomalous situation to arise and had proved the delegation of control to have been a failure. In virtue of this and of the fact that numerous congresses had sent him resolutions demanding the institution of censorship on a national basis, the Minister had laid the matter before the Provincial Administrations all of which had decided that it was a matter for the Central Government. It had also been laid before the film companies which had signified their approval of the institution of a National Board.

The debate was opened by Colonel Denys Reitz (member for Barberton) who ridiculed the provisions of the Bill and described the instructions to the proposed Board in regard to the giving of their approval as a preposterous absurdity. To many members of the House, it did not appear to have occurred to the sponsors of the Bill that the concept of censorship does not admit of such rigorous and ludicrous definition, the provisions in fact being even more meticulous and specific than those of the Cape Provincial Ordinance of 1917. Mr Swart and Mr Coulter also ridiculed the provisions and demanded that a Select Committee be appointed to consider the matter, Mr Coulter adding to his remarks a demand for a quota provision for British and Dominion films to counteract the contemporary bulk of low-class American films.

The Rev.S.W.Naude supported the Bill as a very necessary measure and described its specifications as being very aptly addressed towards existing evils. Dr Stals also supported the Bill in its then form and endorsed its multitudinous specifications though not denying their imperfections. The House then embarked on extensive discussion most of which was on a sarcastic or semi-humorous note.

(ii) The Select Committee which was empowered to take evidence and call for papers, consisted of the Minister of the Interior Dr D.F. Malan as chairman, Mr Acutt, Dr Bremer, Colonel M.S.W.du Toit, Mr M.L. Malan, Colonel Deneys Reitz and Mr Roper (the latter of whom was discharged on the 18th March, Mr S. Waterson being appointed to his place). The committee first met on the 26th February and concluded its examinations on the 12th March, its report being submitted to the House on the 25th March.

It examined Mrs Roux, Mr F.Howe-Browne, Mr R.G.Ross and the Rev.G.S. Malan representing the Cape Province Board of Film Inspectors, the consensus of whose opinion was in favour of the institution of a National Board and of the specification of censorable items as an indispensable "guiding line".

The committee then interrogated W.F. White representing African Theatres Ltd, African Films Ltd and African Film Production Ltd who had prepared a memorandum. Reiterating his companies' support of the proposed institution of censorship on a national basis, Mr White's memorandum went on systematically to deal with the provisions of the Bill. It recommended inter alia that, owing to the controlling filmscompanies having their head offices in Johannesburg, the Board should sit there or failing this, that Transvaal opinion should be represented in its members (neither of these recommendations were put into practice). Dealing with the specific instructions to the Board, the memorandum systematically exposed their ambiguity and inapplicability. Mr White also recommended the issue of three separate certificates - for Europeans; for Europeans and coloureds; and for Europeans, coloureds and natives. The salient point of his evidence was the protest against the specification of objectionable features.

The committee then examined Joseph Kalusky, representing Kinemas Ltd and Kinema Films Ltd whose memorandum also reiterated his companies' support of the proposed institution of censorship on a national basis. Mr Kalusky recommended the appointment of a police official to the Board and at least one member who might be

House of Assembly went into committee on the Bill following the submission of the Select Committee's report. There was some dabate on the various clauses of the revised Bill and one or two amendments made. On the 26th March, the Bill was further considered and read for the third time. The Senate then discussed it, making various minor amendments and on the 25th May, it was finally debated in the House o. Assembly. On the 3rd June 1931, the Entertainments (Censorship) Act became law.

The Act was divided into three chapters which may be summariedd as follows :

Chapter I prohibited exhibitors from showing films or film advertisements without the approval of a Board of Censors consisting of not less than seven members appointed by the Minister for a period of not more than three years. Four members constituted a quorum (the chairma or his designate having a cast vote) which was empowered to approve and disapprove wholly or in part i.e. to enforce a total ban or exact the excision of censorable items. An "aggrieved" exhibitor might appeal against the Board's decision to the Minister whose decision was final.Provision was made for the imposition of fees not exceeding one sixth of a penny per foot for censoring and fines for contravention of the Board's decisions.(1)

Chapter II provided for the prohibition or confiscation by the Minister of any entertainment not yet inspected by the Board and the

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regarded as an authority on the stage, drama and film (as MrWhite had also done). The memorandum also recommended the issue of four separate certificates - for Europeans; Europeans and coloureds (Asiatics and not natives); Natives only; and adults only (or excluding children under sixteen) - and systematically exposed the ambiguity and inapplicability of the provisions of Clause 5.

Finally the committee examined Colonel Godley, chairman of the Transvaal Censorship Board, who retailed the specific grounds used by the police in censoring films while emphasising their flexibility in regard to context, a point which he applied to the provisions of Clause 5.

(1) Despite the emphatic disapproval of the trade and the Transvaal police expressed at the Select Committee's examination, the Act embodied meticulous specification of censorable items. (Colonel Godley had stated (I9) - "The various scenes detailed in Clause 5 of the Bill should only act as a guide to the censorship board and it should be left to their own discretion to decide whether a film depicts in an offensive or indecent manner any of the items mentioned in the Act. I agree with your suggestion that it would be better to put in the words "which in the opinion of the board depict in an offensive or indecent manner" in the Act but I would rather like to see the whole of that section cut out because it is only really a guide and if it were put in the Act, it can be intepreted by the Board in such a way that they assume that they have to ban every film in which any one of those scenes occur. If it is not included in the Act, it will be left to the discretion

to Section I2 of the Act, the Censor Board's certificate had publicly to be displayed on every film for a given length of time or, in other words, a certain footage of film which eventually amounted to thousands of feet and involved the trade in considerable expense. Thirdly, the Act was framed to protect the moral welfare of the general public whereas films were also shown to esoteric publics for other than entertainment purposes, notably educational. Educational films used for surgical demonstration, for instance, would be "offensive to decency" as far as the general public was concerned and the Board would have no option than to ban them if the Act were altered (as was suggested) so exclude the private showing of uncensored films. In view of these anomalies, the Minister of the Interior Dr D.F. Malan, introduced an amendment to the Act in I932; but owing to the general elections and the subsequent changes of office, the Amendment was withdrawn.

Early in I934, Mr H.H. Hofmeyr, Minister of the Interior in the Fusion Government, re-introduced the measure and on the 29th January, the "Entertainments Censorship Amendment Bill" was read for the first time. On the Ist February, Mr Hofmeyr elaborated the motives behind the Bill, pointing out that the principal Act was not watertight in that it covered public performances only. It left the door open for a number of abuses of which he specially instanced the showing by private societies of censorable (notably propaganda in Russian and communistic) films to their members. There was nothing, he said, to prevent natives forming themselves into such a society and thus becoming susceptible to subversive propaganda. Such a movement might continue to grow and to defeat the purposes of the Act. It was therefore necessary to extend the framing of the Act to cover <u>all</u> performances to which the general public was admitted while permitting certain types of film, notably educational, to be shown without censoring to esoteric publics. Finally, the financial loss incurred by the film companies through the compulsory exhibition of a certificate involving many feet of film on each picture, might be obviated by employing other means of signifying the Board's approval, such as the showing of one certificate at the beginning of each programme. The Bill was read for a second time after minor and uncritical discussion . On the 2Ist February, the House went into committee, the clauses and title were agreed to and the Bill reported without amendment. On the 23rd

February, it was read a third time and on the 5th April 1934, the Entertainments Censorship Amendment Act was gazetted.(i)

The first Union Board of Censors was drawn almost entirely from the Cape Provincial Board of Inspectors, Dr Malan having expressed his intention of so doing before the gazetting of the Act. (The members therefore could freely give their opinions to the Select Committee without fear of prejudicing their livelihood.) (ii) Apart from their

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(i) Its three points amended the principal Act in the following manner : Section I, instead of reading "No person shall exhibit in public any cinematograph film...." now read "No person shall exhibit in public or in any place to which admission is obtained by virtue of membership of any association of persons or for any consideration, whether direct or indirect, or by virtue of contribution towards any fund, any cinematograph film...."
Secondly there was added to Section I - "provided further that the Minister, or a person delegated by him for the purpose, may in his discretion exempt from the preceding provisions of this section any particular cinematograph film or film advertisement or any particular class of cinematograph films or film advertisements or any cinematograph film (and any advertisement relating thereto) intended for exhibition to any particular class of persons or under any particular circumstances."
Thirdly paragraph (b) of Section I2 of the principal Act by which "the Governor-General may make regulations (b) for the affixing to cinematograph films of photographs of certificates of approval" was deleted and "prescribing the method of notifying at exhibitions of cinematograph films of the board's approval of such films" inserted.
By the Amendment Act therefore, private showing of pernicious films, uncensored, was rendered impossible while private showing of beneficent films, uncensored, was rendered possible by the Minister's (or his designate's) special sanction. Thirdly the trade was absolved from what it considered unnecessary expense in equipping each film with a considerable footage of film to display the board's certificate.

(ii) The original Cape Provincial Board of Inspectors consisted of(20)
Mr F. Hore-Browne as chairman who had joined the Cape Board in I926, becoming chairman in I929;
the Rev. C.S. Malan who had been a member of the Cape Board since its inception in I9I7;
Mrs E.C. Wessel-Roux, a certified school-teacher and member of the Cape School Board who had joined the Cape Board in I926;
Mr D.F. Bosman, general agent, member of the Cape Town City Council, Justice of the Peace, educated at the South African College where he matriculated;
Mr B. Dods, accountant, educated at Crawford School in London;
Mrs C.W. du Toit, educated at Bloemhof Seminary in Stellenbosch, Cape of Good Hope Teacher's qualifications and certificates of the Conservatorium of Music;
Miss A.M. Fourie, educated at Beaufort West school and at Bloemhof Seminary in Stellenbosch, Cape of Good Hope Teacher's qualifications;
Lieutenant-Colonel H.F. Trew, matriculated at Church of England Grammar School in Melbourne, certificates of Military College of Victoria, ex-Deputy Commissioner of Police;
Brigadier-General R.D. Bouwer D.S.O. (alternate member), educated at Staatsgymnasium in Pretoria, former commanding officer of the Cape Command.

R.G. Ross became secretary to the Union Board of Censors and on the Ist April I935, was made an alternate member.

previous experience on the Cape Board, none of these members had any special qualifications for censoring films; nor did the first Union Board embody African Theatres' request for the representation of Transvaal opinion or African Theatres' and Kinemas' request for the appointment of "at least one member who may be regarded as an authority on the stage, drama and film".(i)

The institution of the National Board of Censors in 1931 was characterised by an immediate cessation of the sensational incidents which had belonged to the provincial censorships. Empowered to grant certificates prohibiting performances to children, coloureds or natives, the Board was absolved from making the spectacular complete bans of its Cape provincial predecessor.(ii) For many years, it worked unobtrusively and so far as the public was concerned, without undue prudishness even during the "sex-appeal" wave.(iii) Occasionally protests appeared concerning the suggestive posters it permitted to be shown and the "smutty" cartoons it failed to cut; but as "sex-appeal" declined, so the number of protests dwindled until, by the late thirties, the only line of attack left to enthusiastic social workers was the Board's apparent failure to realise the pernicious effect of

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(i) With three exceptions, the constitution of the Board remained unchanged until 1940. F. Howe-Browne, the Rev. G.S. Malan and Brigadier Bouwer were replaced by (2I) :
Mr H.N. Venn, retired Public Servant, formerly Under-Secretary for the Interior and Commissioner for Immigration and Asiatic Affairs, appointed 1933 and became chairman;
Mr W.J.H. Farrell, retired Public Servant, formerly Under-Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and of External Affairs, ex-clerk of the Union Executive Council, appointed 1934;
Lieutenant-Colonel A.C.G. Hatchell, ex-deputy commissioner of Police of the Orange Free State, matriculated at Denstone College, Staffordshire, England, appointed 1938.
and as alternate members :
Mrs A.C.S. Steenkamp, teacher's certificate, reads English, High Dutch, Afrikaans and German, made a study of silent and sound films when travelling in Europe, also visited the U.S.A., Egypt and Palestine, appointed 1938;
Mrs M.P.B. Cresswell, passed Oxford Senior Examination (in French, German and Latin), School Certificate for History and Literature, trained as a Medical and Surgical Hospital Nurse, was Ward Sister at Johannesburg General Hospital, director of Utility Housing Co, member of Animal Welfare Society, appointed 1938
Of the nine members of the Board, six had been reviewing films without interruption for more than ten years, Mrs Roux for fourteen and others for longer.

(ii) At first exhibitors attempts to profit by the situation by advertising largely that a film had been passed for adults only or for exhibition to men and women separately; but the outcry aroused by these tactics (often in connection with comparatively innocuous films to which pernicious influence was lent by this exaggerated suggestion) soon stopped publicity of this kind.

(iii) See Page 325 et seq..

"horrific" cartoons on children.(i) The decisions of the Board however came to be regarded as unduly severe by United States authorities.(ii) The only occasions on which the Board figured in the public eye were in August 1939 when it banned the exhibition of "Confessions of a Nazi Spy"(iii) without any reason being officially vouchsafed and later withdrew the ban; when it prohibited the showing of "Of Mice and Men" (iv) also without official statement which was not generally known until the Labour paper "Forward" featured the news; and when it prohibited sound films of General Hertzog and Dr Malan making speeches at variance with the Government's policy which had been prepared by the Hereenigde Party, an action which inflamed the feelings of the Anti-Government Afrikaans Press in June 1940.(21)

(i) One of the rare occasions of exciting public interest was in 1934 when the Board banned "Viva Villa" on grounds of "too much brutality" and "Tarzan and His Mate" because it was "offensive to decency".

(ii) In September 1938, the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce attached to the United States Department of Commerce stated in its circular on World-wide Motion Picture Developments(22) that "censorship is so strict in the Union of South Africa that exhibitors hesitate to offer films for review that may be rejected It is interesting to note that six appeals were lodged against the decision of the Board and that four of these were upheld. Of the 1,520 films censored by the Board for the year ending on the 31st December 1937, 347 were classified as drama, 395 as comedy, 486 as newsreels, topical, interest and musical, and 292 as trailers. The results of the censorship are detailed below :

Approved without Excisions :	
For general exhibition	1,166
For exhibition to Europeans only	37
" " " " and non-Europeans (not natives)	154
For exhibition to persons over the age of 12 years only	5
For exhibition to Europeans and non-Europeans over the age of 12 years only (exclusing all natives)	39
For exhibition to Europeans over the age of 12 years only.	12
For exhibition to Europeans over the age of 16 years only.	2
	1,415
Films approved after certain Excisions :	
For general exhibition	40
For exhibition to Europeans only	4
For exhibition to Europeans and non-Europeans(not natives)	23
For exhibition to persons over the age of 12 years only	1
For exhibition to Europeans and non-Europeans over the age of 12 years (excluding all natives)	2
For exhibition to Europeans over the age of 12 years only.	1
For exhibition to Europeans over the age of 16 years only.	2
	83

Total Number of Films Rejected : 32

(iii) See Page 362 et seq..

(iv) The film "Of Mice and Men" was totally banned by the Union Board of Censors when not only was the play being widely read but actually performed in an unexpurgated form by the Johannesburg Repertory Players inter alia. (23)

The nationalising of censorship undoubtedly cured a great many o the previous anomalies; but , owing to the framing of the Act and its failure to recognise that censorship is always contingent on context (that is, on time, circumstance, the temper of the public, etc etc), it created a good many more. In its tautological specification of ~~specific~~ censorable items, the Act is at variance with the concept of censorship embodied in parallel legislation in Australia, for instanc (1); but, though many of these specifications represent acknowledged a dead letter, the application of the remainder continues contingent on context and forces the Board into committing apparent contradictions.(ii) Those paradoxes which are always subsequently explicable on circumstantial grounds are less serious than other inherent defects which the Act admits. In the first place, the lack of official statement of the Board's grounds for banning well-known and eagerly-

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(1)"Centrary to the practice in some other countries", stated W. Cresswell O'Reilly, Chief Censor of the Commonwealth Film Censorship (24),"the Censorship does not specify particular subjects or scenes which it considers objectionable, being guided by the general principles laid down in the regulations i.e. no imported film shall be registered which
(a) is blasphemous, indecent or obscene;
(b) is likely to be injurious to morality or to encourage or incit to crime;
(c) is likely to be offensive to the people of any friendly nation
(d) is likely to be offensive to the people of the British Empire;
(e) or depicts any matter the exhibition of which is undesirable in the public interest.
While this system has disadvantages, it has the advantage of elasticity and flexibility, permitting a change of practice to meet fluctuating custom or opinion and enables allowance or disallowance according to the atmosphere, intention or character c the particular film in question..... In judging films which come before them, the Board seeks to conjecture what would be the attitude of the average man or woman towards any film or scene therein, and thus tries to interpret public opinion, with this additional proviso that the Censorship deems its function to be or of restraint rather than anticipation. It has sometimes made it a practice to delete a certain type of incident or language only to find that it has been adopted through the medium of the wireless, the gramaphone, the printing press or general custom...."
Together with the Irish Free State, the Australian Censorshi was reputed to be the strictest in the world (although it did not have the problems of colour afflicting South Africa).

(ii) The specifications in sub-section 2 of Section 5 (see Page406) permit the Union Censor Board to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. The Board refused to ban "The March of Time" (see Page 366 (i)) although the Act specifically stated that it should "not approve any film which in its opinion depicts in an offensive manner (g) scenes containing reference to controversial or international politics" - an offence to which scores of people attested and which was pleaded in Parliament. On the other hand, the Board banned "Confessions of a Nazi Spy" in 1939 on precisely those grounds but released it later, thus tacitly admitting the contingency of censorship on context. Under these circumstances, the provisions of sub-section 2 are pointless and redundant.

awaited films (i) proved as much "calculated to disturb peace or good order or prejudice the general welfare" as their actual exhibition. Secondly, the Act is designed to cover "the performance of public entertainments"; but in actual practice, there is no supervision of theatrical performances.(ii) Thirdly, though the Act enjoins strict censorship of films and film advertisements (i.e. posters, publicity stills, etc) there is no parallel censorship of "bioscope slides" or still advertisements shown on the screen during intervals etc.(iii) Fourthly, the Amendment Act of 1934, if it left no loop-hole for the private exhibition of pernicious films, opened the door for their public exhibition. By its provisions, exhibitors were allowed to show at the beginning of a programme a statement that all the films to be shown in the programme had been approved by the Board, instead of the previous certificates on each film. This arrangement is entirely dependent on the goodwill and moral integrity of the trade - factors which may be impeccable in the established exhibiting companies but which it would be unfair to presuppose universally, especially under exigent political circumstance. There is nothing to prevent an exhibitor from showing the customary slide and exhibiting films which have not been approved by the Board. There is particularly a temptation to do so with political films in country dorps where detection would be unlikely. Fifthly, the Act made no provision for special qualifications for the members of the Censor Board.(iv) Finally, the

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(i) For instance, though the film "Confessions of a Nazy Spy" was banned, the book on which it was based "The Nazi Spy Conspiracy in America"by Leon Tourrou and Wittels was then being read and freely circulated throughout the Union; likewise the play "Of Mic and Men" which was also being performed. The "treatment" of films ofcourse may render them more influential than books, especially in countries of mixed population.

(ii) Had there been such censorship, several amateur productions of plays "representing antagonistic relations between capital and labour" staged in Johannesburg at least in the late thirties woul certainly have been censored.

(iii) In several cases, "bioscope slides" have been"offensive to decency" but unless directly reported to the Board as "pictures" within the scope of the Act, no action can be taken.

(iv) The members of the Board were to be appointed by the Minister of the Interior who originally appointed en bloc the Cape Provincial Board of Inspectors. There was no outside representation as requested by African Theatres, which, in virtue of the disparate effect of films in various areas was a primary demand; there was no qualified authority on the theatre, drama and cinema as requested by the trade; there was no child psychologist as persistently requested by probation officers, welfare societies, etc; and no public relations officer or any member who might be presumed to have his finger on the public pulse.

the Act made no provision for the maintenance of the alertness of the Board. Where it might have provided for the appointment of new members at regular intervals to assure the Board's conversancy with public feeling and contemporary event, it merely stated (Section 2 sub-section 2) - "the members of the board shall be appointed for a period of not more than three years : provided that any member of the board may be re-appointed for a further period of three years..." with the result that the Minister continued to re-appoint members (some of whom had been reviewing films for ten, twenty and even thirty years), the only new members being appointed through the necessity of death and other reasons and not by discretion.

References : CHAPTER XIV

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(4) The Star - I0th June I9I3

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(I2) Cape Times - 8th May I9I3

(I3) Cape Times - 2nd May I9I3

(I4) Page 4 - "Report of the Select Committee on the Entertainments (Censorship) Bill March I93I"

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(I9) Page 38 - "Report of the Select Committee on the Entertainments (Censorship) Bill March I93I"

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The Star - IIth June I940
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CHAPTER XV

The History of Film Production in South Africa

Section I - For Commercial Exhibition

Section II - For Non-Commercial Exhibition

CHAPTER XV

The History of Film Production in South Africa

Section I - For Commercial Exhibition

(The distinction between film production for commercial and for non-commercial exhibition, though the only feasible classification, is necessarily loose - for instance, African Film Productions Ltd produce both type of film but, the former preponderating, it is dealt with in Section I.)

Desultory Film Production 1896-1910

The history of commercial film production in South Africa may be said to have begun in May 1896 when Edgar Hyman, manager of the Empire Palace of Varieties in Johannesburg, first saw the "cinematographe" used by Carl Hertz (i) and, fascinated by its possibilities, obtained from Charles Urban, managing director of the Warwick Trading Company of London, a cinecamera and supplies of unexposed film. Hyman continuously took films in South Africa as agent for the company and it would appear that, prior to the outbreak of the Boer War, Urban also sent one of his cameramen (possibly Joseph Rosenthal) to film scenes in South Africa on two separate occasions. The Warwick Trading Company's Film Catalogue from 1898 onwards itemised a large number of South African films many of which were shown at the Johannesburg Empire from 1898 onwards and some to President Kruger (whom Hyman also filmed) early in 1899.(ii) It is evident that from 1896 to 1899, both Edgar Hyman and other cinecameramen were active in South Africa and that their films, distributed through the Warwick Trading Company, were shown throughout the world. The Boer War was systematically documented by three enterprises (iii); but subsequently film production seems to have ceased in South Africa for some years except for the filming of Cecil Rhodes' funeral in April 1902 by J.T. Blake, the "bioscope operator" attached to Fillis' Circus, then in Cape Town. He filmed other scenes as well (iv) but those of Rhodes' funeral were shown throughout South Africa and aroused considerable interest wherever

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(i) see Chapter I and Page 45.

(ii) see Page 47 et seq..

(iii) see Chapter III

(iv) see Page 90

shown.(i)

During I906, one of the itinerant "bioscope" exhibitors of the period, H.D. Roberts took a number of films in Natal, mostly of scenes in Durban and in August I906, of the Zulu insurrection.(ii) Also in August I906, the Tivoli music-hall in Cape Town showed films of the England-versus-South Africa cricket match at Newlands which were apparently taken by an amateur cameraman and made no great impression.

During the same year, the first ambitious production enterprise since the Boer War was being undertaken. Urban had again sent his cameramen to South Africa, this time to make a comprehensive document ary entitled "From Cape to Cairo". They covered the country thoroughl taking films in all the large towns and sending them back to England for processing. These single films (and also several taken in Rhodesia) returned to South Africa from early in I907 onwards and wer shown throughout the country by the itinerant exhibitors, especially Wolfram, never failing to arouse great public interest. The completed series was said to have run to "crowded houses" in London. A large

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(i) Its original advertisement on the IIth April I902 was as follows

Imperial Circus
Proprietors and Managers - Bonamici and Fillis
Tonight (Friday)
Grand Fashionable Box Night
dedicated to the Elite of Cape Town when will be exhibited by the Bioscope
The Late Right Hon.C.J.
RHODES'
Funeral Procession
Animated Pictures
taken on the 3rd instant by Mr J.T. Blake, the operator of the Imperial Circus.
The pictures were taken first in the Government Avenue, corner of the Mansion House Buildings, at St George's Cathedral and Railway Station with Full View of the Train steaming away.
The management think it their duty to intimate to the genera public and regular patrons that in reproducing the animated pictures of
The Late
Right Hon. C.J. Rhodes'
Funeral Procession
they have no intention to offend the susceptibilities of those wh feel reverence for the defunct statesman, but have followed the march of progress of the present country in which all Great Events, Heroes and Notable Persons are brought into prominence by the most wonderful and latest discovery
The Bioscope
The public interest taken in the funeral of the late Illustrious Statesman is universal and an event of such importance demanded the Exhibition of a series of Pictures depicting the chief characteristics of the Mournful Procession. They have thus fulfilled their duty to the public by reproducing a lasting testimony to one whose name will be handed down to posterity as the Greatest Empire Maker of the Age.

(ii) These films showed the Transvaal Mounted Rifles, the Natal

number dealt with Natal - life in Zululand, the whaling industry, Hulett's Tea Plantations, the Mahurram Festival, ricksha riding, the Durban beach, etc etc - while others showed the Rand gold-mining industry, then supplied with Chinese labour (a special film showed "The Chinese at Work and at Play"), the de Beers Diamond Mines at Kimberley, scenes at the Cape etc. The first film of the Victoria Falls taken by these cameramen, was shown in September 1907 by Wolfram.(i)

Another lull, lasting about three years, in film production ensued but was terminated by the institution of the first permanent "picture palaces". The popularity of the first newsreels inspired the founders of "Electric Theatres Ltd" to make a policy of producing their own topical films for their "bioscopes" in South Africa. The country's first permanent cinema, the "Electric Theatre" in Durban which opened at the end of July 1909 employed a "bioscopist" to take "local views" (ii) These films were shown along the circuit which however, soon failed and the development of a South African newsreel was further postponed. A singular enterprise was undertaken towards the end of 1910 by the Coliseum Cinema in Johannesburg which, with the South African Railways and Harbours, employed a number of cinecameramen to film "From the Cape to the Zambezi" from the front of a locomotive. The production was timed to include the famous Arnst-versus-Barry sculling race held on the Zambezi and included scenes on the river showing hippopotami, etc. When released, the completed film did not provoke much interest despite the fact that Arnst himself accompanied many of its exhibitions with a lecture.(iii)

Desultory film production by amateurs or itinerant professional

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Rifles, Lancashire and Yorkshire regiments, their laager at Greytown, Royston's Horse in camp after the action at Nome Valley and a "Fighting Scene with Zulus". They do not appear to have made much impression.

(i) There is no doubt that Urban's enterprise secured the first comprehensive documentation of South Africa in films. Of the many thousands of feet taken by his cameramen (sometimes in areas where only a few white men had penetrated), not one remains. Their last appearance in South Africa was in July 1910 when the Johannesburg Vaudette specially imported "Johannesburg Four Years Ago"; but since then, they have completely disappeared.

(ii) See Page 129 (iii), Page 130 (ii) et seq..

(iii) The quality of the film appears to have been poor (the jerking of the train during the scenic sections could hardly have improved the inevitable flicker) and though the film was offered for sale to the trade, few copies seem to have been bought.

appears to have continued. During 1910, their activities were manifested in various topical films, especially in Johannesburg; but the outstanding production of the year was the filming of the Cape Town Pageant organised by Frank Lascelles in celebration of the Act of Union. This film which was of considerable length, was shown throughout the country, evoking as much interest in Cape Town itself as in remoter areas. The desultory production of topical newsfilms was now an established feature but their market remained strictly local. A film of the Johannesburg Summer Handicap, for instance, was seldom shown anywhere else but in Johannesburg. On the other hand, South Africa's special scenic and other attractions were appreciated by overseas production firms which, faced by an insatiable demand for films through the current "movie-madness", had difficulty in maintaining an adequate supply. During 1911, following Urban's lead, the famous London firm of W.H. Butcher sent a representative to South Africa who took a considerable number of scenic and other films which, though intended for the overseas market, were later successfully shown throughout the Union.(i)

Africa's Amalgamated Theatres and the "African Mirror" 1911-1913

It was largely due to the enterprise of Rufe Naylor that the desultory production of South African films ceased and that the industry began to be placed on a firm basis. Shortly after the institution of his "Tivoli Picture Palaces" in Johannesburg, Naylor began to be interested in the production of topical shorts and before long, they began to feature on his programmes. With the formation of Africa's Amalgamated Theatres (ii), local film production was established as a concomitant of the organised exhibition of films. From the end of 1911 onwards, the local films taken by A.A.T. cameramen led by the well-known photographer Nissen, and latter Crellin, became a feature of Johannesburg cinemas and the activities of the "Orpheum bioscopist" were watched with interest by the Press.

Naylor's example was quickly followed elsewhere, particularly at the Cape where "Payne's Springbok Gazette" appeared early in 1912. The quality of its photography was such that it did not survive its

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(i) The "Premier Bio" in Durban which received them regularly, made a special point of featuring them on its programmes.

(ii) see Page 135 et seq..

first few issues. In April 1912, a more ambitious enterprise was launched in the "South African Biography Company of Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg" which proposed issuing a "South African Animated Gazette" of which however, only one or two issues appeared. Towards the end of 1912, a far-sighted enterprise was launched by Leo Weinthal editor of the "African World" who inspired the production of a large number of comprehensive "interest shorts" in South Africa and Rhodesia for exhibition overseas for publicity purposes.(i)

By 1913, the cameramen of Africa's Amalgamated Theatres had begun to cover items all over the Union, these newsfilms proving of such interest that on the 5th May 1913, they were first combined in the issue of South Africa's first newsreel, the "African Mirror".(ii) At the same time, Mr Schlesinger was negotiating the foundation of the companies that were to save the entertainment industry. The "African Mirror" had made only two or three appearances when their parent company, Africa's Amalgamated Theatres was merged in the African Theatres and the African Films Trusts.

The African Films Trust's Production Unit 1913-1915

The most spectacular achievement of the early "African Mirror was the filming of the Kleinfontein Strike which took place while the negotiations between Schlesinger, Naylor and the Empire Theatres Co. were still in progress. The films totalled about 2,000 feet and their exhibition in Johannesburg was prohibited by the military, municipal and police authorities lest they incite to violence. (iii) During the

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(i) This enterprising venture appears to have met with some success and evoked great interest, both locally and abroad. The South African films were shown in London in March 1913 and the Rhodesia in May at the Alhkambra in London and, if they did not "attract attention to South Africa as a field for British capital and enterprise" as intended, they greatly gratified the local public.

(ii) The opening issue of the "African Mirror" was advertised :

THE
AFRICAN MIRROR
in which is reflected all the current South African events
No.I includes - The scene of Thursday's motor fatality showing th wrecked car; South African Championship Sports; Witwatersrand League versus Pretoria; the funeral of James Coward, mayor of Germiston; Boy Scouts Church Parade; Opening of Braamfontein's New Station; Pony and Galloway Meeting; Diggers versus Wanderers.

(A week later, its cameramen (Messrs Humphrey, Bradley, Wilson and Crellin) were organising an ambitious "reportage" of the motor cycle race for the Schlesinger Trophy from Johannesburg to Durban. Simultaneously Mr Schlesinger himself, departing from his usual financial interests in insurance, etc was investigating the possibility of re-establishing the bioscope-music-hall business on a sound basis.)

(iii) Interest in the strike was so widespread that in July 1913, it was possible to open the Grand Theatre in Cape Town (which had

Strike, the African Films Trust was founded and the "African Mirror", with its numerous cameramen and already extensive organisation, was incorporated in the new company as a subsidiary department. Thence onwards, it acted as South African correspondent for the Pathé' Gazette.(1)

Meanwhile the idea of a local newsreel had been developed at the Cape where H.J. Stodel and F. Potts were successfully running the Tivoli with bio-vaudeville and the Alhambra as a "bioscope" in Cape Town. In June 1913, the "Alhambra Gazette" or "Cape Animated Gazette" appeared and for some time proved a popular feature (its cameraman Jarvis having many adventures with the military authorities after the outbreak of war when many historic scenes were filmed). Subsequently as the control of both Trusts over the whole industry was tightened, the "Alhambra Gazette" gave way to the "African Mirror" and the production of opposition newsreels ceased.

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been closed for some time) specially to show the films which were advertised as follows :

The Great Sensation of South Africa
THE JOHANNESBURG STRIKE AND RIOTS
showing the Charge of the Dragoons on the Mob
The Dead and Wounded lying in the Streets
The Burning of Property and all the Sensational Scenes
One of our Operators shot dead wilst taking the pictures

Commenting on the exhibition, the Cape Times remarked (I) -"... there was not a vacant seat...The films, which are particularly distinct and came out with remarkable clearness, help one to realise more thoroughly the sensational happenings...The first film is that of a meeting of miners at the Van Rhyn Mine and the march of a contingent of strikers from Benoni to Vereeniging. Some of them swam across the Vaal River and captured the pont, and they are shown "pulling out" the men from the Victoria Falls Power Co's station. Then follow views of Park Station and the offices of The Star in ruins. But the pictures which commanded most attention wer those taken outside the Rand Club when it was besieged. The soldie are seen lying and kneeling in the street ready to fire..."

In August 1913, the Judicial Commission consisting of Sir Johannes Wessels and Mr Justice Ward which was appointed to enquir into the causes of the strike, was given a special showing of the films at the Empire Theatre in Johannesburg "in order to get a clearer impression of the events than could be obtained from the hearing of witnesses".(2) Others present were Mr.E.L. Matthews representing the Union Government, Mr R. Feetham representing the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief the Imperial Military Forces i South Africa, and a number of military officers. Prior to this private showing,the films had been sent to London where they were shown to a number of War Office and Home Office officials who "did not object to the public exhibition of the films which will subsequently be shown throughout the country."(3)

(1) From its first issues onwards, the "African Mirror" had been attentively watched by the Press which commented with approval on new features such as the inclusion of a "fashion" sequence (frequently taken in Joubert Park, Johannesburg), the modes and models being supplied by local emporia.

For hearly three years, the African Films Trust carried on film production as a subsidiary department of its film-distributing activities. During that time, production progressed both in quality and scope to an astonishing degree. Associated with it were H.Barlow Coulthard, a well-known theatrical personality; Crellin, the pioneering newsreel cameraman for Africa's Amalgamated Theatres; and Joseph Albrecht (i), a young English newsreel cameraman who had filmed the Serbian war and the Balkan disturbances of 1912. Production was not confined to the "African Mirror" but extended also to numerous scenic and industrial "shorts" for educational and publicity purposes. By the beginning of 1914, an Industrial Exhibition held in Cape Town was able to stage a "bioscope" giving a continuous programme of these films which included "A Holiday at Port Elizabeth", "Farming by Dynamite", "The Victoria Falls", "A Ride to Camp's Bay", "The Cape Times Printing Works", etc etc. During 1914, Crellin made an outstanding film of the waterfalls of Natal and Albrecht did much scenic work, including films of Pretoria, Rustenburg and Kloof(Durban), and a tram-ride from Eloff Street to Orange Grove in Johannesburg.(ii)

African Film Productions Ltd

The expansion of the South African film production industry and its consolidation under one company resulted from a variety of causes, primary among them being the outbreak of the Great War. The difficulties which war conditions imposed upon the regular supply of films furnished one reason for the establishment of a local industry but more urgent was the fact that American fiction films, which now formed the bulk of programmes, could now force the market at any price their distributors cared to demand. The attenuation of the local cinema field through the departure of troops, the disinclination of the remaining public (through bereavement or other causes) to attend cinemas and general economic stress made this position the less tenable. It was therefore proposed to make "South African films for South African audiences" which could also be sold on the overseas

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(i) Joseph Albrecht, often described as "the father of the South African film production industry", subsequently became the manager of African Film Productions Ltd and as director, producer and often scenario-writer, was responsible for almost every film that reflected meritoriously on the country.

(ii) This latter film was preserved at the Killarney Studios of African Film Productions Ltd though all previous productions have completely disappeared.

market. Inspired by the personal interest of Mr.I.W. Schlesinger (1), "African Film Productions Ltd" was founded with this end in view and the added purpose of maintaining topical work (in the "African Mirror and such publicity and other productions as might be required in the Union.

The company, which was associated with the African Theatres and Films Trusts, was launched on an ambitious scale to give immediate effect to grandiose plans. Its activities were not at once apparent to the public, little publicity having been given to its formation and "actuality" film production (ii) tended to conceal the preparations already on foot for the establishment of a fiction film production industry. One of the first steps was the building of extensive and substantial studios at Killarney, a suburb of Johannesburg and at that time, almost in the country. Surrounded by rocky koppies on which as yet no houses had been built, fields and wooded streams, it furnished excellent locations of "exterior shots".Another step was the engagement of Lorrimer Johnston, a well-known American film producer who, with his wife Caroline Frances Cook, arrived in Johannesburg during 1915. In April 1916, it was announced that Harold Shaw, the wellknown producer for Vitagraph and London Films, and his wife, Edna Flugrath, a famous film actress (iii) had sailed for South Africa under engagement to African Film Productions Ltd. Before the

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(i) Mr Schlesinger married Miss Mabel May, a member of a touring theatrical company, who performed in a large number of films mad by African Film Productions Ltd.

(ii) During 1915, the obvious merits of a nascent film production industry were exploited by the Publicity and Travel Department o the South African Railways and Harbours which commissioned the production of a number of films, including a comprehensive treatment of the gold mines, various railway routes such as the Mossel Bay-Oudtshoorn line, and a remarkable documentary of the building of the Prieska-Upington line at the rate of a mile a day showing the building of bridges, the transport of troops and camp life in all its phases. During the same year, apart from topical and scenic production such as "The Beautiful Cape Peninsula", "African Mirror" cameramen took historic pictures of the Lusitania Riots, General Botha's triumphant return to Pretoria after the South West African campaign, and other spectacular occurrences.

(iii) Vitagraph was then one of the most popular makes of American films. Harold Shaw was reputed (4) to have been engaged at a salary of £2,000 for the first year and £3,000 for the second as well as a percentage of the profits derived from the exhibition of the films he produced.
His wife Edna Flugrath was famous in her own right as a film actress and was a sister of one of the first popular "film stars Viola Dana, and of the rather less famous Shirley Mason.

results of these enterprising importations could be publicly shown, the ambitious productions undertaken during 1915 with local resources began to be screened.

From May 1916 onwards, African Theatres showed a steady succession of short fiction films produced by African Film Productions(1), many of the latter of which were directed by Lorrimer Johnston. The staff of the firm now numbered between seventy and eighty and, apart from its permanent employees, it frequently utilised theatrical talent to play leading roles. Wherever possible, African Film Productions Ltd

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(1) During 1915-1916, African Film Productions Ltd produced the following films :
"An Artist's Inspiration" - A.F.P.'s first comedy designed to give Denis Santry, the Rand Daily Mail's cartoonist whose war cartoons were very popular at the time, an adequate "framing" to demonstrate his talent, and acted by Mabel May, Dick Cruickshanks (a local actor) and H.B. Waring, the scenario written by Denis Santry;
"A Zulu's Devotion" - A.F.P.'s first drama, written and directed by Joseph Albrecht, showing how a Zulu farm-hand frustrates the designs of two half-caste stock thieves and rescues his little mistress from their clutches, played by Dick Cruickshanks and Caroline Frances Cook as the farmer and his wife, Little Mary Rowson as their daughter, Julius Royston (once associated with Leonard Rayne) and Holger Petersen as the stock thieves, and the Zulu actor Goba (later one of A.F.P.'s stars) as the faithful servant;
"The Silver Wolf" - a Boy Scout drama dealing with a hooligan who becomes a Boy Scout and earns the Silver Wolf (the Scout V.C.) by rescuing an eminent personage's daughter, the leading role being played by Scout Banks and the child by Mary Rowson, the Mayor of Johannesburg Mr J.W.O'Hara and the Chief Scout Commissioner of the Transvaal Mr Wallace Boutter also taking part (a fact which aroused lively local interest);
"The Story of the Rand" - dealing with illicit gold-buying played by Caroline Frances Cook and Julius Royston;
"The Illicit Liquor Seller" - a topical melodrama played by Mabel May, Dick Cruickshanks and M.A.Wetherall (an actor associated with Leonard Rayne) which, owing to great public interest in the prevalent wave of illicit liquor selling and a rapid multiplication of prosecutions, proved a popular success;
"A Kract Affair" - a short comedy one of whose scenes was taken in Eloff Street, Johannesburg, paralysing the traffic both vehicular and pedestrian;
"The Water Cure" - a short slap-stick comedy modelled on the early American Keystone Yells;
"The Splendid Waster" - a "powerful South African drama in 4 acts" in which Edna Flugrath played the lead (her overseas films were given great prominence at the time);
"Gloria" - based on the novel by Charlotte Mansfield in 5 acts with Mabel May in the lead supported by M.A.Wetherall and Frank Cellier (then playing with A.E. Anson and Mary Malleson at His Majesty's);
"A Tragedy of the Veld" - a short comedy

In August 1916, African Film Productions explored a new line by offering a £100 prize to the best suggested ending for a projected melodrama entitled "The Gun Runner". The cast of this unproduced film was
Katje du Toit (the heroine,daughter of a Boer farmer) - Mabel May
Hendrik Andries (the hero, a young Boer) - H.B. Waring
Roderiguez de Zazas (the villain, a renegade Portuguese gun-runner) - Julius Royston
Unfortunately the response did not realise the company's expectations and the film was never produced.

endeavoured to lend local interest to their films by weaving fictional romance into factual problems of the day and almost all their first fiction films were based on this policy. While these films were being shown throughout the Union and sometimes two or three simultaneously in the larger towns such as Johannesburg, African Film Productions were engaged on two great enterprises. Apart from topical work for the "African Mirror" and the production of various "interest shorts" such as a documentary on "Ostrich Farming at Oudtshoorn", its cameramen were documenting the East African campaign in a remarkable series of films which were continuously shown under tht title "With Our Boys in German East" and local military activities such as "A Day in Camp at Potchefstroom". The second enterprise was the filming of "De Voortrekkers", an historical epic whose scenario had been written by the eminent historian Dr Gustav Preller in collaboration with Harold Shaw, the producer specially imported for the purpose.(1)

"De Voortrekkers", in every sense a national film documenting a climactic point in South African history, told the story of the Great Trek culminating in the Battle of Blood River. Its leading players were

Piet Retief - Dick Cruickshanks
Mrs Retief - Caroline Frances Cook (Mrs Lorrimer Johnston)
Ingenue - Edna Flugrath (Mrs Harold Shaw)
Dingaan - the Zulu actor Goba

Elaborate preparations were made to ensure authenticity - twenty thousand assegais and other native war paraphernalia were collected, five hundred rifles of the period (one of which was the gun actually used by Andries Pretorius during the Zulu attack) and forty trek wagons which were specially made for the production. Costumes and details of decor were checked by Dr Preller and every care was taken to ensure accuracy and a total absence of anachronism (then a feature of overseas productions).

Production commenced early in 1916 on exterior scenes and immediately aroused popular prejudice owing to the hyper-sensitivity of the Dutch-speaking population which had been incensed over the pro-

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(1) The magnitude of "De Voortrekkers" was totally out of proportion to the reputation of the nascent film industry and gave evidence of the courage, confidence and optimism which attended its launching. Conceived on a grand scale, this ambitious historical film would have demanded the full resources, both financial and technical, of the best-equipped Hollywood studio of the day. Its production was courageously and sincerely undertaken and despite every kind of difficulty, was successfully concluded.

posed screening of "The Dop Doctor"(i). This animosity was intensifie when it was discovered that much of the production was taking place on Sundays. Requiring large numbers of European and native "extras", the producers were forced to rely on local labour which was available only over the week-end. This activity was pursued for some time without comment; but in October 1916 when the climactic sequences depicting the Battle of Blood River were being filmed at Elsburg near Johannesburg, Die Burger launched an unequivocal attack on Sabbath-breaking. No action was taken however possibly owing to the fact that the Prime Minister, General Botha, had taken a personal interest in the production. There were manifold other difficulties, notably in the handling and control of thousands of natives who were expected to make a fanatic attack on a laager without losing sight of the fact that they were only acting. At the first filming of the Battle of Blood River in October, trouble ensued (ii) but on the 18th November

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(i) See 394 et seq..
At the time, racialism was still rife and the Nationalist Party under General Hertzog in bitter opposition to the S.A.P. Government. At the same congress of the Women's Nationalist Party held in Johannesburg in April 1916 that had condemned exhibition of "The Dop Doctor", Mrs Langenegger of Heidelberg(5) "told a story of how a few weeks ago, a Johannesburg company of film actors came to Heidelberg for the purpose of the enscenation of an episode in the earlier history of the Africander people. It just happened to be Nachtmaal time and the company hired ox-wagons at £3 per day and engaged the unsophisticated farmers to perform parts in the play. The farmers were supplied with ludicrous costumes which were supposed to be the dress of the voortrekkers wild beards and all sorts of ridiculous paraphernalia which would only serve to excite public contempt. As the farmers were about to take up their parts, one courageous man stepped forward and taxed his fellow Africanders with their thoughtlessness in thus disgracing the memory of their brave ancestors. The man at once saw that they had been at fault and tearing off the theatrical rags, they one and all refused to have anything more to do with the undignified show."

(ii) At a given signal, the natives charged the laager furiously; but instead of recoiling and falling "dead", continued into the laager itself where blows with Europeans were exchanged. Mounted police under the command of Major Trew (subsequently Colonel Trew became a member of the Cape Provincial and Union Censor Boards) were forced to intervene and to prevent the natives from attacking the laager in real earnest. In moving them away from the scene of "battle", the police hustled the natives out of the laager and into the surrounding hills. Some escaped by swimming the river and one was drowned. This unfortunate occurrence badly affected the temper of the hundreds of natives now waiting sullenly in the hills and made a "re-take" impossible. At the subsequent magisterial enquiry into the single casualty, it transpired that both Harold Shaw and Major Trew had reason to suppose that the disturbance had been engineered and that there had existed "a plot to incite and irritate the natives" (6)While the natives were charging the laager, the Europeans within had fired shots. Harold Shaw had shouted to them to stop firing and when they had failed to do so, he had run among the natives in an attempt to stop it. Even at this stage, trouble was not anticipated; but when Trew saw a native pull a white man off his

it was again filmed with complete success. The natives, numbering about 400 were drawn from the E.R.P.M. mine and were controlled by their own compound managers (i) and other mine officials and the "Boers" were all E.R.P.M. employees and known to the natives. This large body of "extras", completely without experience of film acting, intelligently appreciated what was required of them and with little or no rehearsal, carried out the attack on the laager and the repulse of the Zulus. It was also possible to shhot other scenes and before long, the production was completed.

On the 12th December 1916, a private pre-view of the Dutch version of the film was given at the Empire Theatre in Johannesburg to an invited audience of 400. The Dutch captions were read in English by Mr Barlow Coulthard against a musical background specially composed by Mr Henn ten Brink. Running for nearly three hours (it was 10,000 feet long), the film made a deep impression. The first public showing of "De Voortrekkers" was given on Dingaans Day, the 16th December 1916, in the Town Hall, Krugersdorp where an immense concourse of Afrikaners led by General Botha, had gathered to celebrate at the Monument at Paardekraal.(ii) General Botha was present in the

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horse and jab at him with his improvised assegai, he realised the danger of serious disturbance. So far from cooperating in the dispersal of the natives, the Europeans in the laager fired at close range even when the natives were withdrawing.

The film of this scene was privately shown at the Empire in Johannesburg on the 19th October. Though extremely realistic, it was ofcourse wholly inaccurate. The Zulu charge (since it very nearly approached to genuineness) was most impressive and depicte the natives smashing into the laager regardless of rifle fire. In point of historical fact, the Zulus made three attacks on the Boers whose fire was so deadly that they never got nearer than 150 yards. It was therefore necessary to re-take the scene and even more elaborate preparations had to be made.

(i) The compound managers were Messrs G. Blair Hook and A.P. Norton and the mine officials included Mr H.M. Taberer of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association who was much respected and beloved by the natives. (He was also an apostle of film production - see appropriate section.) The"Boers" were led by Mr M. Foxcroft. The action took place near Elsburg (south of Germiston) and, unlike the previous attempt, was fully successful. So amenable were the participants that it was possible to progress with other portions of the film towards the end of the day when the setting sun permitted excellent effects. In its waning light, the massacre at Weenen was filmed and the Zulu burning of the wagons of the ill-fated expedition to Dingaan led by Retief.

(ii) A huge laager of ~~kwek~~-wagons was formed near the monument and Krugersdorp was filled with thousands of Afrikaners who had travelled hundreds of miles to attend the celebrations which were being staged on an unprecedented scale. The vast majority came by ox-wagon. It was estimated that 40,000 were present when General Botha, himself sleeping under canvas, made a speech at the Monument. Bad weather with intermittent rain failed to damp Afrikaner ardour which achieved enthusiastic expression at the time.

first audience (i) which greeted the film with wholehearted acclamation, he himself being profoundly moved.(ii) Subsequently the film was shown throughout the Union to enormous audiences (it had a three week record-breaking run at the Johannesburg Palladium) and in May 1917, was shown privately at the London Alhambra to an invited audience including Lord Selborne (a former Governor-General), General Smuts (then a member of the Imperial War Cabinet) and others. Thence onwards the showing of "De Voortrekkers" on Dingaan's Day of every year became

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(i) The first public exhibition of "De Voortrekkers" was organised by W.F. White, a director of the African Theatres and Films Trusts. Its initial advertisement was as follows :

"De Voortrekkers"
at
Krugersdorp
The Enthralling Film Story of
THE GREAT TREK
produced by Harold Shaw, scenario by Gustav Preller

South Africa's greatest historical film, produced in this country by South African enterprise, with South African money and South African talent. Historically perfect.

The Outstanding Feature of Dingaan's Day Celebrations
Now Showing
in the Big Laager Tent
Two Performances Every Night 7 to 9 and 9 to 11

In the Town Hall, Krugersdorp
Performances every two hours, commencing at 10 o'clock in the morning until midnight. Admission 2/- and 1/-.

Saturday Night Only
at 8 p.m.
Wanderer's Ground, Krugersdorp
Great Mass Exhibition
Thousands can be admitted at One Shilling
The birth of a great African industry. Admitted by all who have witnessed it as the greatest film picture ever produced in the history of the cinema.
The African Film Production Ltd

The showing of "De Voortrekkers" with its saga of optimism, courage, endurance and tragedy culminating in the final establishment of a harried people, was superlatively apposite at this annual celebration of their memory.

(ii) General Botha was stated (7) to have "watched the film through from beginning to end in complete silence but at the end of the picture, when the lights were turned on, it was seen that tears were streaming down his face for he had been completely moved by this pictorial presentation of some of the greatest incidents in South African history."

a national institution.(i)

The success of "De Voortrekkers" both in South Africa and overseas (ii) deservedly exceeded the highest expectations of its sponsor and inspired African Film Productions to embark on the production of another historic epic "Symbol of Sacrifice". Prior to its undertaking and during its production, routine work was continued in a number of short comedies and feature-length dramas(iii); but the comparative paucity of fiction films produced by African Film Productions to be shown during 1917 was largely owing to the firm's preoccupation with the production of "Symbol of Sacrifice". This ambitious historical film which rivalled "De Voortrekkers" in scope and magnitude, was designed to illustrate the Zulu Wars of the eighties and included the death of the Prince Imperial. The scenario was written by F. Horace Rose, a well known South African writer and then editor of the "Natal Witness" and Mr Schlesinger himself, assisted by Joseph Albrecht and Dick Cruickshanks, undertook the direction.(iv) Involving the use of

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(i) During 1938 when the Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations roused Afrikaner sentiment to a new height of fervour, "De Voortrekkers" (now twenty two years old, silent, jerky and antiquated) was shown extensively in the Transvaal and particularly along the Reef where it played to thousands of people even more enthusiasti than its original audiences. At Germiston, crowds numbering 1,100 waiting for the fifth performance of the film caused seriou disturbance by rushing the doors of the Apollo Cinema, bursting in and knocking over the manager and attendants. The police had to be called and order was not restored until queues were formed. (8) In subsequent years, the showing of the English "They Built a Nation" and the Afrikaans "Die Bou van 'n Nasie" (both talkies) a well as the amateur production "'N Nasie hou Koers" failed to break the hold of this remarkable national film which, forgotten throughout the year, punctually appeared on the 16th December and played to packed audiences.

(ii) "De Voortrekkers" was said to have inspired an American counterpart in "The Covered Wagon".

(iii) During 1917, a "comedy-short" series after the type of the late "Our Gang" and called "The Mealy Kids" was undertaken and three o four issues released. Other such comedies were "Zulutown Races" and "The Piccanins' Christmas" which, relying largely on the native's natural talent for acting, were insouciantly produced wherever and whenever possible. A more pretentious enterprise was the comedy "The Major's Dilemma" played by Mabel May and Dick Cruickshanks. The sole drama made by African Film Productions to appear during the year was "A Border Scourge", a melodramatic fil based on Bertram Mitford's novel of the same name and produced by Ralph Kimpton (an imported producer) and Joseph Albrecht.

(iv) By the terms of his agreement, Harold Shaw was to have directed "Symbol of Sacrifice" but soon after the launching of its product ion late in 1917, he left the employ of African Film Productions for a variety of reasons. Shaw then became associated with the Fishers - then in open opposition to the Schlesinger companies - who sponsored his production of a local drama called "The Rose of Rhodesia" in an old tramway shed at Sea Point, Cape. This film ir which Edna Flugrath and M.A. Wetherell played the leading roles, was of very poor and amateurish quality and, though loudly

hundreds of supernumeraries both native and European, the production of "Symbol of Sacrifice" met with even greater difficulty than that of "De Voortrekkers". Shooting commenced in January 1918 and was actively supervised by Mr Schlesinger with the assistance of Albrecht, Cruickshanks and Colonel Johan Colenbrander, a Natal and Rhodesian pioneer who had actually fought in the Zulu Wars.(1) Again the utmost care was taken to ensure accuracy of military uniforms, settings and the general reconstruction of historical scenes. Some part of the scenario was shot at the Killarney Studios and in the surrounding country; but the climactic sequences were taken at Isandhlwana in Zululand where

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boosted by the Fishers with the collaboration of the Press, survived only a few showings at various Town Halls during March-April 1918. In Cape Town, a disappointed audience adopted a truculent attitude at its conclusion. In July 1918, Leonard Rayne sponsored a dramatic production of "The Wasters" at the Cape Town Opera House with Harold Shaw and his wife Edna Flugrath in the lead; but running for two weeks, it proved unsuccessful. Shaw then left for England and died shortly afterwards in Hollywood.

(1) The filming of these ambitious scenes required immense organisation in which Colonel Colenbrander, an outstanding personality and recognised as one of the best native linguists in South Africa, was of considerable assistance. Assuming the role of Lord Chelmsford, commander of the British forces, Colenbrander took an active part in the production in which he was also enthusiastically interested. On Sunday the 10th February 1918, the unit was engaged in filming the British forces crossing the Tugela on the way to Rorke's Drift after the battle of Isandhlwana, a scene which had been reconstructed on the Klip River near Henley-on-Klip, a few miles from Johannesburg and near Vereeniging. The river was running high and Schlesinger, standing on the bank with his co-producers, attempted to dissuade Colenbrander from entering the water on horseback and making the crossing. Colenbrander however made light of his fears and, in company with several other "troopers", plunged into the rapidly-running river and urged his horse towards the opposite bank. Within a few moments, both Colenbrander and his companions were swept from their horses and disappeared from view. Some were rescued but two days later, the bodies of Colonel Colenbrander and two "troopers", Joseph Ralph Levy and Brown, were recovered from the river.

The tragedy created a profound sensation not only in Johannesburg but throughout the Union where Colenbrander was widely known and liked. In Johannesburg itself, the wildest rumours circulated as to the cause of the tragedy and the parts played by the various figures. The painful impression it had created was reflected in the House of Assembly where, on the 21st February, Mr C.W. Malan asked the Minister of Justice (9) whether, in view of (a) the reprehensible and fatal occurrence at Henley-on-Klip on Sunday the 10th February 1918; (b) the repeatedly-made requests of the Dutch Reformed Church; and (c) the generally-felt need, he would inform the House whether the Government intended introducing a Bill regulating the observance of the Sabbath and if so, when the said Bill would be introduced. The Minister replied in the negative.

On the 4th March, inquest proceedings were held, the court adjourning to the "bioscope" attached to the Grand Hotel in Vereeniging to view the section of the film taken before and during the fatal attempt to cross the river. The producers who had consistently tried to dissuade Colonel Colenbrander from attempting the crossing, were absolved from all culpability.

the famous massacre of 1879 actually occurred. Despite the unfortunat death of Colonel Colenbrander, the production of "Symbol of Sacrifice went ahead and on the 21st March 1918, a private preview was held in Johannesburg. The accompanying music, specially composed by David Foote, was peculiarly impressive, particularly the playing of the "Marseillaise" in a minor key during the funeral of the Prince Imperial. A thread of"love interest"ran throughout the film but its theme remained that of the struggle between civilisation and barbaris for which the Union Jack stood and for which it commanded the allegiance of every section of the community.(i) The historic scenes of conflict between British and Zulu were magnificently executed and obtained the unstinted admiration of the Press. "Symbol of Sacrifice" opened simultaneously at the Johannesburg Town Hall and the Palladium on the 27th March 1918 (during Show Week) and played to large houses. It was shown throughout the Union to sizeable audiences and though creating by no means the stir provoked by "De Voortrekkers", was everywhere acclaimed by Press critics. Offered on the overseas market it attracted a number of buyers and was distributed in England by the Stoll company.(ii) Lacking intrinsic national appeal, the film was never revived in the manner of "De Voortrekkers" and within a few years, completely fell out of the general public's memory.(iii)

The production of "Symbol of Sacrifice" occupied the concluding months of 1917 and the beginning of 1918. By June 1918, apart from

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(i) The film opened with the following verse projected against a fluttering Union Jack :
"I am the flag that braves the shock of war
From continent to continent and shore to shore.
Come weal or woe, as turns the old earth round,
Where hope and glory shine, there is the symbol found.
Look ! Sun and moon and glittering star,
Faithful unto death, my children are !
You who for duty live, and who for glory die,
The symbol of your faith and sacrifice am I."

(ii) In May 1919, "Symbol of Sacrifice"was shown by special request at Windsor Great Park to the Canadian Forestry Corps. Princess Alice was instrumental in arranging the exhibition and wrote to say that "she and the men thoroughly appreciated the picture".(IO (In this case, coming events cast their shadow before - in 1923, the Earl of Athlone was appointed Governor-General of the Union, both he and Princess Alice proving exceptionally popular, their term of office being extended until 1931. In 1940, they were appointed to the same office in Canada.)

(iii) The last recorded mention of the film was in March 1940 when J. Langley Levy, editor of the "Sunday Times", made an appeal in the news columns of his paper (II) for any information concerning a manuscript of recollection which, according to his son Dr Johan Colenbrander M.B. B.Sc., Colonel Colenbrander had written and which he was thought to have lent to Harold Shaw during the early stages of the film's production.

perpetual topical work, African Film Productions had already produced another drama - "Bond and Word" written by F. Horace Rose and produced by Dick Cruickshanks with Edward Donnelly in the lead. "An original detective drama in 4 acts", it made no great impression. Meanwhile the company was engaged on an imaginative and subsequently successful production called "The Voice of the Waters". Written by F. Horace Rose and directed by Joseph Albrecht, this drama was set among the scenery surrounding the Howick Falls in Natal. Most of the action took place in the room of a house overlooking the falls, the scenes being so set that the falls themselves were constantly seen through a window.(i) A drama produced during the year similarly taking advantage of scenic feature was "The Bridge" featuring Edward Vincent and directed by Dick Cruickshanks. It was taken in and around the Blaauwkrantz Bridge over the Kowie River.(ii)

By this time, the activities of African Film Productions Ltd had begun to arouse widespread interest. Apart from "De Voortrekkers" and "Symbol of Sacrifice", none of their films had set the Thames on fire but as evidence of a new and flourishing industry and the intelligent exploitation of local resources (in point of authorship, acting talent, etc), they greatly impressed large numbers of people.Numbers of distinguished people visited the Killarney Studios of the company (iii)

(i) To achieve this striking effect, a special platform and 'house" had to be built above the chasm on the side opposite the falls. Here Mabel May and Edward Vincent (an actor associated with Leonard Rayne) acted their rather melodramatic parts. The artistry and originality of this film at a time when films were consistently crude and sensational, marked commendable enterprise on the part of African Film Productions and earned favourable Press comments as well as sizeable audiences throughout the country. The film also proved successful overseas.

(ii) This bridge, 13 miles from Grahamstown, crosses a deep rocky gorge in one span at a great height and in point of design, is said to be the most graceful in the Cape Province.

(iii) The Governor-General, Lord Buxton, frequently came over from "Sunnyside", his official residence in the adjoining suburb of Houghton. In September 1918, Mr Schlesinger entertained a large and distinguished party at the studios where the production of "King Solomon's Mines" was in progress. Included in it were Sir Thomas and Lady Hyslop; Sir William and Lady Hoy (General Manager of the South African Railways and Harbours); Lady Albu; Mr and Mrs Patrick Duncan (later Governor-General of the Union); Marie Tempest, her husband Graham Browne, and Winifred Cotton (then playing at His Majesty's); Leonard Rayne; Mr and Mrs Claude Dampier (then playing at the Empire); Madge Fabian (the Australian actress imported by J.C. Williamson who subsequently played the lead in "Fallen Leaves" made by A.F.P.); Miss Mabel May ("South Africa's own film star" and married to Mr I.W.Schlesinger Mr and Mrs J. Langley Levy (editor of the "Sunday Times") etc et Another of Killarney's visitors was Mr F.S. Malan,Minister of Mines and Industries who in October 1918, was shown over the

particularly during the filming of "King Solomon's Mines" which was produced on a lavish scale by H. Lisle Lucogue with Edna Joyce as the Queen of Sheba, Frank Fillis (son of the famous circus master) as the Captain of the Guard, and Phyllis Solomon as leader of the troop of dancers. The scenes and decor were elaborately constructed and every attempt was made to do justice to Rider Haggard's popular novel. The film was released early in 1919 in the Union and had a successful overseas distribution.

During 1918-1919, African Film Productions were particularly active in the production of short fiction films of which five were shown throughout the Union in 1919 (1). The extensive activity of the company coupled with the cessation of the Great War resulted in exceptional publicity for local film production. The prospects appeared so bright that several independent ventures were launched, notably "Norman Lee's School of Cinema Acting" which was opened in June 1919 by the Mayor of Johannesburg in the presence of a large

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studios and given a private exhibition of the many documentaries made by A.F.P.. Among these were films dealing with South African industries such as alluvial diamond digging, orange culture and soap making, mention being made of the company's plans to produce other films of this kind for educational and publicity purposes. This official visit of the Minister marked the Government's appreciation of African Film Productions''enterprise; but there was no attempt overtly to encourage local film production.

(1) These were :
"The Stolen Favourite" - a racing melodrama directed by Joseph Albrecht with a cast, led by Mabel May, of local celebrities including the bookmaker Harry Siegenberg; the jockey Stanley Daly the boxing champion Jack Laylor; and the child actor Bobby Brown.
"Fallen Leaves" or "the reclamation of a human derelict", a movin melodrama directed by Dick Cruickshanks in which Madge Fabian (then playing at His Majesty's in Johannesburg) played the leading role supported by Yvon Saxby (of the Allen Doone and Madge Fabian Frank Cellier dramatic companies and later announcer-producer to the South African Broadcasting Corporation and its predecessor company), W.F. Woodman (sometime manager for the Wheelers and later theatrical manager for African Consolidated Theatres Ltd) Edward Vincent, Thomas Paunceforte, Holger Petersen and Adele Fillis (daughter of Frank Fillis senior);
"Copper Mask" - a melodramatic highwayman film directed by Joseph Albrecht with Adele Fillis and Holger Petersen in which Adele Fillis made an unfaked 14-foot dive into a river and dragged a "drowning" man to the other side. Part of the production was watched by Lord Buxton. It proved very popular in Johannesburg;
"Allan Quatermain" with Mabel May "as the Beautiful Queen" (the fair one);
"With Edged Tools" - with Mabel May in the lead.

crowd.(i) In August 1919, "Holger Petersen's School of Cinema Acting and Dramatic Art" was opened in Johannesburg; but while the parent "Rand School of Cinema Acting" achieved no result beyond one or two short topical films such as "A Day with the Rand Hunt Club", Norman Lee himself eventually produced a feature-length film entitled"Virtue in the City" which proved a failure on exhibition.(ii) These abortive enterprises did not prevent the launching of the "Screen Art School of Cinema Acting" at Cape Town in February 1920(iii) and as late as October 1920, the Johannesburg Business College advertised a series of lectures (and also a correspondence course) on scenario-writing prepared by M.A. Wetherell. It became increasingly apparent however

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(i) The Mayor (Mr T.F. Allen) made a speech at the ceremony on Sunday the 22nd June, commending the enterprise in which Rufe Naylor (then a Municipal Councillor despite his prosecution on charges of bribery of which he was acquitted) was actively interested. Fifty "pupils" attended the opening which took the form of the filming of a number of scenes. On the 25th June, the enterprise was advertised as follows :

Enormous Success !
Opening of the Rand School of
CINEMA ACTING

At Wemmer Pan Lake on Sunday last, a huge crowd gathered to watch several exciting scenes played by the School's staff and pupils. His Worship the Mayor, in a speech to the pupils, congratulated all concerned and assured them that Norman H. Lee would, by his enterprise, revolutionise the Moving Picture Production business in South Africa.

Remarkable Opening for People with Ambition and Ability
Join the New School of Cinema Acting and become a Polished Film Artiste

The stock company engaged to play leading parts already includes
Mr Holger Petersen (late African Films)
Miss Adele Stolleri (late Steadman's London Film Academy)
Miss Madge Calder (the daring girl rider)
Mr Ernest Duffield (athlete and "stunt" man)
Mr Tromp van Diggelen (the handsome strong man)

Call or write for particulars
Rand School of Cinema Acting
3 & 4 Glencairn Buildings, Johannesburg

(ii) "Virtue in the City" was prepared for exhibition by Owen O'Neill of "Prizma Natural Colour Motion Pictures" then independently showing colour films of Alaska throughout the Union (see Page 257). It was shown at the Johannesburg Town Hall in January 1920 and was very adversely received. Its plot involved a maiden, fresh from the country, falling into the clutches of a villainous gambling crook and being rescued by a strong-man hero. The action involved a police raid on a gambling den during which someone was murdered and a race between an express train and the motor car "conveying the hero on a knightly mission to save the heroine's honour", all of which was set in and around Johannesburg. So uncompromising was its reception that the film was never again shown.

Norman Lee subsequently became a successful producer for British companies.

(iii) The secretary was Lyle Heath; but, apart from advertising a "Beauty and Ugly Competition" for aspirants throughout the country, nothing was achieved by this enterprise.

that the only commercial success to be made by film production had already been achieved by African Film Productions.

Despite its brave showing, African Film Productions was facing a growing number of difficulties. Outstanding among them was the predominance of the American industry which the war had made possible. By the end of the war, the overseas market was completely flooded with American productions which, since they were assured of a steady demand were produced with break-neck speed at the minimum of cost and retailed at an extremely low figure. No expensively-produced film stood a chance of competing with these shoddy productions whose cheapness was in fact almost their only virtue.(i) The financial success of African Film Productions was largely contingent on the overseas market South Africa itself offered far too small a cinema-going public to guarantee anything but the costs of production at best - all profits had perforce to be derived from the overseas market. In the face of American competition, South African films stood little chance and to be shown at all, many of them had to be sold at a loss. Nonetheless African Film Productions continued to maintain its production of fiction films though now, if somewhat diminished in number, certainly not in enterprise and imagination. During 1920, three of its feature films were shown (ii) but none, with the possible exception of "Prester

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(i) see Page 244 et seq..

(ii) These were :
"Isban Israel" - an imaginative reconstruction based on G.H. Cossing's novel of life at Zimbabwe which was actually filmed at the ruins in Southern Rhodesia with Mabel May playing the leading role;
"Prester John" - based on John Buchan's novel, Adele Fillis playing a leading role, which earned favourable comment from the London Press;
"The Man who was Afraid" - produced in seven reels and directed by Joseph Albrecht with Florence Roberts (of the American Dramatic company then playing in the Union), M.A. Wethergll, Dick Cruickshanks and Grafton Williams.

John" proved an outstanding success in South Africa. African Film Productions Ltd therefore began to divert its activities from fiction film production to documentary work. Apart from continuous production of the weekly "African Mirror", a number of films were made for the Union Government, notably dealing with the iron and steel industries then recently founded at Vereeniging.("Iscor" subsequently featured in several such films.) This tendency and the gradual abandonment of fiction film production continued during 1920-21 when A.F.P.produced a large number of documentaries and only one fiction film.(i) A remarkable documentary was "The Dust that Kills" which dealt with th prevention of miners' phthisis.(ii) Others produced by A.F.P. during 1921 were a series made for the Publicity and Travel Department of the South African Railways and Harbours and including "The Glorious Cape Peninsula", "Motorist's Paradise", "Attaining Heights" and other scenics. Their cameramen also travelled outside the Union and during the year, a series of four films entitled "Life in Mauritius" was shown. Another documentary which caused much comment was "Big Game Hunting" which recorded the activities of Major Pretorius when instructed by the Union Government to reduce the number of elephants in the Sabie and Addo Bush.(iii) Apart from visiting Mauritius,

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(i) This was "A Madcap of the Veld", a comedy-drama by the well-known South African journalist Owen Letcher in which Mabel May played the leading role and Joseph Albrecht the juvenile lead.

(ii)"The Dust that Kills" was directed by Dr A.J. Orenstein(renowned for his work on malarial mosquitoes in the Panama Canal zone), Chief Medical Officer to the Rand Mines Ltd and a member of the Industrial Hygiene Committee. It was produced for the Chamber of Mines and photographed at the Ferreira Deep with the active assistance of its manager, Paul Selby (who was an enthusiastic wild life photographer - he died in 1940). The film was first shown on the 11th March 1921 to a meeting of the Scientific and Technical Society under the chairmanship of Sir Lionel Philips in Johannesburg. It proved one of the most significant and valuable films ever produced in South Africa. Regularly shown to mine workers through the agency of the Prevention of Accidents Committe of the Rand Mutual Assurance Company, it supplied impressive propaganda for many years until improved methods of combating phthisis converted it into a historical curiosity. In 1940, the Rand Mutual Assurance Co. presented a copy to the Film Division of the Cape Archives.

(iii) The cameraman was Joseph Albrecht who wore out three pairs of riding breeches in keeping up with the hunters owing to the thorns in the bush. Two months were spent in the Addo Bush and the completed film, though highly commended for its technical merit, evoked a number of protests against the "cruelty" and inhumanity o some of the scenes it depicted. This sentiment was expressed throughout the country and cast some aspersion on Major Pretorius' activities. (This colourful character who served meritoriously through the Great War and the Second World War, died in 1945 befor the completion of his autobiography.)

A.F.P. cameramen visited East Africa (where Ayliff covered many subjects during a five and a half month visit) and Madagascar where Albrecht directed and photographed a number of remarkable films.(i) Simultaneously with this exceptional enterprise in actuality films went a revival in fiction film production. Under the direction of Dick Cruickshanks and W. Bowden, an ambitious production of H. de Vere Stacpoole's novel "The Blue Lagoon" featuring Arthur Pusey and Molly Adair was launched.(ii) Work on this film occupied almost the whole of 1922 (many cameramen were also engaged elsewhere on documentary and newsreel work) but two other fiction films were also produced at the Killarney Stddios and a third during 1922-23.(iii) "The Blue Lagoon" marked the swansong of local fiction film production.Released in the Union in February 1923, the film (most of which had been filmed on the Natal and Portuguese East African coast) was very favourably received. It was also successful on the overseas market; but, despite the contemporary odium of American films and attempts to sponsor British and Commonwealth production, it was obvious that South Africa's best efforts were not assured of a payable return. Thereafter fiction film production had perforce to be abandonned.

(i) The films taken in East Africa dealt with native and animal life. The "Great African Rift Series"as they were called, embodied several outstanding features notably the Mountains of the Moon and Ruwenzori which Ayliff climbed as far as the famous point attained by the Duke of Abruzzi. There were also sequences of exceptional interest dealing with native life, especially in Madagascar and two travelogues - "Where Slavery Flourished" dealing with Mombasa and "Clove Islands of the South" dealing with Zanzibar and Pemba. Another remarkable documentary of the year was "The Roaring Forties", a film taken by Ayliff of the remote and little-known Kerguelen Island and showing the hunting of seal elephants. A final feat of African Film Productions Ltd during this period was the documentaing of the Great Strike or The Rebellion (see Page 230). These filmsw were incorporated in the "African Mirror" and all trace of them has disappeared.

(ii) Their counterparts in earlier life were played by two children, Val Chard aged II and Doreen Wonford aged IO, who in 1938 were married in Johannesburg.("He has never looked at another girl since 1922" said Chard's mother (I2))

(iii)These were :
"Swallow"- produced in five reels with Joan Morgan and Hayford Hobbs, based on Rider Haggard's novel;
"Sam's Kid" - with Gertrude McCoy based on F. Mills Young's novel (a film which was adversely reviewed);
"The Reef of Stars" - produced by Joseph Albrecht with Molly Adair and Harvey Braban (it provoked little comment).

Documentary films produced by African Film Productions Ltd had achieved some success on the overseas market (i) and during 1923, the company was engaged on the production of a large number for exhibition at the special cinema attached to the South African exhibit at the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in England. Between forty and fifty reels were made for commercial firms, municipalities and the Publicity and Travel Department of the S.A.R. & H., outstanding among them being a film of the Kynsna area called "In the Land of Flowers, Forest and Reflections" (ii) and "The Magic of Gold", a film of the Rand gold mining industry produced under the direction of Dr A.J. Orenstein. During 1924, African Film Productions was confined largely to topical and publicity work (including an unusual film of "Lumbering in Tanganyika Forests") and a short "Safety-First" film for the Chamber of Mines; but in 1925, its activities became more extensive. In producing a documentary of native life called "Peeps into Basutoland", its cameramen met with the hostility of the natives and were virtually expelled. Other such films were made but the major preoccupation of the year was the thorough-going reportage of the Prince of Wales tour through Africa undertaken by Albrecht. Prior to joining the royal entourage, an A.F.P. cameraman George Noble had made a scenic of "Madeira and the Canary Islands" and then crossed to Lagos on the Gold Coast to join the first stage of the tour. Here several scenics of West Coast ports were made while accompanying the Prince on every phase of his tour, including expeditions into the interior where remarkable films of native life were obtained, little-known ceremonies being specially staged for the Prince.(iii) A.F.P. documented every salient feature of the Prince of Wales' tour from beginning to end, their cameramen even penetrating to the Western Sudan at its conclusion. As they were taken, short films were sent overseas and shown in

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(i) Albrecht's films of Madagascar, for instance, were distributed throughout the world by the original Gaumont Company (from which later arose the Gaumont-British Company).

(ii) This film was twice shown shown to Queen Mary at her special request. South Africa's was the most popular cinema at the Empire Exhibition, its attendance being computed in December 1924 to have been 600,000, there being no charge for admission.(13)

(iii) Also accompanying the tour was Geoffrey Barkas, "ace-cameraman" for British Instructional Films who later joined Gaumont-British and came to South Africa to film "Rhodes of Africa" and "King Solomon's Mines".

cinemas throughout the world, a record in celerity being established by the first consignment which were showing on Broadway before they appeared in London. Finally the aggregate mass of film was edited and a 4,000 foot documentary entitled "Great White Chief" was released, proving very popular.

This reportage did not mark the full extent of A.F.P.'s work during 1925. Apart from consistently maintaining the "African Mirror" the firm produced an instructive film on "Bilharzia" under the direction of Dr Annie Porter of the Medical Research Institute, Johannesburg. During 1926, topical work (which included the final stages of Alan Cobham's flight through Africa) was augmented by the production of several short films, notably one showing the evils of unemployment made for the Witwatersrand Juvenile Affairs Board. During 1927, a 7,000 foot scenic publicity film (including the cruise of the "Asturias", a luxury liner then cruising in South African waters) was made for the S.A.R.& H. and during 1928, a number of scenics including the Natal Sugar Industry. In 1929, A.F.P. made an outstanding film of Captain Malcolm Campbell's speed dash at Verneuk Pan in the Northern Cape and in 1930, a documentary of the Fruit Growing and Packing Industry at the Cape.

The diminution in activity during these four years was largely owing to over-production of "interest shorts" by overseas firms. It had become practically impossible to sell actuality films at a price which would cover the cost of production and unsponsored enterprise on the part of African Film Productions Ltd was therefore no longer feasible. Significant of the enforced lull in film production was the fact that during this period, Joseph Albrecht, one of the company's chief executives, was first appointed to an administrative post and then left for England to study sound-film technique,(1) returning in 1929. By this time African Film Productions Ltd had a competitor in Kinemac Ltd which had launched a silent film production unit but showed no signs of embarking on sound films.

In September 1929, African Talking Pictures Ltd founded by

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(1) Albrecht went to Durban as local director of the associated Schlesinger companies - African Theatres, Films, Broadcasting, Catering, Advertising etc, a post which he occupied until November 1928 when he left for England to study talkie-film production with British Sound Films Ltd, a newly constituted company. He returned a year later in the company of Mr Schlesinger.

Mr Schlesinger was registered in Pretoria (i), the objects of the company being the importation of the apparatus and equipment necessary for sound film production, and thenceforward the equipment of African Film Productions Ltd with talkie apparatus went ahead. In November 1929, Albrecht, now instructed in the necessary technical knowledge, returned to the Union and in December, was able to announce to the Press that recording apparatus was to be installed in to motor vans to record "natural sound".(Meanwhile both Kinemas and African Theatres had shown the first overseas talkie films.) The first sound film made by African Film Productions Ltd was a short talkie of the Witwatersrand Agricultural Show held in Johannesburg in March 1930. It was followed soon after by a publicity talkie dealing with Durban financed coöperatively by the Publicity and Travel Department of the S.A.R.& H. and commercial, recreational and publicity bodies of the town. Production commenced early in May 1930, the arrival of the "Mystery Grey Vans" arousing much popular curiosity. The whole enterprise was treated with extensive publicity by the Press and the public itself became deeply interested.(ii)

Meanwhile Kinemas had launched a competitive effort in the production of a silent and unsponsored publicity film also dealing with Durban taken by six cameramen and including the July Handicap. Most of their thunder was stolen by African Film Productions whose cameramen under the direction of Albert Carrick, filmed the race, had the film processed and exhibited at Prince's Cinema six hours after the race, a South African record. (Its effect however was somewhat countered by Kinemas' having chartered an aeroplane and filming much of the race from the air.) A.F.P.'s publicity film "Durban - Lovers' Paradise" proved very successful both locally and overseas though Kinemas' silen

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(i) The capital was only £100, the directors being I.W.Schlesinger, W.O. Bullock, D.M. Burton, J.A. Macrae and W.F. White.

(ii) The "story" of the film revolved round the adventures of a young couple in exploring Durban's attractions, the parts being played b two local inhabitants, Miss Margaret Anderson and Mr H. Mill Colma a young surveyor. Once again, African Film Productions met the animosity of the Church through "breaking the Sabbath for gain" (the Town Council had given permission for "shooting" on a Sunday, the beach crowds then being densest); but its instigators were publicly reproved by the Mayor and production went ahead attended by unmitigated interest.

prototype did not go unnoticed.(i) In August 1930, African Theatres showed the first sound film of native life made by African Film Productions. This was "In the Land of the Zulus" which recorded the visit of the Governor-General, the Earl of Athlone, to Eshowe and was excellently reviewed. Other such talkie shorts were now consistently made as well as silent publicity films (of the fruit industry, for instance) commissioned by departments of the Union Government.

The advent of sound prompted African Film Productions again to attempt dramatic production, this time on a greatly modified scale. Their first venture was a short or "featurette" entitled "Sarie Marai dealing with a Boer prisoner-of-war in Ceylon, the song running throughout the slight plot on a nostalgic note. It was produced by Joseph Albrecht, S.C. Browning being the sound engineer, with Joan du Toit as Sarie and William Matthews as the prisoner-burgher. The music was supplied by "The Melodians" and Chris. Blignaut, both of whom figured in the film. Production commenced at Booysens (a suburb of Johannesburg) in April 1931 (ii) and on the 25th May 1931, "Sarie Marais" was released as a "featurette" at the Orpheum in Johannesburg (iii) Its success encouraged African Film Productions to embark on a history-making production - the first Afrikaans talkie fiction film. This was "Moedertjie", a dramatic short produced by Joseph Albrecht from "In die Wagkamer", a one-act play By Dr J.F.W.Grosskopf.(iv) Photographed by George Noble with S.C. Browning in charge of sound, the film was acted by Joan du Toit, Stephanie Faure, J. Plaat Stultjies, Pierre de Wet and Detective-Constable Richter of the C.I.D who had never previously acted on stage or screen but who nonetheless gave a convincing performance. The film was enthusiastically received

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(i) Kinemas achieved a certain advantage by obtaining a "Command Show of their silent film to the Governor-General the Earl of Athlone, Princess Alice and suite at King's House in Durban on the 9thJuly

(ii) Following the reproduction of a "still", The Pilgrim in The Star's daily column "Stoeptalk" hastened to point out that the British soldier's helmet was an anachronism, the type used in the film having been issued some years after the Boer War (14). ("Spotting the anachronisms" in films was then a popular diversion Actually historical accuracy, as in all their productions, was a consistent feature of African Film Productions' policy.

(iii) A copy of "Sarie Marais" was donated by Mr Schlesinger for showing in South Africa House, London.

(iv) Dr J.F.W. Grosskopf, the well-known South African playwright, was then a lecturer at the University of Stellenbosch and later became Director of the Division of Economics and Markets of the Union Department of Agriculture.

by the Afrikaans-speaking section of the cinema-going public and in March 1933, the Suid Afrikaanse Akademie vir Taal, Lettere en Kuns presented Joseph Albrecht with its gold medal "in recognition of his work in adapting for the screen and directing the first talking picture made in Afrikaans. The film"Moedertjie" was shown with great success in every town and village in South Africa where talking picture equipment was operating."(15)(i)

During 1931, Kinemas' silent film production unit made strenuous efforts to oppose African Film Productions, mostly in connection with propaganda and publicity shorts. In Johannesburg, both Kinemas' and A.F.P.'s cameramen were assisted by the Municipal Traffic Officer Mr Norman, in the production of "Safety First" films in 1931 (ii) and occasionally Kinemas achieved certain small commissions such as the production of a 1,000 foot publicity film for the Boksburg Publicity Association at a cost of £250 (the Municipal Council contributing on a £ for £ basis). Its activities however never seriously menaced African Film Productions and in December 1931, the amalgamation of Kinemas and Mr Schlesinger's companies took place.

Other sound-film productions (iii) of 1931 were "The Babel of the Kraal", a film of the Baila native tribe of Central Africa and "Denizens of the Zoo" dealing with the animals in the Johannesburg and Pretoria Zoos. In subsequent years, African Film Productions confined itself entirely to documentary sound-film production. Of a long sequence, an outstanding example was the first sound-film of the Victoria Falls made in May 1932 with Joseph Albrecht directing, George Noble as cameraman and C. Spence Browning in charge of sound. About a thousand feet in length, the film was commentated by Eddie Reid, incidental music being played on an organ. Originally made by A.F.P. as a commercial venture and shown very successfully throughout the

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(i) In company with "Sarie Marais", the film "Moedertjie" was shown in the supporting programme of the annual revival of "De Voortrekkers".

(ii) A number of "accidents" were staged in Johannesburg streets and genuinely alarmed some of the more naive inhabitants.

(iii) Apart from its achievement in fiction short films, African Film Productions also claimed the distinction of making the first talkie advertisement films in South Africa. Made in 1931, these "filmlets" dealt with Joko Tea and Pegasus products and preceded by eight years the appearance of advertising "filmlets" produced by Alexander Films Ltd which became a feature of Twentieth Century-Fox programmes.

Union by African Theatres, many copies of "The Smoke that Thunders" were bought by the Publicity and Travel Department of the S.A.R. & H. and shown throughout the world. A similar circulation was obtained for "The Cape of Good Hope", also made in 1932 by A.F.P. as a commercial venture in coöperation with the Cape Publicity Association. This scenic film also included a costume sequence representing the Cape's historic al associations, the commentary being spoken by George Montford against a background of organ music. Apart from these documentaries and the consistent maintenance of the "African Mirror", A.F.P. also made films of odd items of interest such as a sound film of a party of Zulu singers and dancers brought to Johannesburg by Mackay Brothers to make records for His Master's Voice, Albrecht directing and George Noble in charge of camera. During 1933 and 1934, A.F.P. continued the productio of documentaries (1) mostly on behalf of the S.A.R. & H., the need for

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(1) Among them were the following :
"The Riddle of Rhodesia" - about 1,000 feet long dealing with the Zimbabwe Ruins and including imaginative sequences of Sheba's Court, the commentary being spoken by Eddie Reid against a background of organ music, originally made by A.F.P. as a commercial venture to be shown by African Theatres etc, copies of which were bought by the S.A.R.& H. and distributed throughout the world;
"On Tour in South Africa", nearly 5,000 feet made to the order of the S.A.R. & H. and documenting the overland route of the passengers of the luxury cruise-liner "S.A.Carinthia", the commentary spoken by Joseph Albrecht against an organ background, issued serially in South Africa and, under the title of "Star of the South", throughout the world as well as being supplied to other cruise-liners such as the "Franconia";
"The World's Greatest Wild Life Sanctuary" - about 2,500 feet made to the order of the S.A.R. & H. dealing with the Kruger National Park, the characters being played by Joseph Albrecht and his daughter Miss Dinks Albrecht, the commentary spoken by T. Wentzel, wide circulation overseas under the title of "At Home with Wild Animals";
"In the Land of the Red Blanket" - about 1,500 feet, No.1 of a series entitled "Life and Customs of South African Natives" made t the order of the S.A.R. & H. with the coöperation of the Union Department of Native Affairs in the Elliottdale district of the Transkei, commented by Joseph Albrecht, wide overseas circulation; During 1934, the series was continued in :
"Marriage Customs of the AmaZulu" - about 1,500 feet, No.2 of the series on native life, made to the order of the S.A.R.& H. with th coöperation of the Union Department of Native Affairs at Langalake's Kraal near Elandskop in Natal, natural sound with titles and brief commentary spoken by Joseph Albrecht, wide overseas circulation;
"The Swazi People" - under 1,000 feet, No.3 in the series made to the order of the S.A.R.& H. with the coöperation of the Swaziland Administration at the Queen Mother's Kraal near Ezulweni in Swaziland, commented by Joseph Albrecht, circulated in South Africa and privately distributed overseas.
"Life in the Sun" - totalling about 3,500 feet or 4 reels made to the order of the S.A.R.& H. and composed of excerpts from the "African Mirror" and specially-produced sections to illustrate everyday life in South Africa, commentated by Joseph Albrecht against an organ background with some sequences in natural sound, wide local and overseas circulation, issued in 1936 in an Afrikaa version commentated by J.P. de Waal and entitled "Lewe in die Sonneskyn" which was not shown commercially in South Africa though

publicity during and after the Great Depression being to a certain extent appreciated.

During 1934, African Film Productions embarked on an enterprising venture in the production of a serial cinemagazine entitled "Our Land" whose primary purpose was commercial publicity presented as entertainment.(i) Joseph Albrecht commentated the series which, becoming a feature of the South African cinema, proved quite popular. Copies were sent to South Africa House, London for exhibition. Apart from the issue of the "African Mirror", A.F.P. made a 600-foot film of the opening of the Iscor Steel Works by the Governor-General and a documentation of the visit of Prince George (later the Duke of Kent).(ii)

In 1935, A.F.P. made one of its most meritorious productions - "The Golden Harvest of the Witwatersrand", a longthy documentary of over 7,000 feet or nine reels dealing in detail with the gold mining industry and produced to the order of the S.A.R. & H. in association with and financially assisted by the Transvaal Chamber of Mines and the Board of Trade and Industries. The script was written by Joseph Albrecht in conjunction with the Chamber's experts, George Noble being in charge of the photography. Produced with natural sound, it was commentated by Albrecht against a background of music supplied by the Colosseum Cinema Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Michael Doré. The film showed the whole process of gold mining from the recruiting of native labour to the actual extraction of gold and most of it was taken on the Crown Mines. The exceptional length of this documentary and its essentially "unromantic" nature rendered it unsuitable for exhibition in commercial cinemas but an abridged version was success-

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extensively used in South African schools and exhibited in Holland

(i) The first issues of "Our Land" were as follows :
No.1 - the Grape Juice (K.W.V.) industry; Pretoria Portland Cement Pretoria as a tourist resort; and a song number by the Melodians Male Quartet;
No.2 - South African transport including Shell petrol; and a song number by the Melodians Male Quartet;
No.3 - miscellaneous subjects;
No.4 - the manufacture of Castle Beers and cigarettes (United Tobacco Co.); the scenic attractions of The Wilderness; and a dance band number;
No.5 - the making of Monatic shirts; White Star Flour; the Italian shipping line (subsequently deleted) and a dance band number.

(ii) At the request of the Johannesburg Municipal Council, this film was edited into a short dealing with Prince George's visit to Johannesburg which was placed in the Municipal Archives.

fully shown in South Africa. Its largest exploitation was overseas where it was extensively used by mining colleges and other educational institutions such as the British Film Institute and the Imperial Institute as well as for publicity purposes. Reduction prints were also included in the Union's National Film Library. In August 1939, "Golden Harvest" was re-issued in England and submitted to the jury of the Annual International Exhibition of films held in Venice. The jury awarded a bronze medal to its producers, an event which gratified the South African public and proved the merit of a film which the passage of five years had failed to diminish.

A similar film "The Story of South African Steel" was made by A.F.P. for the Iron and Steel Industrial Corporation. Nearly 6,000 feet or six reels in length, it was produced with natural sound and commentated by Joseph Albrecht.

Further publicity enterprise sponsored by the S.A.R.& H. (the post-depression years brought an urgent demand for trad expansion)was a series of documentaries or "Tone Poems" (1) of about 1,000 feet each produced by A.F.P.. These films were designed to overcome the language difficulty. There was no commentary, symphonic music appropriate to

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(1) There were five of these "Tone Poems" produced between 1935 and 1936, all of great beauty and impressiveness. Primarily designed for overseas publicity purposes, they were also much appreciated in South Africa. They were as follows (in all cases except where specified, the music was supplied by the Colosseum Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Michael Doré) :
"The Day Awakens" - illustrating life around an old Cape homestead from dawn till noon and including scenes of the Cape Peninsula and surrounding country, circulated in South Africa but to publicity bodies only overseas;
"Moods in the Forest" - depicting the beauties of the Knysna forests, circulated in South Africa but to publicity bodies only overseas;
"The Sea" - consisting of seascapes at the Cape and Hermanus, circulated in South Africa but to publicity bodies only overseas;
"Mountain Waters" - dealing with Natal and the birth of a river in Mont-aux-Sources in the Drakensberg and its subsequent journey through tropical Natal scenes introducing Zulu and Indian life, briefly commentated by Joseph Albrecht, slightly abridged for South African showing and extensively distributed overseas;
"Tight Lines" - describing angling in South African waters commencing with trout fishing at the Cape and Natal followed by a tour of recognised coastal angling resorts including St Lucia Bay. commentated by Joseph Albrecht with an organ background, slightly abridged for South African showing and widely distributed overseas under the title of "The Song of the Reel".

the subject being the sole accompaniment. Titles were written in the various languages of the countries to which the films were sent. During I935-I936 (i), African Film Productions also produced "The Blue and Silver Way" for the South African Airways. It depicted the three main routes of the company in three sections filmed by A. Carrick - Rand to Cape including an excursion round the Cape Peninsula, from the Cape to Durban, and from Durban to the Rand, the film being commentated by Yvon Saxby with a background of organ music and natural sound. This film was widely distributed overseas. In I936, A.F.P. filmed with sound recording the opening of the Empire Exhibition held at Milner Park, Johannesburg on the I5th September by the Governor-General the Earl of Clarendon, including both his speech and that of the Prime Minister, General Hertzog. The company also made a number of shorts for the Department of Agriculture for showing at the exhibition.

From I937 until the end of I938, A.F.P. was engaged on the production of the monumental bi-lingual historical documentary "They Built a Nation - Die Bou van 'n Nasie" (ii) commissioned by the Government; but also produced various other films such as a documentary dealing with the manganese mining industry commissioned by the Department of Mines (iii) towards the middle of I938 and a safety-first film for the Johannesburg Safety-First Association produced by C. Francis Coley. In July I939, the "African Mirror" was very belatedly issued in sound and in December I939, an experimental issue in "Dufaycolor" appeared. Thereafter African Film Productions Ltd prepared a great deal of topical material in support of the war effor for inclusion in the "African Mirror". Towards the end of I939, A.F.P. began the production of a venereal diseases film for natives entitled "The Two Brothers" for the South African Red Cross Society. First shown in February I940, this film made a great impression. Directed b Joseph Albrecht without sound recording, it was titled in English and Afrikaans. Though primarily designed for native consumption and acted almost entirely by natives, it was shewn to European troops in August

(i) During I935, an abortive attempt to found a film production industry was made in Southern Rhodesia. Founded early in I935, "Rhodesian Film Productions Ltd" was sponsored by Gordon Cooper, a prominent farmer connected with "The African Observer" and "The African World". Its initial enthusiasm resulted in two films produced by a professional photographer A.W.B.Peterson - "Ordeal by Poison", a Matabele Romance shot on Cooper's farm; and "Gold", a documentary dealing with the ancient and modern gold mining industry in Rhodesia. The company did not survive these two films.
(ii) see Government Production in Section II.
(iii) see Government Production in Section II.

1940. About the middle of 1940, A.F.P. produced "Fighters of the Veld a documentary of the Union forces construed from issues of the "Afric Mirror" and commissioned by the Bureau of Information attached to the Department of the Interior. Running for just under half an hour, this film made little impression in South Africa. Its distribution in the British Commonwealth was arranged. Later in the year, A.F.P? produced "Noordwarts", the first Afrikaans-sounded political propaganda film, commissioned by the Truth Legion of the Union Unity Fund. Designed fo exhibition in country areas and running for about half an hour, it wa directed by Joseph Albrecht and Henry Cornelius, an English film-editor once associated with Alexander Korda. At the same time, A.F.P. was entrusted with the processing and preparation of the films of the films taken by the Bureau of Information's cameraman, F. Dixon (an A.F.P. cameraman) operating with the South African troops in East Africa. Incorporated with material shot locally, the first of these films were entitled "The Springboks Trek North" and "With General Smuts Up North".

Other Enterprises

Among several attempts to found a film producing industry in opposition to African Film Productions Ltd, the sole organisation to meet it on anything like a competitive basis was the production unit established by Kinemas Ltd. The advent of sound films and the amalgam ation of Mr Schlesinger's companies with Kinemas Ltd in 1931 finally eliminated this possibility.

In 1938, film production of a different type was foreshadowed when a company entitled "Alexander Films Ltd"was founded in Johannesburg by William Boxer. Boxer had first seen advertising "filmlets" while on a visit to the United States in 1938 and, impressed by their possibilities, had failed to interest established organisations in their South African exploitation on his return to Johannesburg. He accordingly founded "Alexander Films Ltd" which arranged for the pro duction of "filmlets" and their distribution along the Twentieth Century-Fox circuit. The production itself and the sound-recording was executed in the United States, necessitating considerable passag of time between the transmission of the order (1), the production of

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(1) Furthermore American methods were not always suitable. Filmlets advertising petrol, for instance, showed motor cars being driven on the right-hand side of the road, allowance not having been ma for the left-hand practice in South Africa.

the filmlet and its return to the Union. The first filmlets were shown in Twentieth Century-Fox cinemas towards the end of 1938 and aroused considerable popular curiosity. Thenceforward the business flourished and Alexander Films Ltd rapidly expanded. After the outbreak of war with its attendant dislocation of transport, the punctua delivery from America of the completed filmlets became increasingly precarious and unsatisfactory. Accordingly the company decided itself to undertake their production and towards the end of 1940, equipped a temporary studio with the necessary staff and apparatus.(i) Pending the arrival of adequate equipment from America and the erection of a studio, filmlets were successfully produced in a Johannesburg suburb while the company formulated plans for the production of a South African monthly documentary on the lines of The March of Time, and fo the undertaking of any production for which it might be commissioned.

Having rejected the proposal to utilise "filmlet" advertising on the screens of his circuits of cinemas, Mr Schlesinger was at length forced by this enterprise to do so. A company entitled "Filmlets Ltd" was formed for the purpose and in December 1940, African Film Productions Ltd commenced making film-advertisements for its purposes.

Plans to enter the newsreel and documentary field in South Africa were also enunciated by "Union Film Productions Ltd", a company founded in 1939 by C. Francis Coley (ii) with the immediate purpose of processing the Movietone newsreels shown in Twentieth Century-Fox cinemas. Heretofore these newsreels had been imported as positive prints ready for exhibition. The importation of a duplicate negative and the printing of copies actually in the country obviated payment of customs dues, reduced costs of transport and removed othe difficulties. Accordingly suburban premises in Johannesburg were converted into temporary laboratories and studios and, proving successful, the company was shortly entrusted with the processing of

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(i) The scenarist was Bertha Slosberg whose autobiography "Pagan Tapestry" had caused a minor sensation the year before, and the commentator Eric Egan, previously of the South African Broadcasting Corporation.

(ii) C. Francis Coley, an English film technician, was originally South African agent for British Fox Movietone News and had been employed by African Film Productions Ltd to direct a safety-first film for the Johannesburg Safety-First Association. (see Page 445

newsreels not only for the Twentieth Century-Fox cinemas in the Union (now numbering about 50) but for Rhodesia, Kenya, Khartoum, Cairo, Tel-Aviv, Baghdad and much of the Eastern market. Meanwhile desultory production of news items was pursued, the company intending to embark on extensive production as soon as certain conditions were established. By the end of 1940, it produced a second South African newsreel "Unifilm News" which was shown on the Twentieth Century-Fox circuit.

In addition to these commercial enterprises (to which VOBI was later added) were a few commercial cinematographers who, sometimes combining other work with this profession, produced a small footage of film, usually in 16mm, according to erratic demand. These include Lynn Acutt of Durban ("African Mirror" correspondent), Merle Lavoy, Harold Weaver, Leon Schauder, L. Lewis and others.

Foreign Production of African Films

Newsreels, Documentaries, etc

The foreign production of films in South Africa dates from before the Boer War when Charles Urban's cameramen were active in the country and Edgar Hyman acted as correspondent for the Warwick Trading Company, and continued throughout the Boer War, ceasing suddenly at its conclusion. During this time, there is no doubt that various overseas firms "faked" films of the Boer War and showed them extensively. Urban published a warning to this effect at the beginning of his Film Catalogue at the time, many exhibitors having been deluded into thinking that they were purchasing genuine films from other firms. During the succeeding period, isolated English enterprises (such as Urban's cameramen taking the "Cape to Cairo" documentary in 1907 and Butcher's agents taking "interest shorts" in 1912) appeared in South Africa and there was random activity elsewhere.(1) The existence of a local film production industry however and the fact that African Film Productions Ltd consistently supplied the Pathé Gazette with topical items as well as producing fiction films and interest shorts for the overseas market, militated against

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(1) Cherry Kearton, for instance, took remarkable films of lion hunting among the Masai in East Africa in 1910 which were shown in the Union in November 1910 and caused a considerable stir.
Owing to American interest in Theodore Roosevelt's expedition to East Africa, the production firm of Selig which specialised in animal film dramas, faked a film of lion hunting which made some impression in America at the time.

foreign exploitation of the South African field. It was not indeed until 1927 that foreign production interests appeared in the Union to any considerable extent.

In February 1926, Alan Cobham arrived in the Union after an epic flight from England. He was accompanied (i) by a cameraman Elliott whose films were first issued serially and then as a full-length documentary under the title of "With Cobham to the Cape" which was shown with great success overseas and (in 1927) in South Africa.(ii) (iii)

(i) Cobham was also accompanied by his mechanic Emmott who was later shot and mortally wounded by a wandering Arab when the plane was flying low in a dust storm over Arabia on its way to Australia.

(ii) "With Cobham to the Cape" included scenes of wild life which were unique and those taken over Abyssinia also excited much interest though the mystery of this comparatively unknown country had been considerably dissipated by "From Red Sea to Blue Nile", the film taken by the cameraman accompanying Rosita Forbes on her journey through Abyssinia in 1925.

(iii) An exceptional film was also made before 1927 which, if it were not actually produced in the Union, involved a personality who was later to become actively interested in one of South Africa's biggest productions. This was "Kilimanjaro" produced by A.A. Pienaar, later co-director with Joseph Albrecht of "They Built a Nation - Die Bou van 'n Nasie".

A.A. Pienaar, more widely known under his nom-de-plume of "Sangiro", had written an extremely popular book entitled "Uit Oerwoud en Vlakte" (From Primeval Plain to Forest) which had been translated into several European languages. Dealing with Tanganyika, it proved so exceptionally popular in Germany that Pienaar was able to persuade Universal Films (UFA) to finance a film expedition to Africa under his direction to film the background of the book. Pienaar himself had been born and bred in East Africa and knew Tanganyika intimately. The expedition, consisting of two German cameramen and several natives under his leadership, set out in March 1925 having guaranteed to film the crater of Kilimanjaro and a lion and a rhinoceros charging.

After numerous adventures, particularly during the filming of the crater when the party endured considerable privation from the altitude, cold and great weight of the cameras, the original requirements were achieved and Pienaar returned to Germany to edit the 15,000 feet of film taken and to reduce it to a length of 10,000 feet.

When released, "Kilimanjaro" proved an outstanding success, running for three months in Berlin and for lengthy seasons in England and America. A special copy with English and Afrikaans captions was road-shown in South Africa towards the end of 1927, running for nine days (matinee performances for school-children were specially organised) at the Johannesburg Town Hall and provoking much interest wherever shown.

The success of this film was frequently and uninstructedly used in argument in the House of Assembly and elsewhere. It was unique in type and bore no relation to the South African film production industry.

In February 1927, T.H. Baxter, a well-known documentary film producer, landed at Cape Town at the outset of a journey throughout Africa for the purpose of taking a film showing "the impact of Western civilisation on the native". This film had been commissioned by several English missionary societies for propaganda purposes. It was to be called "African Today" and was patterned on a similar film "India Today" taken two years previously by Baxter and the cause of much interest overseas. By July 1927, Baxter had reached Nairobi having shot nearly 32,000 feet. The film was first shown at the London Polytechnic towards the end of 1927 but never appeared in South Africa.

During the same year, significant films were made by what came to be called the "Italian Scientific Expedition". Arriving in June 1927, this expedition was financed by the Italian Government for the purpose of making a scientific study of the Zulus from anthropological and ethnological points of view.(i) It consisted of four members - Professor Lidio Cipriani of the University of Florence; Captain Attilio Gatti, managing director of Exploration Ltd of Milan and world famous for his books and films on animal life in Africa, who was in charge of camera work; and two cameramen - Franzeri and G. Vitrotti(ii) Gatti, whose films were primarily intended for commercial purposes, shot over 80,000 feet some of which was devoted to the production of a native "drama" dealing with witchcraft. Gatti was enthusiastic over the natural acting talent of the Zulus and planned a further visit. The expedition left Cape Town on its return to Italy in September 1927 and some time later, Gatti's native film entitled "Zeliv" was shown in all the European capitals, exciting not little interest. It was the

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(i) The study of native characteristics was pursued on very thorough lines, plaster casts, photographs and films being made. Operating in the Eshowe district, the expedition was assisted by the Resident Magistrate, Mr Armstrong; the Chief of the Native Administration Department, Mr Rotzel; by Captain Edgar and Lieut. Varney of the Zululand Police Force; and by the natives themselves who, at first wary, later entered wholeheartedly into the proceedings.(16) At the conclusion of his work, Professor Cipriani visited Professor R.A. Dart of the Department of Anatomy of the University of the Witwatersrand who in 1925 had discovered the Taungs skull, an event which had aroused world-wide interest. Some of the photographs of Zulu types taken by the expedition were later presented by Professor Cipriani to the Durban Museum and Art Gallery (where they may be seen on the walls of the staircase and landings), whose director Mr E.C. Chubb visited the University of Florence in 1928.

A similar expedition operated in Angola.

(ii) G. Vitrotti was the cameraman of Ambrosio's famous silent film "Quo Vadis" made in 1924 and other well-known silent Italian films.

first full-length documentary of South African native life and has never been repeated. In December 1929, the film was shown by African Theatres at the Johannesburg City Hall and elsewhere under the title of "Witchcraft". Possibly owing to tactless advertising with European publicity matter ("A Story of Love, Hate, Intrigue and Adventure in Zululand", etc), it excited little comment.

During the next five years, the full-length documentary attained great but transient popularity and several exceptional films were taken in Central Africa but none in the south.(1) In 1928, foreign interest in the South African field became more pronounced and resulted in the commissioning of a special production unit."Heart Metrotone News" sent a cameraman, J.H. Lieb, to South Africa for the express purpose of filming scenery and life in the Union for inclusion in its newsreels with the possibility of combining various of the items into a South African documentary. The publicity opportunities of this enterprise were fully realised locally and Lieb was given every assistance by the Publicity and Travel Department of the S.A.R. & H.. His films were processed by African Film Productions Ltd and a certain number were shown by African Theatres. The success of this venture was considerable, the films (in documentary form) proving exceptionally popular in the United States. Their exhibition coincided with the transition from silent technique to sound and before further plans could be made, it became obvious that any future exploitation of the South African field would have to be through the medium of sound films. The advent of talkies did not however divert American interest from their earlier intentions and in 1930, a production unit No.46 of the Fox-Hearst Corporation (Metrotone and Movietone News) arrived in South Africa in November. It consisted of J.H. Lieb and Carl Bjerre, a sound engineer, and immediately set to work to take the first talkie film of the Kruger National Park. As before, the unit was given every assistance by the S.A.R.& H. which now actively coöperated in pro-

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(1) Most of these documentaries were shown in South Africa , including "Simba" (1929) taken by the Martin-Johnsons (17); "Tembi"(1930) taken by Cherry Kearton (18) who married the well-known South African singer Ada Forrest and made many expeditions to all parts of Africa (he died in September 1940); "Congorilla" (1932) made by the Martin-Johnsons; "Africa Speaks" (1934) taken by the Loeffler expedition across Africa from Lagos on the West Coast to Zanzibar on the East and distributed by Columbia; "Baboona" (1935) made by the Martin-Johnsons; and, an enterprising attempt to revive interest in the now infrequent documentary, "Dark Rapture" (1939) a remarkable film of the Congo taken by the Denis Armand-Leila Roosevelt expedition under Belgian patronage.

duction.(I9) Other subjects taken by the unit were the Victoria Falls, a visiting R.A.F. flight, the Table Mountain cableway and a Mine War Dance. Originally intended for inclusion in newsreels, these sound films proved so popular in America that they were issued as "interest shorts", special acclamation being accorded to those dealing with the Kruger National Park and the Diamond Mining Industry. There publicity value to South Africa was immeasurable. Apart from the novelty of sound documentaries, Lieb's silent films taken in I928 were still circulating in American cinemas not yet equipped for talkie projection.

Meanwhile there had been several other unofficial enterprises. In June I929, Captain Carl Hoffman, famous American cinematographer and lecturer, had arrived in South Africa to take extensive films of Zulu life for use in lectures and a year earlier (July I928), the Ernest Cadle Expedition to the Kalahari had employed two cameramen, Fred Parrish and Hank Hodes who were equipped with four cinecamers, their films later being included in the Imperial Institute's catalogue.During I930, Cherry Kearton was filming animal life in South Africa. One of his intentions was to film the white rhinoceros in Zululand along the Umfolosi River; but owing to a conflict of opinion with the Provincial Administration officers regarding permits to visit the game reserves, he was unable to do so. Kearton however succeed in taking a remarkable documentary of the penguins on Dassen Island off the Cape Coast some of whose material consisted of scenes shot by African Film Productions' cameraman Ayliff on Kerguelen Island which Kearton purchased. When shown in London in November I930, the film aroused a great deal of interest. During I93I, Major Hans Schomburgk, a well-known German documentary film producer, passed through the Union with a sound film unit engaged on producing two documentaries - the one dealing with wild life in Africa, the other with the development of the African native from the pygmy in the wilds to the worker in the skyscraper. Many scene were filmed in Johannesburg. These films were shown in Europe and America but not in South Africa.

The publicity value of the talkie film was now widely appreciated, especially by transport companies. Towards the end of I932,Imperial Airways commissioned Gaumont-British Instructional Films Ltd to film their route from London to the Cape and preliminary work was undertaken by the famous author-producer Paul Rotha who, with his wife Bunch Lee, covered the route in an air-liner without spending any time in the

Union. There was no immediate result to this enterprise but in 1935, Gaumont-British announced their intention of making a fiction feature film entitled "Air Route" and commissioned Captain R.B. Wainwright to film the London-Cape route of Imperial Airways. This was done during September 1935 but the film itself was never made.

Meanwhile another important American enterprise was exploiting the South African field. In May 1935, James A. Fitzpatrick of the famous "Traveltalk" series (distributed in South Africa by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer) arrived in Cape Town with a sound production unit and a number of cinema players. His intention was to shoot the background scenes of a proposed biographical film of David Livingstone and his unit included Charles Lipscomb, assistant director; Ralph Donaldson, cameraman; Hugh McDermott playing Stanley (Clive Brook was to play the studio sequences); and Eileen Corder playing Mary Moffat (Madeleine Carroll to play the role in Hollywood).(i) The unit intended filming for six weeks, both the biographical film and the travelogues to be taken in Johannesburg, the Kruger National Park, the Victoria Falls and Kuruman Fitzpatrick concluded an interview by announcing - "I intend to take the darkness out of Africa"(ii); but the Livingstone film was never made. He returned to the United States and in February 1936, revisited the Union as a passenger on the luxury liner "Franconia". His party this time included Percy Marmont, Daphne Warren Wilson, Moira Lynd, Wheeler Dryden, Hugh McDermott, Benjamin Sharpe and Charles Hone who acted in a dramatisation of a world cruise. Fitzpatrick also made "Traveltalk" of Durban and another entitled "Africa - Land of Contrast" dealing with the "Franconia's" cruise and including North African sequences. He was given travelling facilities by the S.A.R.& H. which viewed his enterprises with sympathy. His films on Africa were shown throughout the world and furnished the Union with valuable publicity.

(i) Charles Lipscomb married Eileen Corder in Johannesburg.

(ii) At the same time, Geoffrey Barkas was in the Transvaal arranging for the production of "Rhodes of Africa". Both he and Fitzpatrick received an enormous fan-mail from acting aspirants.
Local interest was still further animated by the arrival of a third film production party consisting of A. van B. Mencken as cameraman (he was a flight-lieutenant in the U.S.A. Marine Corps and previously cameraman to Paramount and Pathé, having travelled all over the world), Mrs Abbott Inglis (niece of Pierpont Morgan) and Mrs Margaret Hubbard, a film producer. This party however intended filming native life only in Rhodesia and East Africa.

In I936, Merle Lavoy (i) produced a 2,000 foot documentary of the Southampton-Cape sea route for the Union Castle Company for publicity purposes at the Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg and in January I937, J. Blake Dalrymple and J. Stirling Gillespie, representatives of Elder Dalrymple Productions Ltd, an educational film company, arrived in South Africa to produce short educational films on native and other subjects. Travelling by safari car, they covered Africa from Cape Town to Cairo, filming everything of interest en route (20), their films subsequently being incorporated in many educational catalogues.During the same year, Burton Holmes, originator of the"travelogue" and a producer of films since I897 (21) visited South Africa and took various scenic sequences for lecture purposes. This enterprise was of great publicity value to South Africa.

Overseas interest in the Union which appeared to have languished was revived in I938 when Gaumont-British-Instructional commissioned Leon Schauder (ii), a young South African cameraman, to film a number of "interest shorts" in the Union. This modest enterprise consisted solely of Schauder himself who, arriving in October I938, wrote, directed and shot his own scripts. There were three subjects - "Ox Wagon" dealing with the history of transport; "Karroo", a straightforward documentary dealing with farming life; and "Nonquassi", a reconstruction of the mass suicide of the Ama-Xosa in I856. Delay in editing prevented the early appearance of these films but by the end of I939, they were being shown in West End cinemas as well as figuring on the catalogue of Educational films purveyed by Gaumont-British-

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(i) Merle Lavoy was a well-known newsreel cameraman of worldwide experience. At the conclusion of this commission, he remained in the Union and subsequently shot material for the Electricity Supply Commission, African Film Productions and Alexander Films.

(ii) Passionately attached to film work since his earliest youth,Leon Schauder began his professional career by writing, directing and filming "In Them Our Hopes", a documentary of the Habonim organisation. On the strength of its success, he left his home in Port Elizabeth for England and after various tribulations, joined the staff of Gaumont British as a film-cutter. Persistent in his plea for the recognition of South Africa as a documentary field, he at length succeeded in attracting the attention of Bruce Wolfe of Gaumont-British Instructional Films Ltd who agreed to finance an experimental attempt to prove the point.(22)

After making "Ox Wagon", "Karroo" and "Nonquassi",Schauder returned to England to resume employment with Gaumont-British; bu in July I940, returned to South Africa after the outbreak of the Second World War and offered his services to the Union Government In the then absence of suitable opportunity, his offer was not accepted but towards the end of I940, in collaboration with Henry Cornelius, he made a propaganda documentary for the Truth Legion of the Union Unity Fund.

Instructional.(i) Early in 1939, Imperial Airways commissioned Strand Films Ltd, the well-known documentary film producers, to make a documentary of the London Cape air route for exhibition at the New York World's Fair. In April, their cinematographers, Stanley Hawes (ii) and J. Jago arrived in the Union by air and took thousands of feet of loca interest, the exploitation of which was ruined by the outbreak of the Second World War.

The foreign production of South African documentary films now assumed a vicarious aspect.(iii) As early as May 1938, it was known that Germany planned colonial propaganda through films (23) and that General von Epp, leader of the Reich Colonial League, had offered two annual prizes equivalent to £400 each for the best literary work and the best film dealing with the colonies.(24) Whether these films were made or shown is unverifiable; but in December 1939, the Sunday Expres published the impressions of a Cape Town visitor to Germany in 1938 on seeing a South African film issued by the Nazi Propaganda Ministry. (25) It showed, he said, famished Europeans subservient to prosperous natives in luxurious mansions and other grotesque distortions. The fil was called "Life in the Union of South Africa". It is possible that other such films were made and shown in Germany during the war.

(i) Commentated by C.V. Emmett and distinguished by local touches such as the speaking of verse in Afrikaans in "Ox Wagon", the three films formed part of a series called "Focus on the Empire" issued by Gaumont-British-Instructional. Their appearance marked the firs attempt to publicise South Africa through films made by a South African under the aegis of a British company, a fact which was given suitable recognition in the Union Press. All the films appeared in programmes supporting popular feature films in West End cinemas and were therefore assured of large audiences.

In ~~November~~ April 1940, the British Ministry of Information bought the world rights of "Nonquassi" hoping to exploit the propaganda effect of establishing a parallel between the Xosa self destruction through implicit in a fanatical prophetess and the imminent Nazi self-destruction through implicit faith in the fanatical Hitler.

"Nonquassi" was first shown in South Africa at the Twentieth Century Cinema in Johannesburg in October 1940, African Theatres having failed to justify an earlier hope that they would show Schauder's films.(26)

(ii) Admitting "the appalling ignorance overseas of the vast development of cities and towns in Africa",(2$) Hawes waxed enthusiastic on the cinematic possibilities of the country. His testimony might have weighed in responsible quarters (especially in the newly-established Imperial Relations Trust which aimed at inter-information of the Dominions and colonies); but the outbreak of the Second World War obliterated all hope of British exploitation of the Sout African documentary field.

(iii) See Page 368.

Amateurs

An enormous footage of 16mm and 8mm film was taken in South Africa by overseas tourists, particularly Americans, with considerable publicity value to the country. From about 1925 (when "Cine-Kodaks" first became popular) onwards, production steadily increased, being greatly accelerated by the arrival of luxury liners such as the "Asturias", "Franconia", "Empress of Britain", "Stella Polaris", "Arandora Star", etc. The outbreak of war extinguished this production almost completely, the restrictions of prohibited areas serving to dissuade most visiting amateurs, as well as the shortage of materials.

Entertainment Films

The foreign exploitation of South African entertainment films dates from the Boer War when many faked patriotic sketches were produced.(i) The passing of this stimulus resulted in a gap which was not broken until about 1910 when it appears that an overseas productio firm made "The Great Kimberley Diamond Robbery" or "The Star of the South", the scenes undoubtedly having been shot in South Africa.(ii) Although fiction films set in other parts of Africa were made (iii) in

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(i) One of these, called "Tommy's Last Shot" showing a Tommy wrestling successfully with a Boer after expending all his ammunition, is remembered contemporaneously.

(ii) See Page 171 (ii)

(iii) The first entertainment film actually to be made in Africa was produced by Major Hans Schomburgk F.R.G.S. in 1913. Born in 1881 i Germany, Schomburgk left for Africa at the age of 17. He served with the Natal Mounted Rifles during the Boer War, being awarded the war medal with four claspe. He spoke English perfectly and was additionally an excellent native linguist. Known throughout Africa as an intrepid hunter and explorer, he made several adventurous journeys across the continent, one lasting for five years. In 1912 Schomburgk embarked on a cinema expedition in West Africa for the purpose of making a record of native and animal life. Though the expedition was partially a failure (tropical conditions ruined the negatives), Schomburgk then decided on an ambitious scheme to film native dramas in their natural setting. Three weeks after his arrival in London, he approached an actress Marie Gehrts, who agreed to accompany him back to West Africa to "star" in native films. According to Schomburgk's foreword to the book she subsequently wrote(28), "she was absolutely the first and only white woman the natives had ever beheld" and that the book itself had "the distinction of being the first published record of a journey through Togoland ever written by anybody, man or woman, black or white". Lightly, even flippantly, written, the book is an entertaining account of many and varied adventures sustained while playing the lead in native dramas set in the wilds of Togoland. In point of the ground covered alone, the expedition was remarkable; but successfully to have achieved the production of such films wa even more so. The films were melodramatic in character ("The Whit Goddess of the Wangora", etc) and though the book establishes tha the native documentaries were shown to British Museum and other officials in London, there is no record of the showing of the native dramas. Certainly they were not shown in South Africa.

the intervening time, and Pathé Freres staged the production of the South African novel "The Dop Doctor" (i), it was not until 1923 that the first entertainment film to be produced by overseas enterprise in South Africa was made. This was "David Livingstone" produced by M.A. Wetherell who, returning to England after dramatic and film work in South Africa (ii), had succeeded in interesting private capital in the film production of the life of Livingstone in the actual places where it had been lived. In November 1923, Wetherell arrived in South Africa with a film unit to commence a production estimated to last twelve months, himself playing the title-role and his wife Mary Moffat.(iii) Exactly a year later, the unit returned to England having travelled thousands of miles through south and central Africa, and proceeded to Scotland to film the scenes of Livingstone's boyhood. On the 28th January 1925, "David Livingstone" was privately shown for the first time in London.(iv) As a commercial venture, the film suffered many

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(i) see "History of Censorship" - Page 394 et seq..

(ii) Born in India in 1887, M.A. Wetherell went to England and took up acting as a profession. Prior to the outbreak of the Great War, he unsuccessfully attempted farming in Rhodesia and about 1916, joined Leonard Rayne's stock dramatic company in which he played for some years. During this period, he played in several films made by African Film Productions Ltd and then went to England.(29) (Wetherell's son Ian also became a film actor and was for some years in South Africa in various capacities in the cinema.)

(iii) Early in 1924, Mrs Wetherell returned to England to give an account of the proceedings. In February, a meeting was held in London at Murray's, the publishers, which was attended by Viscount Ullswater and Earl Buxton at which Mrs Wetherell described the progress made, especially the filming of scenes at Kuruman.(30)

(iv) The cabled report (31) was as follows : "Though opinions vary as to its technical merits, from a story standpoint, the experts unanimously praise its scenic beauty. The initial production of this British-made cinema study of the life of the great African explorer took place in the presence of the Lord Mayor and many leaders of religious and scientific societies who closely followed the picture representation of Livingstone's ambitious struggles towards success. All the most romantic episodes in Livingstone's career are carefully portrayed, including scenes of personal danger, his meeting with Stanley, his marriage and bush wanderings But, as one recognised film expert remarked, "always the spirit and not the cinema aspect is considered first. Livingstone is not a film-maker's film in spite of the beauties of the camera studies strangely soft and delicate for the products of an African sun.It is the illustration in pictures of a sequence of fine ideals woven round the figure of a fine man". Nevertheless this conception of the subject is typically English and although lacking the melo-dramatic grip so essential in American films whatever their nature it is undoubtedly a more sincere conception of one of the world's greatest epics than anything Los Angeles is likely to conceive. Not the least interesting feature of the production was Mr Ormsby-Gore's (then Colonial Secretary, later Lord Harlech and appointed High Commissioner for Great Britain in the Union) speech at a luncheon given by the producers prior to the performance. He said few things were doing more harm, especially among the non-European races such as Indians, than the sensational criminal films and if

vicissitudes. In 1926, Wetherell went to New York to try to sell it on the American market but buyers professed complete ignorance of and indifference to the subject.(i) African Films did not bid for the film in London and accordingly a distribution company called Empire Pictures Ltd was formed to show it in South Africa. On the 19th September 1925, it was first shown at the Cape Town City Hall accompanied by the Municipal Orchestra conducted by Leslie Heward. It was kindly but enthusiastically reviewed by the Press. It ran for a week in Johannesburg but nowhere to exceptional audiences, its lack of concession to "box-office appeal", its undramatic accuracy and emphasis on scenery rather than action, proving unattractive to the excitement-loving cinema public of the day. Despite the remarkable enterprise of its production, Wetherell's "David Livingstone" subsequently passed completely out of public memory.(ii)

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people like Mr Wetherell succeeded in getting a higher standard, then the film would become a valuable aid to education. The Livingstone film was unique, proceeded the Under-Secretary for the Colonies, in that it associated a travelogue with a life actually lived - a life of dauntless courage, individual self-reliance and unwearied effort. It should bring home to every Englishman appreciation of a wonderful heritage in Central and Eastern Africa which covered a million square miles of the most fruitful land in the world."

(i) "They did not know as a matter of fact", said Wetherell in an interview (32), "who Livingstone was. One of them actually asked me if he was in the film business ! They had heard of Stanley but he was insufficiently well known for publicity purposes."Darkest Africa" is nothing to darkest New York where the film buyers are."

(ii) Towards the end of 1926, Wetherell embarked on an equally ambitious scheme in the production of "Robinson Crusoe" so to speak in loco. Playing the title-role, he took a production unit to Tobago to film the principal scenes, Fay Compton playing the feminine lead. In March 1928, Kinemas showed this film in South Africa but it failed to arouse any special comment.

Continuing with film work in England, Wetherell cherished plans for film production in South Africa and in August 1938, returned to the Union to organise the production of a film dealing with the life of Paul Kruger. The scenario was written in English and Afrikaans by the well-known historian Dr Gustav Preller and the production was estimated to cost £100,000, a company entitled "South African Industrial Films (Pty) Ltd" (which also engaged on certain commercial advertising films) being used for the purpose. (33) It was rumoured that the Afrikaans actor Hendrik Hanekom who played Paul Kruger in the play of that name, would take the title role. Wetherell's actor-son Ian, left England to join him; but early in 1939 when production was scheduled to begin, M.A.Wetherell died and the project was subsequently abandonned.

Preller's scenario however continued to be the subject of speculation and it was frequently rumoured that other companies had undertaken its production.

During the twenties, the disrepute of the American film industry and the sponsoring of the British together with schemes for the promotion of an Empire production industry (i) began to cause American firms some concern. In December 1925, J. Stuart Whyte representing United Artists, the Hal Roach Studios and Australian Films Ltd of Sydney, visited the Union to study film conditions after spending a year in Australia. He propounded a scheme by which American firms would produce scenic work in South Africa, the dramatic portions of the films to be produced in Hollywood studios. On the assurance that the American public was tired of "Wild West" films, Stuart-Whyte emphasised the possibilities of this scheme; but, despite his enthusiastic attestation no American firms availed themselves of it. A month later (January 1926) Jack Zimmerman representing British interests and paying his second visit to the Union, propounded an almost identical scheme which was to make South Africa "the Hollywood of the Empire". Despite intense interest in Empire film production subsequently aroused by the Imperial Conference, nothing evolved from this or other schemes. Meanwhile in their quest for variety, American firms were "faking" African films which however were never shown in the Union. This practice was combated by the growing popularity of authentic African documentaries which attained their peak expression about 1932 and exposed the anachronisms of studio-made "jungle scenes".(ii)

This movement had an excellent effect on the authenticity of entertainment film production and it became the practice of big production firms to send special expeditions to the countries concerned to take"location shots". India, Egypt and the Sudan were favourite loci operandi, British firms being particularly enterprising. Towards the

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(i) see Page 244 et seq..

(ii) Major Hans Schomburgk made two African documentaries and three British expeditions filmed native and animal life - one led by Walter Summers which filmed the Yafooba cannibal tribe in the Sahara for "Timbuctoo"; a second led by Norman Walker for British International which filmed scenes in Egypt and the Sudan for the fiction film "Fires of Fate" (some of them were curiously interposed in "Four Feathers" produced a little later); and a third led by John Amery assisted by Court Johnston-Noad which filmed native life etc in Tanganyika for an ambitious wild life epic entitled "Jungle Skies". Simultaneously the Martin-Johnsons continued their documentary work in Central Africa.

end of 1933, Gaumont-British decided to film the life of Cecil Rhodes based on Sarah Gertrude Millin's biographical study. Geoffrey Barkas, the firm's production manager, was commissioned to make a ten-week tour of the Union and Southern Rhodesia to select suitable locales ar to make preliminary arrangements. While thus engaged, a successful libel action against a production company (1) caused serious doubts to be entertained as to whether the production could continue; but when Barkas left Cape Town for England in April 1934, it was announce that it would definitely be undertaken though Clive Brook would be unable to play the title-role as intended. This intelligence was officially confirmed in May when it was further announced that Gaumont-British's production executive was engaged in solving the problem of casting. Thence onwards confusion grew worse confounded. Though the idea of filming the Rhodes' biography appeared to have emanated from Gaumont-British, news was subsequently released that a new company "British National Films Ltd", had been specially created to make the film (in which Charles Laughton was to play the lead) and that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (who had previously been rumoured to have entertained the same idea) had renounced their own plans in its favou Such conflicting announcements periodically appeared that Mrs Millin was reported to be "utterly sick of the whole affair". By then (October 1934), a year had passed since the Gaumont-British plan had been made public. In November 1934, the position was further complicated by the sensational news that British National Films had abandonn ed the production of the Rhodes film owing to representations made to the directors by General Smuts and other high authorities in South Africa.(It was assumed that the real bone of contention was the Jameson Raid whose reproduction might excite racial prejudice.) This

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(1) During March 1934, when Barkas was in Salisbury completing his investigations, the whole overseas production industry was thrown into confusion by the verdict of Mr Justice Avory in the libel action brought in an English court by Princess Youssoupoff against Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. The Princess alleged that in their film "Rasputin", Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer had portrayed a character Natasha who could not be mistaken as herself and that she had been represented as a woman of loose moral character whom Rasputin had seduced and ravaged. In awarding Princess Youssoupoff £25,000, Mr Justice Avory accompanied his verdict with strong comment on the irresponsible methods of film production companies.

This event enforced a thorough revision of production policy and served to convince a number of large firms that historical films were far too dangerous a subject to produce.

sensation (i) proved a mare's nest, General Smuts, then in England, requesting the Press to publish the following statement (34) - "I should like to deny the report that I caused the production of the Rhodes film to be held up. I suppose it arose from my request to see the script before the production. I ran through it this morning and informed the film company that it has my entire approval."(ii) After further such false alarms including another announcement that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer intending filming the life of Rhodes (iii), production finally commenced with the arrival in Salisbury of the Gaumont-British production unit.(iv)

(i) Mrs Millin, when interviewed by the local Press, expressed great surprise as she had already prepared the scenario and saw nothing in it to arouse racial feeling. She further mentioned that members of the Union Government had taken great interest in the preliminary work and that she had been offered every assistance in South Africa to overcome whatever difficulties might arise. Officials at South Africa House in London had been enthusiastic about the publicity possibilities of the film and it was everywhere granted that its production would benefit the Union. Proof of this had been provided during the visit of Geoffrey Barkas of the Gaumont-British Corporation to whom the Publicity and Travel Department of the S.A.R. & H. had given every facility.

(ii) Two days later, Gaumont-British issued a statement detailing the history of the proposed production. In July 1934, the firm had received a letter from the Prime Minister's (General Hertzog) Office requesting that care be taken to avoid incidents likely to excite racial prejudice. After discussion with South African officials, it was decided that if contentious issues could not be avoided, the production would be dropped. The scenario however, achieved such evasion and on the 13th November 1934, Mr Lee, vice-president of the Gaumont-British Corporation, met General Smuts, Minister of Justice, and obtained his sanction, the original objection against the treatment of the Jameson Raid being withdrawn. Thenceforward production went actively ahead.

(iii) The final decision of Gaumont-British to film the life of Rhodes by no means ended the confusion which had attended the project ab initio. In February 1935 when there was as yet no sign of the production having been undertaken, it was announced that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer intended filming the life of Rhodes and that Irving Thalberg president of the company, had arranged with Leontine Sagan to produce it. Thalberg, according to the Kinematograph Weekly (35), was reported to have felt that this was an especially happy engagement since Miss Sagan was born and had spent much of her life in South Africa. (Though Leontine Sagan spent the latter part of her childhood in South Africa and revisited it frequently thereafter, she was born in Vienna. Actually Miss Sagan interviewed Thalberg and during their conversation, gathered the impression that he thought she knew altogether too much about Rhodes successfully produce a film of his life. Thalberg died in September 1936) Metro's project never materialised but conflicting items of news concerning the film continued even when it was in production both in South Africa and England.

(iv) This production unit had been in India filming the background material for "Soldiers Three". Natalie Barkas subsequently described its experiences in a book "Thirty Thousand Miles for the Films" which deals with both the Indian and South African locales.

The unit consisted of Geoffrey Barkas and his wife Natalie; Sidney Bennet, chief cameraman; Tom Connochie, business manager; George Stevens, cameraman; and Richard Deacon, assistant to Bonnet. They were joined in Salisbury by J.W. Pesselt, ex-Native Commissioner who was to assist in the marshalling and handling of natives; E.E. Travail who came from Johannesburg to assist in the building of sets; and Philip Dorte, Gaumont-British sound engineer; besides several other minor officials such as still photographers. African Film Productions' sound engineers and equipment were responsible for the recording of the actual African sequences. Immediately on arrival, the unit received a cable from the studio informing them that Walter Huston was to play the title-role, that he could not come to South Africa and that a double would have to be found for him and for Dr Jameson to be played by Basil Sydney. Barkas left for Johannesburg and engaged the well-known Afrikaans actor, Paul de Groot, to play Rhodes and Geoffrey Pyke an actor-journalist, to play Jameson. A locale was selected at Gulati (i) twenty miles from Bulawayo, a native chief named Ndanisa Kumalo was chosen to play Lobengula, and Matabele were collected to form the necessary crowds. Mrs Millin travelled from Johannesburg to watch part of the production.

Many difficulties were encountered (ii) but with the active help of the Southern Rhodesian Government and the coöperative assistance of everyone concerned, both native and European, the unit was able to film its scenes on a hitherto unprecedented scale.(36) It then left for Johannesburg, travelling thence to Lichtenburg in the Transvaal and, ten miles distant, to a dilapidated dorp called Bakers situated among deserted diggings which somewhat resembled the early Kimberley. Here the diamond rush and other scenes were filmed. Finally, on the eve of sailing from Cape Town, the unit filmed a few local scenes with W. Brigden playing Rhodes. It left on the 20th June 1935, having spent ten weeks in the Union and Southern Rhodesia.

(i) By the time the unit was ready for shooting, Gulati was the tenth largest "town" in Southern Rhodesia.

(ii) Among many unforeseen difficulties was an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease which made it impossible to obtain horses for the "troopers".

The production was completed in the Gaumont-British studios in England, Ndanisa Kumalom travelling from Southern Rhodesia to continue playing Lobengula at Shepherd's Bush. Walter Huston played Rhodes; Basil Sydney - Jameson; Oscar Homolka - Paul Kruger; Frank Cellier - Barney Barnato (the only credible characterisation), the cast also including Lewis Casson and Peggy Ashcroft. Although reports of its "jumbled historical happenings" were continuously published and visitors returning from England testified to its unaccuracy, it was not until April 1936 that "Rhodes of Africa" was first shown in the Union. On the 9th April, African Consolidated Theatres gave a "secret" showing of the film in their private projection-room in Cape Town to a small audience including General Smuts. Though this event excited much comment in the Press (which had followed the production of the film with consistent and unprecedented publicity), it was generally assumed that the exclusion of reporters from the proceedings and the invitation of a select few was merely to assure the exhibitors that there was nothing in the film to excite racial feelings. Shortly afterwards, the Press published a specious explanation (also published as a letter in the London "Times") by the producer of the film, Berthold Viertel (i), of the inaccuracies and prostitutions of facts in the production. In making cinematic drama out of historic fact, he had had to sacrifice accuracy and indeed, to import quite fictitious events.

On the 18th May 1936, African Consolidated Theatres showed "Rhodes of Africa" for the first time at the Johannesburg Colosseum. Instantly there was a storm of protest, the English and Afrikaans Press uniting in condemnation of a production which was neither a truthful representation of Rhodes himself nor of the events with which he was concerned.(ii) Outstanding among its jarring features were the complete inappositeness of Walter Huston in the title-role; the fictitious events by which Rhodes was made personally to bargain with Kruger over a railway line and later to plead for the life of Jameson, as well as his meeting with Lobengula; the maladroitness of the scenes featuring

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(i) At the time of the production, some outcry had been raised by the fact that the producer of this epic of the Empire was a foreigner it gave him a suitably detached attitude, it was said in defence - and that the role of Paul Kruger should be played by an Austrian.

(ii) The Johannesburg "Star" neatly laid the faults of the film at the door of "a thirsty quest for the dramatic".

Kruger and Mrs Kruger (who appeared as caricatures to some spectators while real offence was caused to others by the sight of Kruger reading the Bible and smoking at the same time, dipping bread into his coffee and eating it noisily, and refusing to offer Rhodes a cup of coffee despite the suggestion of his wife); and the thorough-going misrepresentation of authentic historical material as supplied by Mrs Millin's biography. The "location shots" taken by the production unit in Southern Rhodesia and the Union were unanimously acclaimed (i); but no word of praise could be found for the film as a whole. At best, certain of its episodes were commended. Public protests were made by Afrikaner bodies throughout the country and appeals were addressed to the Minister of the Interior to prohibit the exhibition of the film owing to its farcical representation of Paul Kruger and its offence to those who venerated his memory. The Board of Censors was severely stigmatised for having permitted its exhibition. The Afrikaans Studentebond entered a vigorous protest at its congress in Bloemfontein in June and similar sentiments were voiced elsewhere, frequently with appreciative mention of the support spontaneously accorded by the English-speaking section. The unqualified condemnation which greeted the first attempt by a British firm to make a South African film with authentic background inaugurated a tradition which was consistently maintained thereafter. No foreign-made South African film ever evaded criticism in subsequent years and some transcended even the heights set by "Rhodes of Africa".

Despite its unfavourable reception, the Rhodes film had already diverted the minds of overseas producers from stereotyped film drama to the possibilities of the Union's historical material and several projects were mooted.(ii) None materialised but Gaumont-British,

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(i) Owing to the Italo-Abyssinian campaign, the Matabele war scenes were cut to a minimum when the film was shown in England.(37)

(ii) In March 1936, it was reported that the English producer Basil Dean, was interested in the project of producing a scenario to be written by Francis Brett Young dealing with the Great Trek, the Boer War, the development of the Rand and other features of South African history. Nothing more was heard of this project but in November 1937 (when the movement had been considerably accelerated by the appearance of G-B's "King Solomon's Mines" part of which had been filmed in South Africa, and several films dealing with Indian history), Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer announced that they had "definitely decided to make" Francis Brett Young's novel "They Seek a Country" which dealt with the Great Trek, Robert Taylor (then the most popular male star) to play the lead. Hunt Stromberg the prospective producer and Noel Langley, the scenarist (a South African born in Durban) had already done extensive research work in Worcestershire to get the authentic background for the

treading on the surer ground of imaginative melodrama, essayed another South African film - Rider Haggard's "King Solomon's Mines" whose production began in 1936. A special unit under the direction of Geoffrey Barkas arrived towards the end of November and spent four months filming native life and scenes for the film in the Umgeni Valley Natal. African Film Productions Ltd again made all the sound-recording of the African sequences taken there. A local actress, Miss Connie Barritt, doubled for Anna Lee who took the leading role.(i) When the unit left Cape Town on its return to England in March 1937, the news of the liquidation of the Gaumont-British Corporation had just been published but in an interview dealing with his work in Zululand and his adventures with native "extras", Barkas expressed no anxiety as to the future of "King Solomon's Mines". Its studio-production had already been completed and it would in due course be released. It was shown in South Africa in September 1937 and, despite the apparently impeccable requirements of the book, was distinguished by at least one peculiarity The cast consisted of Cedric Hardwicke, Paul Robeson, Roland Young, John Loder and Anna Lee and, to the astonishment of its audiences (especially in the Union), Paul Robeson several times sang.

At this stage, American production entered the field. At the end of 1935, Gracie Fields performed with a vaudeville company in South Africa for some months and, herself very popular, developed a genuine regard for and interest in the country, particularly Johannesburg. Returning to England towards the middle of 1936, she subsequently went to the United States where she managed to interest Twentieth-Century-Fox Film Corporation in the project of producing a film with a South African background. By the end of 1937, this film project had materialised and the production of "He was Her Man" set in early Johannesburg with Gracie Fields and Victor Maclaglen (ii) in the lead was well under way. Almost all the action took place in the Johannesburg of the early

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beginning of the story. Subsequently however, the excitement caused by this news was damped by the further announcement that the production had been "temporarily shelved" owing to Robert Taylor's being engaged on other films. It was never undertaken which, in the light of other such projects which were subsequently realised by American studios, provided occasion for gratitude.

(i) Whether in virtue of its misplaced zeal in publicising local activities in connection with the Rhodes film or for other reasons the Union Press almost entirely ignored the work of this unit. An account appears in "Pagan Tapesty" by Bertha Slosberg.(38)

(ii) Victor McLaglen was a South African, having been born at Newlands Cape though he left the country in early childhood.

nineties and though no production unit actually visited South Africa, thorough research resulted in a very credible reconstruction of the early town and its hectic life. The film, under the title of "We're Going to be Rich", was not shown in South Africa until December 1938 when it appeared at the Apollo Cinema, Doornfontein, Johannesburg, the first twentieth Century-Fox cinema to open in the town. Despite its local interest and the merits of an amusing and entertaining plot, it aroused no interest whatever except for Press mention of the fact that Gracie Fields sang "Vat Jou Goed en Trek Ferreira".(1)

The subsequent production by Twentieth-Century-Fox of "Stanley and Livingstone" which was heartily acclaimed overseas, aroused interest in the African field and prompted American producers to examine their film libraries for "location shots" which might be incorporated in dramatic films to revive jaded public appetite. The first venture resulting from this procedure was "Adventure in Diamonds" made by Paramount under the original title of "Diamonds are Dangerous". Purporting to take place in Cape Town and Kimberley, the construction of its sets and the action that took place therein were imaginative to a degree that rendered them factually unrecognisable. Cape Town, for instance, had three nightclubs and the population wore topees and terais; Kimberley was only a few miles distant and could be reached by a short motor drive; and the favourite sport of the "diamond barons" (and South Africa as a whole) was ostrich-racing, a sequence which was obviously considered the highlight of the film. There were many other such studio fantasies interspersed with excell-

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(1) Subsequently Twentieth Century-Fox embarked on the production of an African film of remarkable proportions - "Stanley and Livingstone". Towards the end of 1938, the corporation sent a special expedition in charge of Osa Martin-Johnson (her husband had been killed in an accident) to Tanganyika to film the background sequences and, early in 1939, studio production began, Sir Cedric Hardwicke playing Livingstone, Spencer Tracey playing Stanley and Walter Brennan Stanley's quite fictitious Indian scout. The first showing of the film in August 1939 at the Hollywood Boulevards caused a furore, 30,000 people fighting for admission.(39); but it was not until March 1940 that the film was shown in South Africa when it was used to open the Twentieth Century Cinema in Johannesburg, the first major cinema of the new distributors.

Under the circumstances, newspaper critics could treat its grotesque distortion of fact only guardedly, the slightest hint of imperfection being copiously covered by extravagant eulogy of the acting. Only one journal - The Forum - was sufficiently outspoken unequivocally to condemn the film and to point out that "apart from Gordon Bennett's instructions and the famous "Dr. Livingstone, I presume", not one word and not one scene in the film is correct, not even the eagerly anticipated meeting.."(40)

ent documentary material.(i) The film was first shown in South Africa at the Johannesburg Plaza in April 1940 where it ran for a few days. Opening at the Alhambra in Cape Town, African Theatres found it expedient to withdraw it after one performance.(ii)

Possibly the war with its initial demand for "escapist" films maintained interest in productions with an African background. During 1940, Universal produced "A Modern Monte Christo" later called"Diamond Frontier" dealing with a fictitious diamond-mining town in South Africa called "Ammoraxrand" during the seventies; but it was never shown in the Union.

After the first British enterprise (iii), the production of such films was confined to America; but in October 1940, the "Manchester Guardian" published the news that the German state-controlled film industry was producing a biographical film of Paul Kruger in which Emil Jannings played the lead. "A violent piece of anti-British propaganda", it was stated, "will doubtless be the result".(41) The subject lent itself excellently to such exploitation and subsequent news from neutral sources indicated that the production was proceeding.

(i) Perhaps the most regrettable feature of the film was the inclusion of an excellent sequence showing the actual sorting and grading of diamonds at Kimberley which, originally taken through the courtesy of De Beers, made an anachronistic appearance in the middle of a very melodramatic plot. If audiences believed this sequence, they also believed the rest of the setting and vice versa to the detriment of South Africa.

(ii) "Adventure in Diamonds" was an entertaining film and profitable to its producers. Accordingly another of similar type was produced by Paramount in 1940. This was "Safari" featuring Madeleine Carroll and Douglas Fairbanks Junior and was set in Central Africa. The inclusion of a few good "location shots" failed to counteract the ludicrous and almost offensively maladroit qualities of this film. It was first shown in Johannesburg at the Johannesburg Empire in October 1940 and aroused no interest.

(iii) Apart from "Rhodes of Africa", and "King Solomon's Mines" of 1937, there was also "Sanders of the River"of 1935 dealing with the West African Coast (most of which was filmed on the Thames).

Section II - For Non-Commercial Exhibition

Amateurs

Historically amateur film production began with Edgar Hyman who in 1897 imported a cinecamera; but, in acting as correspondent for the Warwick Trading Company, he became a professional. For about twenty years subsequently, various enthusiastic amateurs endeavoured to produce films in South Africa, mostly with 35mm apparatus; but it was not until "Cine-Kodaks" and other 16mm and 8mm cameras were placed on the market that the movement could develop. Their expense militated against their widespread use and furthermore the general public continued to regard moving pictures as a mystery confined to technical initiates. The overcoming of this prejudice was largely due to an influx of American tourists during the late twenties. Most of these visitors were of the more affluent class and, arriving in luxury liners, were seen on tour throughout the country using movie cameras. Thence onward, the movement locally steadily grew until, early in the thirties, it was possible to form Ciné Clubs in all the large centres in the Union.

Until about 1938, the activities of both Clubs and individual amateurs were unobtrusively conducted with a few rare exceptions which achieved public notice. In 1930, for instance, Roy Tuckett, the well-known airman, produced "Down the All-Red Route", a record of his flight in his Moth aeroplane "Doris" from Cape to Cairo.(1) Various expeditions into the Kalahari, South West Africa and Rhodesia took 16mm films which obtained some publicity and in September 1936, Mr. R.H. Gould of the Electricity Supply Commission and Dr H.L. Alden of the Yale Observatory, made a colour film record of the Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg. Early in 1937, C.E. Watkins made a notable film of the Victoria Falls.

By 1938, the amateur production of films was both widespread and diverse. Not only did Cine Clubs organise film (both fiction and actuality) competitions among their members but individual amateurs made films for a great variety of purposes some of which were shown

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(1) Tuckett flew over Kilimanjaro at a height of 19,800 feet which was exceptional for a light plane of the time.

overseas.(i) The Cape Town University organised its cinematographers into a newsreel production unit under the tutelage of Professor Theo le Roux which systematically documented outstanding University events. Travel and scenic films were consistently made and shown by amateurs, the movement, heretofore unobtrusive, being brought into the public ey by the outbreak of war when many film shows were organised to raise funds for various purposes. The Kruger National Park and the Victoria Falls as well as the Namaqualand Flowers and the Cape Peninsula generally were favourite subjects for amateur cinematography.(ii) In addition, amateur producers were encouraged by the activities of almos- of every type of cultural and other society to make appropriate films.(iii)

The random activities of amateurs cinematographers were, as far as the general public was concerned, indistinguishable, except in one or two cases, from ordinary private endeavour in other fields. Film-production was generally regarded as much a hobby as carpentry, stamp-collecting, keeping pigeons, etc. There were however one or two amateurs whose efforts commanded public as well as private attention

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(i) For instance, the Rev. A.A. Jaques of the Lemana Training Institution (Swiss Mission of South Africa) made remarkable 16mm films of native rites and customs (many never before witnessed by Europeans in the Northern Transvaal. Some of these films were commissioned by the Bantu Studies Department of the Witwatersrand University.
A similar film was made of the South African Bantu by Dr.B.F.J Laubscher of Port Elizabeth and aroused considerable interest in psychiatrical circles when shown overseas.(42)
Mr Sydney Nathan, a Johannesburg chemist, made a 600 foot film dealing with blood transfusion which was used for demonstration purposes.(43)
Various university departments were interested in film production and in 1940, students and officials of the Witwatersrand University took a notable colour film of the total eclipse of the sun.

(ii) Notable 16mm colour films of these and other subjects have been made by C.P. de L. Beyers, a Transvaal school-teacher and subsequently director of the Film Division attached to the Union Department of Education (some of his films were bought by VOBI for distribution and public exhibition by touring vans); W. Austin West ("From the Cape to the Zambezi"); Mrs Carleton Jones; D'Arcy Ussher; and several others.

(iii) For example, Mr E.O. Girard, chairman of the South African Aquarists' Association, made numerous colour films dealing with gold fish.

and who, though earning their living in other ways, produced work of a professional kind.(1)

Until 1938, the amateur production movement was without organisation except for the loose association of Ciné Clubs. Towards the middle of 1938, a significant attempt at organisation was launched affecting only Afrikaner cinematographers (a restriction which was never specifically defined). Its origin lay with Dr Hans Rompel who organised a large body of amateur cameramen to film the Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations beginning with the ox-wagon treks from various parts of the Union and ending with the climactic ceremony of

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(1) One of these is Mr L. Lewis of Cape Town who made a number of notable films while engaged as a publicity officer in the insurance business. They included :
"Penguin Patrol" in monochrome taken over a period of two years on Dassen Island (purchased by the Film Division of the Union Department of Education);
"Marvels of the Flower World", a remarkable colour film of the cultivation and cross-pollination of carnations;
"Dreams Come True", a further flower study dealing with natural and artificial pollination;
"Flowers of the Mountain, Veld, Karroo and Garden" - colour close-ups of various flowers;
"Insect Hunting with Dr Skaife" - 1,600 feet of microscopic colour close-ups directed by the South African biological and educational authority (Dr Skaife frequently himself lectured at exhibitions of the film);
"They Only Need to be Told" - a colour film commissioned by the Animal Welfare Society showing the unwitting cruelty of coloured people to animals and how easy it is to be kind (copies purchased by the Film Division of the Union Department of Education);
"They Cannot Help Themselves" - colour film commissioned by the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (London) on the same theme as the above;
"Maternity Work" - commissioned by the Child Welfare Department of the Cape Town City Council for the instruction of coloured mid-wives, in three parts (the second part having been made by a London doctor);
"Huguenot Homesteads" - a colour film made to celebrate the Huguenot Centenary in 1939;
"He called it Port Elizabeth" - 1,600 foot colour film dealing with the history of Port Elizabeth and made with the collaboration of the City Councillors and Librarian;
"Basutoland" made in February 1940 and recording in colour the installation of the Paramount Chief as well as scenic and other views;
"The Social and Economic Life of the Basutoes" made in collaboration with Mr Hugh Ashton of the British High Commissioner's staff;
"Quincentenary of the Invention of Printing" made at the request of Mr Douglas Varley, Librarian, and Dr Skaife of the Cape Town Public Library;
"The Two Brothers", a propaganda film made for the Southern Life Assurance Association;
"He Went to College" dealing with the life of a boy at Kingswood College at Grahamstown;
"Blindness" produced in collaboration with the South African Council for the Blind;
and several other films including short entertainment films dealing with Cape activities such as the Coons' Carnival at Green Point, Malay weddings, the Snoeking Industry, the Habits of the Cape Coloured, etc.

Apart from special exhibitions, these and other films were regularly exhibited at Fortnightly Shows arranged by the Southern Life Association in Cape Town.

laying the foundation stone at the Voortrekker Monument outside Pretoria. An immense footage of 16mm film was shot and entailed a lengthy and arduous process of editing and commentating. The commentar was written and spoken by Gideon Roos, Pieter de Waal and J.F. Marais, all Afrikaans announcers employed by the South African Broadcasting Corporation and was recorded on discs without "natural sound". The recording of these discs on to film did not become available until the end of 1939 but the first exhibitions of the film from August 1939 onwards were personally commentated by Mr. W. le Roux who had assisted in the writing of the greater part of the script. The film belonged to the Voortrekkerbeweging (the Afrikaner Scout Movement) which institute a special unit to arrange its distribution (i) and despite the lapse of more than a year since the Celebrations, "N Nasie hou Koers" was accorded the most rapturous and sustained enthusiasm that had ever been accorded a film shown in South Africa (ii) with the possible exception of "De Voortrekkers". Its production was organised by Dr. Rompel who also supervised the editing and it ran for just under five hours, usually being shown in two sections with a "braaivleisaand" or some such function intervening.

The success of coöperative effort in the production of this film encouraged Dr Rompel to found in January 1939 the "Volksrolprentbond", an association of amateurs with headquarters at Pretoria which aimed at filming occasions of importance to Afrikaners. From it developed the Reddingsdaadbond-Amateur-Rolprent-Organisasie or RARO which was founded in July 1940 and which, since it sold its films to VOBI for commercial exhibition, cannot properly be described as an amateur enterprise.(iii) Though an organisation of amateurs, RARO was largely motivated by monetary gain and owed its existence to a large extent to the continuance of a commercial outlet. In common with all other

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(i) This unit consisted of a chief organiser J. de V. Heese, chief secretary of the Voortrekkerbeweging; a provincial organiser, J.du Plooy; and a travelling organiser and operator, W. de Braal.

(ii) see Page 357 (ii)

(iii) see Page 358

amateur enterprises, the activities of this organisation were at first curtailed and finally stopped by the lack of supplies owing to the Second World War.

Sponsors of Production

Government Departments - the S.A.R.& H.

The most consistent sponsor of film production in South Africa was the Publicity and Travel Department of the South African Railways and Harbours (and later Airways). As early as 1910, the department collaborated with the Coliseum picture palace in Johannesburg when it filmed a scenic from the Cape to the Zambezi (i) and later it assisted the newsreel cameramen of Africa's Amalgamated Theatres Ltd. When African Film Productions Ltd was founded in 1915, the department engaged in more active exploitation of the publicity value of films. By June 1915, it was able to exhibit a number of films taken on its behalf for exhibition overseas (ii) and by 1920 when three of its officers opened a publicity office in London, they were equipped with £5,000 worth of films to further their purpose. These films covered the whole country and dealt largely with industrial and scenic subject African Film Productions Ltd (iii) was frequently commissioned to make further publicity films and the department was associated not only with the production of numerous scenic and industrial shorts but also with the first publicity talkie dealing with Durban. It also purchased prints of films made by African Film Productions as a commercial venture. All visiting film production units were also assisted; but though the department's policy embraced the active use of films, it was constantly averred that insufficient were available.(iv)

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(1) See Page 417. This film was shot by J. Skittrell who later became the proprietor of the Olympic Film Laboratories in London.

(ii) See Page 424

(iii) The details of the S.A.R. & H. films produced by African Film Productions Ltd are dealt with in connection with that company q.v..

(iv) In September 1935, Commander Newton, director of the Cape Peninsula Publicity Association, gave an interview to the Press in which he appealed for more publicity films on travel and scenic subjects for general and not limited exhibition. The special showing of South African films by the Union's representatives overseas by travel bureaux, etc reached only a limited public.
In October 1935, the Publicity and Travel Department of the S.A.R. & H. presented a report to the National Publicity Conference held at Port Elizabeth in which the work done by films was highly praised.

In November 1935, by far the most ambitious project yet conceived for publicity purposes was sponsored by the department with the active direction of the Minister of Railways and Harbours, Mr. Oswald Pirow. This was the production of a film covering the entire history of South Africa from the rounding of the Cape by Bartholomew Diaz in 1486 to the Act of Union in 1910. The department was to be assisted in its production by a representative committee one of whose members, Professor I.J. Rousseau of Rhodes University College, divulged to the Press in February 1936 (44) the nature of the undertaking. The committee also included A.A. Pienaar (1) and Professor S.P?Engelbrecht of Pretoria University. African Film Productions Ltd were to film the story which had been drafted by Pienaar and finally prepared by Professor Engelbrecht in association with Albrecht and Pienaar. The film was to be directed by Joseph Albrecht in association with Pienaar the production also being supervised by D.M. Robbertze, manager of the Publicity and Travel Department of the S.A.R.& H. and his assistant S. Kirkland. The original estimate of cost of the production of this film was about £35,000 based upon the provision of an English-sounded version only. After preparation had commenced, it was decided to make an Afrikaans version also. This involved a costly delay in seeking throughout the country for Afrikaans-speaking artists suitably typed for the dozens of characters historically portrayed and in writing the entire scenario in Afrikaans. The making of this version doubled the film-footage exposed and the whole cost of the film. Primarily designed for overseas publicity purposes and to stimulate national consciousness in South Africa, the film was to be ready for exhibition at the Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations to be held in December 1938.

An immense amount of historical research preceded and accompanied the production, no effort being spared to secure authentic copies of historical objects or, in many cases, the objects themselves. Production commenced early in 1937 at the Cape and continued without interruption until the end of 1938. Scenes were shot in appropriate places throughout the Union, 3,500 Europeans and 8,000 Natives taking part in the crowd scenes, over 50 amateur and professional players

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(1) A.A. Pienaar was the well-known Afrikaans author "Sangiro" who had also produced the silent film "Kilimanjaro" - see Page 449 (iii)

taking the leading roles and 100 various minor parts. 273,312 feet of negative film were exposed and 259,765 of sound recording, the complet ~~mdxfiim~~ ed film totalling 12,815 for the English and 12,634 for the Afrikaans version.(45)(1) The cost of the production was £68,025.(46)

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(1) The cast for both versions except where otherwise stated was as follows :
Bartholomew Diaz - Alfred Holtzer
Johan van Riebeeck - George Vollaire
Maria van Riebeeck - Valda Adams
Simon van der Stel - Jack Bligh
The Landdrost - Herbert Sparling
Willem Adriaan van der Stel - C. de W. Marais
Chaka - M'Badinile Ngcobo
Frontier Boer - Reginald Simpson
His Wife - Eunice Black
Their Child - June Levard
Piet Retief - Myles Bourke
Settler Friend of Retief - Wilfred Hutchings
English Settler - Leonard Burchell (English-Bruce Meredith-Smith)
His Wife - Helene Guldenpfennig
Mrs Retief - Anne Immink (English - Madge Fabian)
Young Retief - Casper Bakkes (English - Gordon Buchanan)
Wounded Settler - H.J. Coetsee
W.R. Thompson - J. Macleod Robertson
Jacobus Uys - J. Miller
Biggar - Dr J. Engelbrecht (English - John Allen)
Halstead - Dirk Illing
Ogle - Chris.Blignaut (English - Gerald Wynne)
Dick King - Eddie Foxon
William Wood - John Nel
Paul Kruger as a Boy - Bobby Matthews
Burger with young Kruger - H. le Roux Jooste
Louis Trichardt - H.J. Oberholzer
Gerrit Maritz - D. Odendaal
Field-Cornet Joubert - C. Olivier
Sir George Napier - Henry Miles
Dingaan - Langalake Ngcobo
Reverend Owen - P. Coetsee (English - Fred Coyne)
Mrs Owen- Sann de Lange (English - Mary Allen)
Jane Williams - Ivy Nankervis
Hulley - G.L. Nel
Daniel Bezuidenhout - Nelson McGregor
His Wife - May Pretorius
Old Man at Weenen - G.J. Absalom (English - Joseph Brady)
Old Woman at Weenen - Bettie Grundlingh
Andries Pretorius - Tom Johnson
Karel Landman - D.A. Kloppers
Hans de Lange - Harry Hambleton
Charl Cilliers - Reynders Pretorius
A Farmer in 1866 - J. van Rensburg (English - Peter Webster)
His Wife - Anna Neethling Pohl
Their Child - J.Hoogenboezem (English - Neville Parkins)
Paul Kruger - A. Sadie (English - Dick Cruickshanks)
Elder Brother - J.J. Scheepers
Younger Brother - Edouard du Toit
Sir Alfred Milner - Eric Carter-Johnson
Uitlander Spokesman - A. Pienaar (English - Deighton Stammers)
The Sower - Freda Meyer.

Speculation was aroused by the fact that Cecil Rhodes was played in both versions by a Cape Town business man who refused to divulge his identity though his similarity to the "Rhodes" employed by the Gaumont-British production unit when in Cape Town filming "Rhodes of Africa" struck several acute cinema observers.

Originally entitled "Salute to Pioneers", the production of "They Built a Nation - Die Bou van 'n Nasie" made unprecedented demands on an industry which for many years had been confined to straightforward documentary work. The difficulties of maintaining historical accuracy were complicated by bi-lingualism and the filming of scenes in the actual places of their occurence in history. The initial stages of production were given little publicity. It was known that the Minister Mr Pirow was personally interested in the film and in May 1938, he gave his permission for its exhibition at the Centenary Celebrations to take place in Pretoria in December.(47) Otherwise there were only occasional items of news, notably recording the arrival of the film unit in various places such as Hout Bay in the Cape Peninsula, Grahamstown, etc with its demands for ox-wagons, flocks of sheep, personnel, etc.(1) While arousing considerable local excitement, such events were not coherently associated in the minds of the public with the immense project which inspired them. In February 1938, certain Afrikaans newspapers delivered an attack on African Film Productions, alleging that the Afrikaans version of the film was receiving less attention than the English which was publicly refuted by its directors.(48) By this time, the production had reached its final stages, many of the scenes being filmed at Killarney and in the country near Johannesburg. Press publicity grew in volume and the public began to be interested in the forthcoming exhibition of the film.

On the 12th December 1938, the Afrikaans version "Die Bou van 'n Nasie" was first shown at a private exhibition at the Capitol Cinema(i

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(i) One news report dealt with the bolting of four dapple-grey Percherons lent by the Elsenburg College of Agriculture at Stellenbosch when attached to a replica of van der Stel's coach which was being used in the film.

(ii) The house was packed, many in the audience being in Voortrekker dress. The newly-appointed Minister of Railways and Harbours, Senator A.P.J. Fourie, received the guests who included the Governor-General, Sir Patrick Duncan and Lady Duncan; the Deputy Prime Minister, General Smuts; members of the Cabinet; the High Commissioner for Great Britain, Sir William Clark; and many diplomatic and consular representatives. Mr Albert Kuit, Chief Railway Commissioner and a representative of the Voortrekker Monument Committee (he had been actively interested in the production of the film) welcomed the guests from the stage in a speech in which he expressed gratitude to the government of Portuguese East Africa and to the Transvaal Chamber of Mines for assistance and which he concluded with - "I trust that you, as representatives of the general public, will, apart from the publicity propaganda aspect or any possible defect at the initial presentation of this film, accept it as a contribution by your State Railways towards the success of our great national centenary

in Pretoria. The English Press, while chronicling the occasion, made little comment on the film itself. The Afrikaans Press however accorded it rapturous praise, Die Vaderland pronouncing it a "magtige faktor in ons nasiebou"(49) The Forum granted it praise qualified by comment on the fact that the film had failed to justify its purpose - attempting too much, it presented merely "a series of numerous disjointed impressions....there is too much occasion for interest and too little opportunity to nail it down..If "Die Bou van 'n Nasie" fails in its greater purpose of depicting the steady growth of a disunited country towards nationhood, it unqualifiedly succeeds in presenting certain aspects of that growth. The description of so vast a subject cannot be compressed within two hours and even were the attempt made, only the most inspired direction could safely negotiate difficult stretches (the symbolical treatment of the Boer War is so banal as to make one wish it had been omitted..."(50)

On the 19th December, the English version was first shown at a private preview for the Press and others held at Broadcast House in Johannesburg. Neither The Star, Rand Daily Mail nor Daily Express attempted candid criticism. Only the Sunday Times introduced a note of doubt into the extravagant praise which had hitherto acclaimed the film. In an article (51) startlingly headed "TREK FILM IS BAD PUBLICITY FOR S.A. - MYSTERY OF S.A.R.", "Gadabout" (J.Langley Levy, editor of the Sunday Times) scathingly criticised the film on several points (i) and

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celebrations and as an expression of our national spirit which is bound to spread its influence far beyond the boundaries of our beloved fatherland, South Africa."

(1) "One has no idea", he stated, "of what the scenario was like in its original form; but, as screened at Broadcast House, it has very few bouquets to throw in the direction of Great Britain. England, in a nebulous sort of way, is the "villain of the piece" and although there may be some historical authority for British shortcomings, it is scarcely meet that a Fusionist Government, asking for the English-speaking support, should dig so industriously in the graveyard of the past, particularly in the face of all that British enterprise and British magnanimity have done to make the Union of South Africa a concrete fact.....The showing of the film abroad - it takes two hours to run through - will not be likely to attract many visitors to a country, the nationhood of which had so disturbed a genesis. It seems to me that only one section of the community will derive any gratification from the exhibition of "They Built a Nation". From the point of view of Railways and Harbours publicity a half dozen scenic films would prove much more efficacious and would have cost the country considerably less."

stressed the fact that the cost of production was rumoured to be "anything up to £80,000". A week later, the Sunday Times (52)published a sub-leader under the title ""HIDDEN HAND" BEHIND TREK FILM ?" in which inter alia it demanded "Is the S.A.R. Travel and Publicity Department publicly shouldering the responsibility for the film in order to "cover up" a "hidden hand" in Pretoria ?....What do those who authorised the production - whoever they are - intend to do. with a film that "plays" for more than two hours ? Where will it be exhibited ?...Does the Government intend to build cinemas to show the film ? If not, how is it to be shown ? Is there any chance of selling the production or even giving it away to overseas exhibitors ? If it is not to be shown, what excuse have those responsible for authorisin the production to offer for making it ?" By now rumour was rife in film and Press circles. The unfavourable impression which the film had caused in all but Afrikaner quarters prompted scores of enquiries as to why public money had been squandered on an enterprise which(i) served neither a publicity nor a propaganda purpose - whose effect in fact, was directly opposed to its avowed purpose in that it fostered disunion and encouraged the racial sentiments of the past.

(i) Meanwhile the film was privately shown to an audience of members of Parliament and their wives in Cape Town early in 1939. Discontent among the general public which, despite the staging of th Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations, had not yet been given an opportunity to see the film, was heightened by the publication of the annual report of the Controller and Auditor-General, Mr H.P. Smit, on the railway accounts of the financial year 1937-1938. This revealed than when the production of the film was approved in November 1935, the Railway Administration had not estimated th total cost (see Page 473), though it was then considered that the film would be completed within twelve months. From November 1935 until March 1938, expenditure amounted to £38,407 and by the middle of October 1938, had amounted to £49,558. The film was the xincomplete and the final cost was estimated to be well in excess of £50,000.(53)

This intelligence provoked the wildest speculation as to how the money had been spent and profound resentment at the Railways' apparently abandonned method of administering public funds. The matter was brought to a head when in February 1939, Mr H.A. Tothill (United Party member for Bezuidenhout) asked the Minister of Railways (Senator A.P.J.Fourie) fourteen questions dealing with the film. The Minister stated that though the original estimated cost of the film had been £36,585, contemporaneously the cost amounted to £64,000. Many of Mr Tothill's questions were expressions of the rumours concerning the manner in which the expenditure had been incurred (notably through extravagance on th part of the production staff); but the Minister was able successfully to answer them. His replies however failed to satisfy the Sunday Times which demanded the appointment of a Select Committee.

In March (still before the film had been publicly shown), Mr Tothill returned to the attack and asked the Minister twenty seve questions anent "They Built a Nation" and other Railway film productions. It had become imperative to discount the suspicion that the film had been actuated by a "hidden hand" in Pretoria as powerful Afrikaner propaganda and fathered on the Railways as publicity. The Minister denied the charge and also the suggestion

Not until Empire Day (24th May) 1939 was "Die Bou van 'n Nasie - Building a Nation" (as the English version was now called) first publicly shown. More than five months had elapsed since its first private showing and the Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations were themselves but a memory. Opening at the Empire Theatre in Johannesburg, the two versions were shown at alternate performances by African Theatres with whom the Railway Administration had at length succeeded in signing a contract of distribution and exhibition. This time the Press did not withold its criticism, both The Star and the Rand Daily Mail (54) emphasising the omissions which vitiated the concept of nation-building and which rendered the film unjustly emphatic in certain directions (a notable omission was the part played by the Bantu). Die Transvaler on the other hand, made great capital of precisely this disproportionate emphasis and in a leading article written with fervent enthusiasm, stated (55) - "Niemand wat die rolprent aanvoelend aanskou, kan weggaan sonder 'n diepe indruk dat daardie selfde pad van Suid Afrika wat ten dele so roerend uitgebeeld is, nog steeds voortloop na sy onverbiddelike einde : die vrye republiek van Suid Afrika."

"Building a Nation" was first shown in Cape Town at the Alhambra on the 28th May 1939. The Cape Argus gave it praise qualified by mention of its omissions; but the Cape Times attacked it with honesty and forthrightness.(i) There immediately followed voluminous correspondence in the English Press roundly and bitterly condemning the film. By now it had become apparent (ii) that the Afrikaans version

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that the production had cost £80,000. Other of Mr Tothill's questions were countered with "there is nothing on record...." By now the film was enveloped in a most unfortunate atmosphere of mystery, resentment and suspicion.

(i) "There is something distasteful",said the Cape Times (56),"about the Blood River scenes and their revival of old unhappiness. Too much space is given up to battles and massacres and much too litt to the great work of building up a free republic in the Transvaal The one-sidedness of the film is most apparent in its handling of some of the historical passages, its perfunctory treatment of Rhodes and Milner and its silence about the part played by South Africans of British descent in the building up of the nation. Nor is the acting for the most part anything but uninspired; except for Mr Dick Cruickshank's sensitive and at time, extremely moving portrayal of President Kruger, there is hardly a recognisable character."

(ii) Special session for Afrikaans-speaking school-children were distinguished by ear-splitting applause for the Voortrekkers, Andries Pretorius, Paul Kruger and the defeat of the Zulus at Blood River while deafening boos and hisses greeted Rhodes, fleeting glimpses of British soldiers, etc.

"Die Bou van 'n Nasie" had become a powerful propaganda instrument with which to whip the Afrikaner community (already emotionalised by the Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations) into further stages of intense nationalism inimical to Fusionist ideal. Meanwhile academic controversy in the columns of The Forum (i) continued and on the 8th June 1939, The Star, previously non-commital in its reviews, published a double-column "critical consideration of "Building a Nation"" written by "A Follower of the Films". Meticulously systematic in his criticism, the writer baldly stated that ""Building a Nation" is not genuinely a historical film. It is a story of the historical development of South Africa told from an entirely Afrikaans angle". Other criticial considerations were published elsewhere (ii) and, so far from fading for public interest, "Building a Nation" continued to provoke resentment in the English-speaking community. In August 1939, the recently-formed Union of English-speaking South Africans at Cape Town adopted a resolution deploring "the inadequate representation of the English-speaking section of the country in the film" and maintaining that it should be withdrawn until rendered historically correct "by due acknowledgement to the great part played by the English-speaking people in the building of South Africa".(57) This provoked further voluminous correspondence to the Press and on the 19th August, it was announced that the Union of English-speaking South Africans had telegraphed the Prime Minister (General Hertzog) as follows (58) - "At a public meeting of the Union of English-speaking South Africans held in Cape Town on August 14, the following resolution was unanimously adopted - "This meeting deplores the inadequate representation of the English-speaking section of the country in the film "Building a Nation" and maintains that the film

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(i) Professor T.J. Haarhoff, a well known apostle of tolerance and coöperation, persistently defended the film against attack, claiming that it "is conceived in the spirit of coöperation, avoids partisan sentiment and indicates the main factors that have gone into the making of South Africa. It dwells on the way in which the English colonists and the Afrikaners suffered and toiled together on the frontiers in the task of opening up the country. It points the way to a strong and united South Africa built on the experience of the past. It has the interest of growth and evolution ."(59) Contradictory correspondence (60) pointed out that in its unbalanced emphasis, the film would undoubtedly have political consequences; but this too was denied (although later substantiated).

(ii) In July, the South African Pictorial published a further account which stated inter alia that "filmically, "Building a Nation" is lengthily, ponderously impressive" while the emphasis on the Zulu conflict made "the preceding and succeeding portions appear episodic, charade-like".(61)

should be withdrawn until rendered historically correct by due acknowledgement of the great part played by English-speaking people in the building of South Africa". "We ask the Government's consideration of the above request and the favour of an early reply."

The outbreak of war stifled the profound feelings of resentment on the one hand and elation on the other which the film had unquestionably aroused and which threatened to develop into more than an academic controversy. By that time, Afrikaner enthusiasm had been deviated to "'N Nasie hou Koers", the amateur film of the Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations which was first shown, complete with commentary, a month before the outbreak of war and which continued the emotionalising effect which "Die Bou van 'n Nasie" had begun. The latter continued to be shown during 1940 (i) but both versions of the film were subsequently completely withdrawn from exhibition of any kind.(ii)

Government Departments - Department of Agriculture(62)

The Department of Agriculture first commissioned the production of films during 1928-1929 when African Film Productions Ltd made seven silent 35mm films dealing with sheep, poultry, dairy stock and maize farming and the value of fertilising.(iii) These films were supervised by Mr.G.W. Klerck, editor of "Farming in South Africa" and other government publications, and were based on the principle of contrasting good and bad farming methods. They created a great deal of interest at the time of their first release; but, so far from pursuing an active policy of visual instruction, no further films were produced until 1935-1936 when a further series of films was made by African Film Productions to the department's order for showing at the Empire Exhibition held in

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(i) During 1940, the Afrikaans version was still being shown in the smaller dorps of the platteland where it continued to arouse great enthusiasm - "Die prent", said Die Transvaler (63)when recording one of these occasions, "het groot byval gevind afgesien van minderwardige haakplekkies".

(ii) In February 1940, Mr Tothill resumed his enquiries in the House and asked the Minister of Railways (now Mr. C. Sturrock) how much the film had cost. The reply was £68,025 and, in reply to Mr Serfontein (Herenigde member for Boschof) Mr Sturrock further stated that he did not know whether it was still being shown. He added that the total amount received from African Theatres for the exhibition of the film was £2,775.(64)

(iii) These films were entitled "When Poultry Succeeds", "The Right Way with Sheep", "The Magic of Bonemeal", "Cattle and Contentment", "The Maize Farmer", "From Milk to Money" and "The Farmer's Friend".

Johannesburg.(i) These films were shown in the lecture halls of Agricultural Colleges, at farmers' meetings, etc by the lecturers, field officer, extension officers and other officials attached to the department. No further use was made of films in the period under review despite persistent tribute to their value.(ii)

In connection with experiments on the habits of termites, the Division of Entomology made use of films for comparative observational purposes but not for exhibition.

Government Departments - Department of Mines and Industries

The department of Mines and Industries has given active assistance in the production of several films notably "Golden Harvest of the Witersrand" (iii); but in 1937, it was proposed that it should actually sponsor the production of six films dealing with the mining of base metals. These films were to deal with copper, asbestos, chrome, corundum, iron and steel, and manganese; but only one was made. This was produced by African Film Productions largely at Postmasburg in the Cape and dealt with manganese. The department's larger scheme of publicising the base metal industry was never realised.

Government Departments - Department of Labour

The department of Labour did not commission the making of films; but Juvenile Affairs Boards working under it were interested in their use for some years. The Witwatersrand Juvenile Affairs Board was particularly active in this reppect and, apart from showing imported films on vocational guidance, In 1926 commissioned African Film Productions to make a "short" depicting the evils of unemployment. In December it was privately shown at Cape Town to the Minister of Labour, Mr. T. Boydell; the Minister of Defence, Colonel Cresswell; and officials of the Department of Labour before being incorporated in the "African Mirror". The film aroused great interest and in later years, was frequently re-issued at the request of the Witwatersrand Board.

(i) Available in 35mm and 16mm, these films dealt with "Agricultural Education and Extension", "Cattle Ranching", "Sheep and Wool", "Wheat and Maize", "Dairying", "Veterinary Services", "Forest Management", "Irrigation", "Deciduous Fruits", "Viticulture", "Stellenbosch", "University of Pretoria" and "Citrus Culture".

(ii) Early in 1939, the department issued a bulletin dealing with soil erosion which advocated the use of propaganda sound films in attacking the problem; but none was produced.

(iii) see Page 443

Government Departments - Department of Public Health

The department of Public Health directly commissioned no films but was associated with their production by other bodies.(i)

Government Departments - Department of Education

The department of Education included the National Bureau of Educational and Social Research to which was attached the Film Divisic and National Film Library supplying films to educational and social bodies. On rare occasions, such as the Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations, the newly-constituted Film Division itself filmed events of educational importance. Its initial policy however was directed more towards the assistance of amateur cinematographers when taking films of historical or educational value. In this manner, the Division sponsored the production of several I6mm films dealing with contemporary events or social problems produced by amateurs, which it subsequently circulated for educational exhibition.

Government Departments - Department of the Interior

The Bureau of Information attached to the Department of the Interior commissioned African Film Productions to make "Fighters of the Veld" (ii) and also employed a newsreel-cameramen to cover the activities of Union Troops in East Africa.(iii)

Government Departments - Department of Defence

The department of Defence did not commission the production of films until after the outbreak of the Second World War. Towards the end of I940, it was associated with the production of a I6mm film "They Serve to Save" designed to recruit for the South African Medical Corps and made by Harold Weaver under the direction of Captain W.P. Steenkamp. Subsequently the department instituted its own Film Production Unit (under the command of Harold Weaver) for the making of military instructional and other films.

Government Departments - Department of Justice : S.A. Police

In I9I6, African Film Productions made a two-reel subject for the South African Police entitled "The Making of a South African Policeman". The S.A.P. themselves produced films of two kinds,usually

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(i)For instance, African Film Productions' film on "Bilharzia" made under the direction of Dr Annie Porter of the Witwatersrand Medical Research Institute in I925; "The Two Brothers" made by A.F.P. for the South African Red Cross Society in I940; etc etc.

(ii) see Page 368

(iii) His material was subsequently edited into two shorts entitled "With the Springboks Up North" and "With General Smuts Up North"

in 16mm e of sports, parades, physical training displays, etc fo record (not instructional) purposes; and of the circumstances of crimes for the Medico-Legal Laboratories.

Union Unity Fund

The Truth Legion of the Union Unity Fund (an organisation formed shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War to combat subversive propaganda) commissioned African Film Productions to make "Noordwarts", an Afrikaans propaganda talkie film (the first of its kind) under the co-direction and editing of Joseph Albrecht and Henry Cornelius in which the well-known Afrikaans actress Lydia Lindeque took part.(i) At the end of the year, the Truth Legion commissioned Leon Schauder and Henry Cornelius to write, direct and produce an English propaganda talkie some of which was set in the theatre of war in the north.(ii)These films were shown by special touring vans.

Commercial Firms (64)

The sponsoring of film production by commercial firms dates from early in the history of the South African cinema though the precise occasions are now impossible to trace. It is significant however that at the Industrial Exhibition held in Cape Town in 1914, a number of films were shown which had been made at the behest of commercial firms or with their coöperation (i.e. "The Cape Times Printing Works" etc). Subsequently other exhibitions, particularly the British Empire Exhibition held at Wembley, England in 1925-25 and the Empire Exhibitionxxx at Johannesburg in 1936, stimulated such production which was

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(i) see Page 446
This film, which was first shown in November 1940, was scathingly criticised by Die Transvaler (65) in a leader in which it said "Ons praat maar nie...van die skaamte wat Afrikaanse spelers soos Lydia Lindeque en Willie Beckman behoort te vervul dat hulle hulle se laat gebruik nie. Dis genoeg om te wys die skaamloosheid van die hele propaganda...." an attack which was vehemently answered by A.F. van der Spuy, organiser of the Truth Legion, in Die Volk (66) The film however powerfully implemented its purpose.

(ii) The Union Unity Truth Legion subsequently produced a large number of films, many of which were made by African Film Productions Ltd.

of very varied origin.(1) In some cases in latter years, the South African advertising Contractors commissioned African Film Productions to make I6mm films for commercial clients; but by far the greater

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(1) The following are somecommercial firms which have commissioned the production of films :
The Union Castle Mail Steamship Company - as early as I908, this company sponsored the production of travelogues, notably "Sunny Madeira" made by Charles Urban's cameramen. Though the company did not actually commission the production of films until about I925, it gave every facility to official cinemameramen or production units which were either filming South African sea routes or Union scenery. In I925, the company commissioned M.A. Wetherell of Hero Films Ltd (see Page 457 (ii)) to make a publicity film which was circulated throughout South Africa, Rhodesia and East Africa. In I93I, it coöperated with the Cape Peninsula Publicity Association in African Film Productions' production of "The Cape of Good Hope" and in I936 it commissioned Merele Lavoy to film the England-South Africa sea route for showing at the Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg. In I937, the Caumont-British production unit for the filming of local scenes for "King Solomon's Mines" filmed sequences at sea on behalf of the company. Furthermore the company has sponsored amateur production of scnic subjects in I6mm in one or two cases, these films being shown semiprivately in South Africa with great success.
Coöperative Winegrowers Association of South Africa (K.W.V.) At the order of this company, the South African Advertising Contractors commissioned A.F.P. in I936 to make "The Romance of the Grape" in I6mm monochrome and colour; and in I938 "Wine Lands of South Afric in I6mm monochrome and colour, both films approximating to 450 feet in length.
South African Coöperative Deciduous Fruit Exchange - commissioned M.A. Wetherell of Travel and Documentary Films Ltd of London to make "The Deciduous Fruit Industry of South Africa" in colour in I938. This film was produced primarily for advertising purposes among members of the trade in Great Britain. The Exchange was also associated with the Union Department of Agriculture's production in I930 of a film dealing with the deciduous fruit industry made by African Film Productions (see Page 48I (i))
Electricity Supply Commission (Escom) commissioned Merle Lavoy to produce "Electricity - Spirit of Progress" in I939 under the direction of Geoffrey le Mare, Publicity Officer to the Commission 3,500 feet in length, this film was processed in I6mm and 35mm editions by George Humphries & Co. In London and was designed to show to both local and overseas audiences the extent of the Commission's achievements during the sixteen years of its existenc
Iron and Steel Industrial Corporation (Iscor) - commissioned African Film Productions in I934 to film "The Story of African Steel", a filmic survey of the industries and products involved.
United Tobacco Companies commissioned African Film Productions to make two subjects, "Leaf to Lip" and "The Story behind your Smoke" for inclusion in their cinemagazine "Our Land" in I934 and I936 (see Page 443 (i)) In I938, the companies sponsored the production by A.F.P. of "Training Young Manhood", a non-advertising film dealing with the training of the Special Service Battalion.
Tea Market Expansion Bureau produced I6mm monochrome and colour films advertising the benefits of drinking tea for the propagandising of natives by mobile van.
Southern Life Association of Africa commissioned its Public Relations Officer, L. Lewis (see Page 470 (i)) to make a propagand-film in I6mm called "The Two Brothers" on a contrastive basis.
Glenton & Mitchell in I93I commissioned A.F.P. to make the first South African talkie advertisement (a distinction shared with the below-mentioned firm) dealing with Joko Tea.
Vacuum Oil Co. commissioned A.F.P. to make the first South African talkie advertisement (a distinction shared with the abovementioned firm) dealing with Pegasus petrol.

volume of film advertising was done firstly by Alexander Films Ltd founded in 1938 through "filmlets" (innumerable commercial firms commissioned their production in lengths ranging from 15 seconds upwards, the completed filmlets being shown before cinema performances and during the interval at Twentieth Century-Fox cinemas); and secondly, by "Filmlets Ltd" which from December 1940 onwards commissioned African Film Productions Ltd to make similar film advertisements.

Publicity Associations

Publicity associations throughout the Union had sponsored the production of local films almost since the inception of the industry. On various occasions such as the Wembley Empire Exhibition in 1924-25 and the Johannesburg Exhibition in 1936, publicity films whose production was sponsored by these associations were shown in large numbers. On other occasions, special films were made either at the order of associations or as the result of coöperative effort in which the association bore part of the cost of production.(i) Differing from other such bodies, the Cape Peninsula Publicity Association augmented its sponsoring of various productions by making its own films which were taken in 16mm monochrome and colour by the assistant director, J.P. de Smidt.(ii) These films were interchanged with overseas publicity associations and were extensively lent to passenger-liners travelling the Cape route.

Transvaal Chamber of Mines (68)

The Transvaal Chamber of Mines and its associated organisations (particularly the Prevention of Accidents Committee of the Rand Mutual Assurance Company and the Native Recruiting Corporation) were also interested in the production of films almost from the inception of the local industry. The Chamber sponsored the production of safety-

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(i) Relative cases are a film made for the Maritzburg Town Council by African Film Productions in 1920; a film made for the Boksburg Town Council by Kinemas in 1931; and a film of Durban - a coöperative enterprise - made by A.F.P. in 1930 (see Page 439).
Prior to the outbreak of war in 1939, the Transvaal Publicity Association had sanctioned the expense of producing a film dealing with the Kruger National Park.(69)

(ii) They included the following :
"Cape Town : A Tavern of the Ocean" in monochrome, produced 1936;
"Glimpses of the Garden Route" in monochrome, produced in 1936,
"Fruits of the Cape", in monochrome, produced in 1936,
"Wild Flowers of the Cape of Good Hope", in colour, produced 1937,
"Young South Africa in Training for the Sea", in monochrome produced in 1939 and dealing with the training-ship "General Botha",
"Cape Town : Gateway to a Continent" in colour, produced in 1940.

first, labour-recruiting, technical and publicity films.(1)

Municipalities.(30)

The production of films by various municipal departments throughout the Union was erratically conducted, the most active being municipal

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(1) They include the following :
Safety-First Films (all the below-mentioned films are silent except where otherwise stated)
"The Dust that Kills" made by A.F.P. in 1921 under the director of Dr A.J. Orenstein (see Page 435) and dealing with the prevention of miners' phthisis;
"The Golden Harvest of the Union" produced in the early twenties for the prevention of the spread of disease;
"A Rand Miner's Day" produced in 1931 and describing the duties of a miner;
"Fire is a Bad Master";
"Native First Aid" in both silent and sound versions;
"Paying the Price";
"Safety First in Every-day Life" in six short "trailers";
"Safety-First on the Mines" in several series;
"Dynamite - A Mighty Force" produced in 1926 in coöperation with African Explosives and Industries Ltd;
These films were used by the Prevention of Accidents Committee of the Rand Mutual Assurance Company.
Labour-Recruiting Films
The organisations concerned are the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association and the Native Recruiting Corporation, the latter being more active in film production.
"W.N.L.A. in Portuguese East Africa" produced in 1920 by A.F.P.;
"From Red Blanket to Civilisation", a remarkable documentary made by A.F.P. in 1925 under the direction of Mr H.M.Taberer, Native Labour Adviser to the Chamber of Mines. Owing to his unique position with the natives (by whom he was loved and respected), Taberer was able to arrange the filming of the some of the most closely-guarded ceremonials of the Transkeian natives. The cameraman was Carrick who was able to film a Fingo and a Xosa wedding, initiation ceremonies, mission stations, labour recruiting depots and finally native work on the mines. The film was produced primarily for exhibition at the Wembley Exhibition but was subsequently shown to thousands of natives throughout the Union. A copy was presented to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, London; and in December 1928, the film was shown at the International Labour Office, Geneva (7♦) (Taberer died of pneumonia in June 1932, his death being universally regretted.)
Both the above films had Portuguese captions
"From Kraal to Mine", a series of films made in various areas by A.F.P., the production beginning in 1930, and embracing Natal and Zululand, Ciskei, Basutoland, Pondoland and the Northern Transvaal. Supplied with Chinyanja titles, the Natal and Zululand film was also used in Nyasaland.
Technical
"Ball Milling"
(Several other such films used for instructional purposes were imported by the Chamber from America. The whole technical process of gold mining was embodied in "Golden Harvest" - see below)
Publicity
"The Magic of Gold" produced in 1923 by A.F.P. (see Page 437);
"Golden Harvest of the Witwatersrand" produced in 1935 by A.F.P. (see Page 443);
"They Built a Nation - Die Bou van 'n Nasie" produced in 1937-38 by A.F.P. (see Page 473 et seq..);
"Manganese" produced by A.F.P. in 1938 (see Page 481);
"Coal Mines of the Transvaal" produced in association with the Transvaal Coal Owners Association.
In all the above-mentioned films, the Transvaal Chamber of Mines gave active assistance.

Health Departments. In 1932 for instance, the Durban Municipal Health Department commissioned Lynn Acutt to make a number of films (i) for propaganda purposes and similarly the Child Welfare Department of the Cape Town Municipality commissioned L.Lewis (ii) to make a film on obstetrical subjects for coloured midwives.(iii) The Traffic Departments of various municipalities utilised imported films for propaganda purposes but few sponsored their production. In 1931, the Johannesburg Traffic Department assisted both Kinemas and African Film Productions to make such films (iv) in a competitive commercial enterprise and on other occasions, this department either commissioned or sponsored the production of safety-first films. Such desultory enterprise characterised the production of films by municipal departments but a progressive step was taken in 1939 when the Johannesburg Municipal Council authorised the expenditure necessary to equip a municipal photographer and cinematographer. This official made 16mm films for publicity and propaganda purposes for several municipal departments with much success (v)

Social Welfare Organisations

The use of films for propaganda purposes was practiced by social welfare organisations for many years but the majority were imported

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(i) These included :
"The Tiger Mosquito" emphasising combative measures;
"Anti-Plague"
"Town Cleansing"
"South African Snakes and Snake-Bite Treatment" produced at the
"Durban's Water Supply" Snake Park, Port Elizabeth
"Health Culture"embbdying the Margaret Morris movement and other
"Durban's Milk Supply" physical culture exercises
"The Prophet Shembe" dealing with a native religious sect
"Child Welfare"
Midwifery Film

(ii) See Page 470 (i)

(iii) In connection with Public Health, an impressive film was made for Councillor D.H. Epstein by J. Higgins (subsequently appointed Municipal Photographer) of the Johannesburg slums. Its value in presenting the problem and obviating extensive tours of inspection by municipal councillors was much appreciated.

(iv) See Page 441

(v) The initial productions of the Johannesburg Municipal Photographer were :
Public Library : "Travelling Library or Booknobile" - a film which aroused great interest in other municipal council.
Parks Department : "Zoological Gardens", 1,200 feet, colour, silent
"The Wilds", 700 feet, colour, silent;
"Parks and Children's Playgrounds", 400 feet
Traffic Department : "Safety-First Film" colour, silent.
City Engineers Department : "First Aid Film"
Public Health Department :"Slums"

from England and America. In 1939 however, the South African Red Cross Society commissioned African Film Productions Ltd to make "The Two Brothers", a lengthy silent film for native consumption dealing with the causes, incidence and prevention of syphilis.(i) The society also commissioned the making of one or two other films such as a short film of Red Cross work at the Voortrekker Centenary Celebrations in 1938 made by Verâe Lavoy, and planned the production of others.

The Safety-First Associations established in various centres in the Union were also actively interested in film production. In 1937, the Johannesburg branch commissioned African Film Productions to make "Travelling about Town" demonstrating the dangers of traffic to careless pedestrians and drivers.(ii)

Animal Welfare Organisations

Animal welfare societies continuously either commissioned or sponsored film production for propaganda purposes. Examples are the colour film of the Kruger National Park produced in 1939 by Harold Weaver for the Wild Life Protection Society of South Africa; "They Only Need to be Told" produced by L. Lewis (iii) for the Animal Welfare Society; various sequences in the "African Mirror" made at the expense of African Film Productions Ltd for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; etc.

Miscellaneous

Apart from the above-mentioned enterprises which represent established sponsors of film production, there were several other sources of films which, since they represent only production intermittently (iv) pursued, are treated elsewhere under the heading of "Non-Commercial Exhibition".

(i) See Page 445

(ii) See Page 445

(iii) See Page 470 (i)

(iv) For instance, the film dealing with physical culture produced for Dr Jokl by African Film Productions Ltd, the films produced to illustrate points in legal prosecutions and enquiries, the films produced by the Herenigde Party for political purposes, etc etc.

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(2) The Star - 2nd August 1913

(3) Cape Times - 28th July 1913

(4) Cape Times - 20th April 1918

(5) The Star - 20th April 1916

(6) Cape Times - 15th December 1916

(7) Daily Express - 15th December 1937

(8) Rand Daily Mail - 3rd December 1938

(9) Cape Times - 22nd February 1918

(10) The Star - 17th May 1919

(11) Sunday Times - 24th March 1940

(12) Cape Argus - 8th October 1938

(13) Cape Times - 30th December 1924

(14) The Star - 24th April 1931

(15) The Star - 8th March 1933

(16) "Hidden Africa" - Captain Attilio Gatti

(17) "I Married Adventure" - Osa Martin-Johnson

(18) "Toto of the Congo" - Cherry Kearton
"In the Land of the Lion" - Cherry Kearton
"The Animals came to Drink" - Cherry Kearton (also in Afrikaans)
etc etc

(19) "The Voice of the Wild" - S. Kirkland : Magazine Article in The Star - 6th December 1930

(20) "Celluloid Safari" - Stirling and Gillespie

(21) "The Man who invented the Travelogue" - J.D. Bold : Magazine Article in the Cape Argus - 12th June 1937

(22) "Presenting South Africa to the World's Cinema Audiences" - The Story of Leon Schauder" - Frank W. Rostron : The Outspan - 12th June 1937

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(37) Page I60 - "Thirty Thousand Miles for the Films" - Natalie Barkas

(38) Pages246-256 "Pagan Tapestry" - Bertha Slosberg

(39) Cape Argus - I2th August I939

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(4I) Eastern Province Herald - 7th October I940
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(45) The Star - 8th February I939

(46) The Star - I6th February I940

(47) Sunday Express - 8th May I938

(48) The Star - 25th February I938

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(50) The Forum - I7th December I938

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(52) Sunday Times - Ist January I939

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(54) The Star - 25th May I939
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(55) Die Transvaler - 26th May I939

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(59) The Forum - 3rd June I939

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CHAPTER XVI

The History of Non-Commercial Exhibition of Films in South Africa

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The History of Non-Commercial Exhibition of Films in South Africa

(The differentiation implied by "non-Commercial exhibition" is very loose and is intended to imply exhibition of films other than in established commercial cinemas. On the other hand, African Consolidated Films I6mm Department, for instance, purveyed entertainment films for what might be termed "commercial exhibition" as against "educational" or "instructional" or "propaganda" exhibition, audiences nonetheless remaining private.)

EDUCATIONAL

The educational use of the cinema in South Africa has the longest and most desultory history in the non-commercial exhibition of films. It began in in I897 when Dr.Thomas Muir, Superintendent-General of Education of the Cape Colony, saw in the flickery, blurred "animated photographs"projected by the Zenomettascope a potent means of visual education (i) and encouraged school-children to attend its shows. The vulgarity and sensationalism which subsequently pervaded the cinema and finally became its outstanding characteristics, dissipated his faith in the educational value of films and many years were to pass before it could seriously be considered.

During that time, a few isolated attempts were made the salvage the cinema's good name from the odium with which it was almost universally regarded. "Educational Matinées" were promoted by one or two cinemas (notably the Union Bioscope in the Dutch Reformed Church Hall in Cape Town in I9I0); but all proved a failure. The institution of a Pathé Agency in Cape Town towards the end of I9II did much to encourage the educational showing of films but though the quality of programmes was considerably improved, it proved impossible to organise regular exhibitions for the benefit of school children. Meanwhile the outcry against the cinema's pernicious effects on children increased an distracted attention from the possibility of classroom use of films.

It was not until the formation of the Bioscope Advisory Committ in Cape Town in April I9I3 that the whole problem of the educational use of films for schoolchildren (as apart from general exhibition) was approached on an organised basis. The supply of proper programmes to children in commercial cinemas was one of the Committee's main concerns and in May I9I3, it made the first attempt to institute regular matinees of specially selected films for children.(ii) With the coöp-

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(i) See Page 33 (iii)

(ii) See Page 393

eration of J.H. Stodel and F. Potts, owners of the Alhambra Bioscope in Cape Town, the first of these matinees was given but like all preceding and succeeding attempts, they proved unsuccessful through the failure to distinguish between the "bioscope" as a means of entertainment and the film as a means of education. Despite the efforts of the Pathé Agency in Cape Town which in January 1913 had shown medical instructional films to an audience of doctors, the idea of incorporating the use of films into the system of education was neither developed nor indeed seriously mooted.

In view of the deleterious quality of current films, this was not surprising. After the outbreak of the Great War, the quality of cinema programmes steadily deteriorated, eventually sinking to unprecedented depths of sordidness and depravity. Persistent protests against its pernicious effects on the enormous numbers of children which now constituted a great proportion of its audiences produced no result beyond an abortive revival on the part of African Theatres of the old expedient of "School Matinées" which were instituted at the Bijou in Johannesburg and elsewhere in 1917. The movement continued to involve the haphazard showing of "non-pernicious" films to children and the incorporation of film instruction into the educational system continued to receive little or no attention.(1)

This was largely due to public preoccupation with the current commercial which hardly showed signs of educational value, the comparative ignorance of classroom use of films and, more important, the cost of the necessary equipment which was patently out of the reach of the existing authorities. In 1921 however, an agent for school projectors arrived in the Union and gave demonstrations to the Provincial educational authorities with the result that a small number of projectors were purchased for use in schools particularly at the Cape. This marked the first attempt to utilise films in the educational system but owing to the cost of projectors, the lack of a local film library from which school programmes might be drawn, the fact that teachers were not instructed in the proper use of films and many other reasons, the equipment of more schools did not continue to any appreciable degree.

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(1) Occasionally Municipal Councils suggested the use of Town Halls for the staging of "Educational Bioscope Displays" for school children but none of these proposals came to fruition. They were inspired largely by a desire to make halls rent-producing.

The projectors were mostly "Pathescopes" and African Films Ltd frequently announced their readiness to import from America the films necessary for educational use.(i)

During 1923, the Imperial Education Conference held in London devoted considerable attention to the subject and desultory progress was subsequently made in the four provinces of the Union. It was obvious however that development of the idea would only be possible through action by Central Government authority; but, despite repeated pleas very little was done.

During 1929, the Union Department of Education established a National Bureau of Education which acted as a clearing-house for information and other matters and which, in 1934, was extended in scope to cover Social Research. The director of the National Bureau of Educational and Social Research was Dr E.G. Malherbe (ii) who in July 1934, organised a meeting of the New Educational Fellowship in Johannesburg which was attended by international educational authorities such as Dewey, Malinowski, Bovet and others. The proceedings of this conference together with the papers that were read and published served to attract valuable publicity to the classroom use of films. At the same time, repeated representations were being made to the Union Government by the League of Nations Committee on Intellectual Coöperat- with a view to developing and controlling the use of the film as a cultural and educational force in national and international life. The matter was referred to the South African Committee of Intellectual Coöperation under the chairmanship of the Minister of Education and a sub-committee was constituted to draw up a report on the advisability or otherwise of establishing a Film Institute in South Africa. The members of this sub-committee were Dr E.G. Malherbe (chairman); Professor M.C. Botha, secretary for Education; Dr W. de Vos Malan

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(i) The school at Lydenburg was one of the first to use film instruction enterprisingly but apart from one or two other examples, there was little further development for some years.

(ii) Dr E.G. Malherbe, a graduate of the University of Cape Town, had studied education extensively overseas and particularly in the United States of America where he specialised in the study of the classroom use of films, for some time serving as a member of the selection committee of the famous ERPI schoolefilm production company. Returning to South Africa, he was appointed to a lectureship in education at the University of Cape Town which he resigned to enter the Civil Service as director of the National Bureau of Educational and Social Research. He was the author of "A History of Education in South Africa".

Cape Superintendent-General of Education; Professor J.P. Dalton of the University of the Witwatersrand; Dr Hans Rompel of the Department of the Interior; Mr H. Venn, chairman of the Union Board of Censors; Mr E. Watson, general manager of African Consolidated Films Ltd; and Mr Rene Caprara, general manager of the South African Broadcasting Corporation.

At the same time, the subject was under consideration by the Consultative Committee of all four Provincial Administrations which proposed dealing on a common basis with the use of films and radio in schools. This development ran counter to the proposals which the Central Government intended considering after the submission of its sub-committee's report.(1)

In November 1935, the sub-committee submitted to the Minister of Education a report (I) in which the functions of the proposed Film Institute were formulated as follows :

(i) to act as a clearing-house for information on all matters affecting films at home and abroad, particularly as regards education and general culture;
(ii) to influence public opinion to appreciate the value of films as entertainment and instruction;
(iii) to advise educational institutions and government departments concerned with films and other organisations and persons in films and apparatus;
(iv) to link up the film trade and the cultural and educational interests in the country;
(v) to encourage research into the various uses of the film;
(vi) to establish a central library to undertake the collection, care and distribution of educational films and to maintain a descriptive catalogue of such films. Schools and colleges would be enabled to borrow films in regular rotation by paying a small subscription to cover transport expenses and depreciation;
(vii) to certify films as educational, cultural or scientific.

While this report was being considered by the Union Department of Education, the Provincial Consultative Committee sitting in Cape Town in February 1935, having dealt with the problem of radio in schools, was considering the institution of a Film Distribution Bureau. These proposals however were unified in the decision of the Department of Education to institute a Film Division under the National Bureau of Educational and Social Research and to appoint an officer-in-charge with a technical assistant. This decision was published in May 1936 at the same time as the vacancies were gazetted.(ii) In the meantime, Messrs African Consol

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(1) In the meantime, further interest in the subject was aroused by the return to South Africa of C.P. de L. Beyers, a school-teacher who had visited the United States to study the classroom use of films and whose address to a meeting of the New Education Fellowship held in Pretoria in June 1935 was widely reported throughout the Union.

(ii) The officer finally appointed was C.P. de L. Beyers and I. Baris as Technical Assistant.

idated Films Ltd had instituted a I6mm Department under the managership of R. Glenn Morton who in March I936 had given demonstrations to Transvaal educational authorities of school projectors and types of schoolroom films. Before the Department of Education's Film Division could be organised or commence a service, this commercial undertaking was already supplying schools.

The Film Division and its Library were organised as quickly as shortage of staff and other difficulties would allow. It was endowed originally with Provincial grants of £300 from the Cape, £300 from the Transvaal and £I00 each from Natal and the Free State, the total of £800 being manifestly inadequate for the services which it was called upon to provide. During I936, this amount was increased to £I,000, the Department of Education contributing a further amount of £300 and paying all additional costs. The operation of the Division was not thought feasible without the advice of a National Film Advisory Board composed of relative educational authorities from every part of the Union, and the assistance of sub-committees coöpted from its membership. This committee met for the first time in October I936 and though its members were appointed for a period of five years, it was possible to hold only one other meeting (in March I939) owing to the high cost of assembling its members. The membership included representation from all commercial film interests and though extensive and interesting discussions were held in which every aspect of the cinema industry as well as the educational field were dealt with (2), the meetings served little purpose beyond an exchange of views and the wider publicising of the film facilities which the Government proposed instituting.

The Film Division came into operation on the I5th April I937 with a membership of 62 and a Library consisting of 650 films, I50 of which had boeh contributed by the Canadian Government. The Department of Education gave financial assistance on a £ for £ basis to schools wishing to purchase projectors which were made available by the Divisio and the Department of Customs agree to the duty-free importation of apparatus and films for educational use. By the end of I937, the staff of the Division had increased to seven, the Library contained I,250 films and there was a mamarkable increased in membership and circulatic

3) During the year, the Division had given its first course of ctures in the classroom uses of films for teachers. The development

of the Division from this stage onwards successfully continued. Cape schools were at first slow to take advantage of its facilities but membership as well as use of the films available, steadily increased. A the same time, African Consolidated Films Ltd developed their I6mm Department and instituted a parallel service on a commercial basis.

In December I938, the membership of the Film Division was 220 which had increased to 349 by September I939. During I938, the Division purchased equipment for re-sounding films in Afrikaans and it also undertook a small amount of production as well as purchasing I6mm print of locally-made films. It was also responsible for the publication of various brochures and the issue of a descriptive catalogue of films in the National Film Library. Membership steadily increased, the Bulk of the first members being Transvaal schools but in time, educational institutions of every kind, as well as cultural, social and other associations, took advantage of the Division's facilities. Despite this increase, the use of films by higher education bodies in South Africa was almost negligible and this field alone remained open for considerable development.

During I940, the Volksbioskope Maatskappy Beperk advertised a supply service of films to schools (1) but the Department of Education' Film Division continued to supply the bulk of the service required and to provide an increased number of films specially sounded in Afrikaans. The policy of the Division was the provision of a film service for educational and cultural institutions of every kind; but this included its encouragement of schools in building up their own Film Libraries of essential and constantly-needed films. Its membership continued to rise and by the end of I940, was between 400 and 500, the staff of the Division having to be increased and its offices enlarged to cope with the increase. The outbreak of war with its attendant difficulties impeded a development which, in the four years of its existence, had been phenomenal. South Africa had been one of the most backward countries in the world in the educational use of films; but four years of strenuous effort on both the Film Division's and African Consolidated Films' side had done much to rehabilitate her status.

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(1) see Page 358

PUBLICITY

National

The publicising of South Africa by means of films was first regularly undertaken by the Publicity and Travel Department of the South African Railways and Harbours(i) which embarked on extensive schemes of production in the early years of the Great War.(ii) The distribution of ~~xxxxxxx~~ South African publicity films to overseas travel organisations, to Union legations, etc was continuously practiced from about 1915 onwards; but equally, perhaps more, valuable were the fiction films and documentary shorts of indigenous background that African Film Productions Ltd succeeded in selling on the overseas market.(iii)

The British Empire Exhibition held at Wembley, England in 1924-25 at which South Africa was well represented, greatly encouraged the movement towards publicity through films which received further impetus through the Imperial Conferences that were subsequently held.(iv) Excellent theorising however failed to produce the necessary financial sponsoring of production and though African Film Productions made several shorts for the S.A.R. & H., an unfulfilled demand continued.

In 1926, the Empire Marketing Board (which had always been and

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(i) The S.A.R. & H's first enterprise was the assistance given to Ekittrel in filming "From the Cape to the Zambezi" in 1910 (see Page 417). During 1912, Leo Weinthal arranged a London Exhibition of South African films (see Page 419) and there were a few other such isolated enterprises before the S.A.R. & H. made a policy of film production.

(ii) see African Film Productions Ltd - Page 422 (ii) et seq..

(iii) "De Voortrekkers" was a notable example - see African Film Productions - Page 421 et seq..

(iv) At the conferences held in London in 1929, considerable attention was devoted to the film industries in various parts of the Commonwealth, Mr Schlesinger submitting a memorandum suggesting their coördination to the special sub-committee convened for the purpose (see Pages ~~xxxxxx~~ 246 (ii)). The "Americanisation" of Commonwealth audiences owing to the predominance of the American industry and the flood of its essentially nationalistic films began to cause serious concern and to prompt the taking of immediate steps. It was thought desirable at once to institute a shheme of mutual publicity among the members of the Commonwealth by means of films; but though many seemingly practicable propositions were mooted, nothing concrete was achieved.

To a large extent, the supervention of the Great Depression caused this inactivity and though South Africa sent several publicity films to the Imperial Economic Conference held in Ottawa, Canada in 1932 (see Page 318), the financial situation continued to militate against the institution of inter-Dominion and colonial film publicity.

continued to be actively interested in film publicity) constructed a Cinema Hall in the Imperial Institute, South Kensington (4) where such Dominion (including South African) and Colonial films as existed were occasionally shown. In 1931, the Empire Marketing Board started and Empire Film Library consisting of 189 films drawn from the Commonwealth whose distribution was later controlled by the Imperial Institute(5). The libary was in touch with some 350 interested bodies and its films were seen that year by about half a million people. In 1937, its films numbered 1,350; its distribution outlets nearly 3,000; and its audience over five million. Included in the library were ~~a great~~ many South African films most of which were made by African Film Productions for the S.A.R.& H..

During the post-depression years, there was a considerable revival in publicity-film production in South Africa but despite the activities of the Railways, there were constant pleasm for more films, particularly those suitable for general exhibition instead of the usual type which reached only the esoteric public served by travel and publicity bureaux and the Empire Film Library. In September 1936, the Imperial Institute which had taken over the Empire Marketing Board's film library reported "an acute shortage of instructional films of the British Commonwealth". In December, its director, Sir Harry Lindsay, arrived in South Africa to canvass support for inter-Commonwealth publicity. While visiting Johannesburg, he spent some time at the Killarney Stddios of African Film Productions whose coöperation he readily secured ; but, despite pressing his case with Government departments, town councils, publicity associations and mining, planting and Industrial interests (1), the production of publicity films did not show the marked increase that might have been expected. Instead, the Union Government (through the Publicity and Travel Department of the S.A.R. & H.) embarked on the production of the monumental "They built a Nation - Die Bou van 'n Nasie" which, while completely sapping the

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(1) Addressing the members of the Vanguard Club in Johannesburg on the 5th January 1937, Sir Harry pointed out that though the Institute's film library served an audience of five million school children, there were only twenty five South African films in the whole collection. "I have come to tell you", he said (6),"that we are doing our best for South African interests and are only too glad to help any of your Government departments or to provide individuals with information. And if any of you can bring pressure to bear on Government departments after I have gone to induce them to supply us with more films, I ask you to do so in the interests of South Africa. I can assure you that if your High Commissioner gets more South African films, they will be well used....."

financial resources which might have been devoted to publicity film production, served no publicity purpose whatever.(1)

The unilateral movement to get South Africa on the screen was continued in 1937 when the Imperial Relations Trust, a body endowed with a grant of £250,00 made to Lord Baldwin by an anonymous donor, was founded for the purpose of strengthening the ties binding the Dominions and the United Kingdom. The Trust established a Film Committee in 1938 and commenced a survey of the means by which the Commonwealth could be publicised by films. One of the methods employed as the investigation of the incidence of Empire items in newsreels shown in the Dominions an colonies. The investigation of the position in South Africa included the incidence in travelogues and "interest shorts". This report was submitted in April 1939 and revealed that just over two percent of the contents of newsreels shown in South Africa emanated from the Empire (most were from Australia and were of a decidedly trivial nature (7)). A similarly small percentage characterised newsreels shown in Great Britain despite the fact that African Film Productions weekly sent a lavender copy of the "African Mirror" to the Pathé Gazette. The amelior ation of this condition was considered an urgent necessity; but the plans that were entertained (including a tour of the Commonwealth by John Grierson, the famous documentary film producer) were frustrated by the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939.

Meanwhile another organisation had been formed which had an indirect interest for South Africa - the Colonial Marketing Board founded by the Secretary for the Colonies, Lord Harlech in 1937 with the object of helping the colonies "to develop their own sources of wealth, to sell more goods and to sell those goods to better advantage" (8) Publicity film production and the reciprocal exhibition of films was one of its major interests but once again the supervention of the war curtailed activities.

While these attempts to secure inter-Commonwealth publicity through films were proceeding in Great Britain, parallel interest was aroused in South Africa. The Press took up the matter and published leaders demanding better publicity films and better distribution of

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(1) See Page 473 et seq..

those existing. It was hoped that the National Publicity Association(10 formed in 1939 would encourage production; but nothing was done. South African national publicity, despite its possibilities arising from exceptional scenic attractions, travel facilities etc, had always been exploited on a smaller scale in the matter of films than could have bee arranged, The usual outlets for film publicity - the film libraries of the British Film Institute, the Imperial Institute, etc; the publicity and travel bureaux in various large cities; the Union Government's overseas representatives; cruise liners; etc - provided in effect only small and esoteric audiences. Only on very rare occasions (such as J.H. Lieb's films produced in the Union in 1928 and 1930, Fitzpatrick's "Traveltalks" in 1935 and 1936, Leon Schauder's modest films in 1938, etc (i)) did South African films reach the commercial screen and even then, not without criticism.(ii) The complete and general ignorance of the overseas public, English as much as American and European, was everywhere admitted (iii) and this lack of publicity undoubtedly resulted not only in the production of fiction films with a travestied South African background (iv) and a consequent inculcation of erroneous conceptions of the country but also in a loss of trade.

Commercial_

The use of films for commercial publicity in South Africa began in 1906 when Messrs Cleghorn & Harris of Cape Town enterprisingly gave a "bioscope display" on the whitewashed wall of their store, then in Plein Street (v). This example however was not followed and it was not until 1914 when an Industrial Exhibition was staged in Cape Town that commercial firms too advantage of the publicity possibilities of films to any appreciable extent. (vi) Thereafter isolated films were made by

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(i) see Page 451 et seq..

(ii) Local audiences, for instance, were amused to hear Fitzpatrick talking about "the Bantoo of Naytal" in one of the "Traveltalks".

(iii) see Page 455 (ii) for Stanley Hawes' testimony.
Typical comment was the following given by a South African returned from the United States in 1939 - "She found many Americans who believe that all South Africans are black. They think this is just a country of natives and game reserves. Mrs Coddington said - "Many people were simply astounded when I described Johannesburg with its skyscrapers, traffic lights and modern theatres.They thought it was just a fairy tale....."(9)

(iv) see Page 460 et seq..

(v) see Page 91(i)

(vi) see Page 421

various commercial firms, mostly for overseas exhibition.(i) Later a number of commercial firms showed films at erratic intervals for publicity purpoes. Particularly active were motor firms which, apart from leasing large cinemas for special free shows of imported films (mostly dealing with American car manufacturers) also staged film exhibitions at the annual Rosebank and Witwatersrand Agricultural Shows. Electrical firms also made use of this publicity means ("Westinghouse Guest Nights held in Escom House, Johannesburg were at one time a regular feature). During 1939, the Shell petrol company held extensive exhibitions of documentary publicity films and continued, though less frequently, in 1940. Other exhibitors were travel organisers such as Messrs Parry, Leon and Rayhoe whose showing of the Southern Rhodesian publicity film"Land of Rhodes" had remarkable success. The Tea Market Expansion Bureau regularly showed films to native audiences and the Southern Life Association held regular exhibitions,(ii) The incidence of commercial film exhibition decreased considerably after the advent of "filmlets"on an extensive scale in 1938. The showing of these short advertisements in commercial cinemas to some extent lessened the necessity for showing imported publicity films to organised audiences.

Municipalities_

(The showing of films ~~by~~ municipal departments for other than publicity purposes i.e. health and other propaganda, is dealt with under appropriate headings.)

The first proposal to use films to publicise municipal activity was made in October 1938 when the Mayor of Benoni, Mr A.S. Hills, proposed their showing in an attempt to defeat prevalent civic apathy. The idea had a mixed reception in the Press at least amd, though lacking widespread support, was revived early in 1939 when the Johannesburg Municipal Council instituted a photographic department including film work. This department made a number of publicity films for various municipal departments (iii) with great success but the scheme was not

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(i) see Page 484

(ii) In 1928, an excellent example was given by "The Moving Picture Exhibition of British Industries Ltd of London and Derby" which, managed by Captain John S. Drysdale, gave exhibitions throughout the Union of British industrial films and aroused great interest and favourable comment. Many Union organisations such as the Transvaal Chamber of Mines and the several Chambers of Commerce were interested and the British Trad Commissioner in South Africa gave it every support. The step was not emulated locally until 1934 when African Film Productions made the "Our Land" series depicting various Union industries (see Page 443) and in the meantime, the production of a few commercial films for overseas exhibition had been undertaken.

(iii) See Page 487

emulated elsewhere. Municipal Electricity and Gas Departments frequently gave exhibitions of cooking films for publicity purposes and advertising filmlets were also commissioned.

Publicity films for public libraries were frequently proposed but never actually produced; nor did any but two or three public libraries attempt to exploit the publicity possibilities of the ordinary commercial cinema. A pioneering exception was the Bloemfontein Public Library whose librarian, Miss Gladys Oppenheim, instituted a publicity scheme in 1935. This took the form of a Film Bulletin Board displaying the month's programme of films and reviews taken from an American review digest. Wherever possible, books relating to films were listed. Though the reviews aroused interest, this unilateral publicity was of little advantage to the library itself since the public was already within its portals. The Johannesburg Public Library on the other hand, evolved a scheme of reciprocal publicity with the cinema themselves and was thus able to canvas cinema audiences as well as its own public.(i) Despite the manifest advantages of this scheme (which was widely practiced in the United States), it was not adopted by other public libraries.Durban for instance, continued the desultory display of film reviews in the same manner as the Bloemfontein Public Library and Cape Town made no use of the opportunity at all.(ii)

(i) According to this scheme, both the library and the cinema showing a suitable film displayed show-cases containing relevant material such as, in the case of historical films, the book which had been dramatised, related literature and lists of books, stills from the film and costume or other pictures. The Library case displayed the title of the film and the cinema at which it was playing in return for which the Cinema displayed an advertisement slide.Frequently the cinema printed book-marks which were distributed in its programmes and at the library. This scheme of reciprocal publicity was exploited with great success from 1938 onwards by the Johannesburg Public Library whose Reference Department made much publicity capital of "Marie Antoinette", "Emile Zola", "The Citadel", "The Rains Came", "Four Feathers", "Gulliver's Travels", "All This and Heaven Too", etc. (In the case of "All This and Heaven Too" shown in November 1940, great interest was aroused by the Colosseum's displaying The Illustrated London News of 1847 reporting the murder of the Duchesse de Praslin which had been lent by the Library.)

(ii) Johannesburg's example had aroused interest and in August 1940,the scheme was formally outlined and submitted to the South African Library Association which promised to consider it in conjunction with the South African Museums Association in the hope of invoking the aid of the Carnegie Corporation. By the end of the year, no further developments had resulted.

A similar scheme was proposed in a paper read to the conference of the South African Museums Association in Cape Town in March 1940 (II); but though interest was aroused, no direct action was taken and the publicity value of the cinema was exploited by the Africana Museum, Johannesburg, only, at erratic intervals. This museum derived an appreciable increase in public attendance by collaborating (through lending museum material for display, etc) with the cinemas showing "Dark Rapture", "Stanley and Livingstone" etc.

General Post Office

Apart from the S.A.R. & H., the General Post Office was the only Government department to use films for publicity purposes (the films used by the Department of Agriculture, for instance, were primarily intended for demonstration). The G.P.O. had a number of 16mm publicity films on loan from the British General Post Office such as "The Story of Stamps", "How Stamps are Made", "The Savings Bank", "The Fairy of the Phone", etc. Though the value of this publicity as well as its education was fully appreciated by the Department, financial stringency occasioned by the war necessitated its curtailment.

PROPAGANDA

(The term "propaganda" is here used purely in its ideological sense. Medical prophylactic "propaganda" is dealt with under "Social and Physical Welfare", native labour recruiting "propaganda" under "Natives" etc.)

Political

The use of the film for political purposes had a considerably obstructed history. It was first attempted in England during the Great War (1) and though, through its newsreel and documentary services at the time, the stature of the cinema considerably increased, it was not until many years later that the sound film was considered suitable for politi-

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(1) At the time (1915), the cinema was of exceptionally sensational character and was generally considered vulgar entertainment. The story of this pioneering enterprise is best told in the following three news-paragraphs which appeared on the cable pages of the South Africa Press in 1915 (12) :

17th August : FILM OF THE CABINET
Unprecedented Step

London - It is announced that Ministers have consented to have a film taken of the Cabinet in Council for the double purpose of historical record and the displaying of films for charitable purposes. The step is unprecedented.

21st August : FILMING THE CABINET
More Derision than Dignity

London - The forthcoming filming of the Cabinet is attracting considerable attention. "The Times" expresses the general opinion when it says that it is clearly fated to bring the Ministers more derision than dignity.

24th August : NO CABINET FILM
Dignity gains the Day

London - There is little surprise in Mr Asquith's announcement that the filming of the Cabinet will not take place. Public opinion has set in very strongly against the project which was regarded as likely to make Ministers ridiculous in the eyes of the world.

The manifest services of the cinema in the propaganda field during the Great War did much to break down the official and popular prejudice against its serious use which had always existed.

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cal purposes.(i) For a variety of reasons, the proposal did not find support in South Africa; but in I937, it was revived and enthusiastically supported by General J.J.Pienaar (later Administrator of the Transvaal). General Pienaar envisaged the sound-film recording of speeches made by Cabinet Ministers and their exhibition in the backveld Little further was heard of the project but the United Party did in fact commission the making of such a film which was shown with some success during I938.(ii)

After the outbreak of war in September I939, evidence daily accumulated proving the activity of Nazi agents in South Africa. In February I940, the Rand Daily Mail in the course of a further disclosure of Nazi activity reported the following facts(i3) - "....cmnsorable films were shown at private performances throughout the country and als on German ships in Union harbours. The importance attached to the film is admirably illustrated by the activities of Fraulein Rutkowsky, a fanatical Nazi schoolmistress, who enjoyed the special confidence of Professor Bohle in Berlin. Miss Rutkowski came to the Union with a fully-equipped motor-film unit and systematically toured the provinces, showing propaganda films in hotels, school-halls or in halls attached to German cultural institutions. At such presentations ofcourse, local Nazis were not only expected to attend themselves but were called upon to bring as many as possible of their friends and acquaintances who might be susceptible to Nazi influence. Possibly more dangerous were

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(i) By I926 when the sound or phonofilm showed signs of becoming practicable, this prejudice had so far been defeated as to allow the British Conservative's Party's buying the exclusive rights to their political exploitation. This extraordinary enterprise excited considerable comment. In South Africa, The Star devoted a leader headed "THE CINEMA IN POLITICS" to the subject in which it said(I4) ".....The Conservative Party in England has been able to obtain the exclusive rights of the American invention of Dr Lee de Forest called the phonofilm which has been described as "the pictures whic can talk"...The scope for hhis scientific device in South Africa is ofcourse immense. Ministers might at last be able to devote their whole time to the duties of their offices while their simulacra thundered forth propaganda to the backveld...."

(ii) The following is a report of one of its exhibitions (I5) - "More than 3,000 people filled the Pretoria City Hall last night to see the United Party election film and to hear five of the six United Party candidates who are fighting Pretoria seats. The film itself consisted of short speeches by General Hertzog and General Smuts and was "shot" in the gardens of Groote Schuur and in a Johannesbur film studio. Speaking in both English and Afrikaans, the two leaders appealed to the electorate for a mandate to continue the work of creating national unity...The film was received with cheers."

Nazi propaganda films shown in ships in Union ports..." In May 1940, the Sunday Express (16) reported that the Portuguese East African police had raided the rooms of three German suspects in a Lourenco Marques boarding house and had seized "several rolls of cinema film" though their content were not divulged. By then, public apprehension concerning fifth column activities had greatly increased and considerable tension prevailed. So far from the Government adopting parallel means of combatting subversiv activity - by radio, films and pamphlets - nothing was done beyond instituting a "Bureau of Information" whose "Information Officer" made periodical statements on the radio in refutation of Zoesen, the Nazi station broadcasting regularly in English and Afrikaans to South Africa If the Government failed to see the necessity of utilising the film for political purposes, the Opposition did not. The Herenigde Party which had opposed the Union's entry into the war and had actively expressed its opposition at every subsequent opportunity, soon attempted to turn the propaganda possibilities of the sound film to account and would certainly have made full use of them had it not been for the intervention of the Union Board of Censors. During the first half of 1940, the Herenigde Party commissioned the making of a propaganda film which was included with various oddments such as the opening of Parliament, an aeroplane accident, photographs of President Kruger, President Steyn and General de Wet, "the Afrikaner in business", the Kruger National Park and articles made of stinkwood. These subjects of general interest included two specially-recorded speeches made by General Hertzog and Dr Malan subsequent to the outbreak of war and expressing their opposition to th Government's policy. The Union Board of Censors banned the film and immediately the news became known, the opposition Afrikaans press published not only the facts but the texts of the banned speeches.(1) It was not until 1940 that the Government, directly through the Bureau of Information and indirectly through the Union Unity Truth Fund, attempted to make use of the political propaganda and other possibilities of the film though persistent pleas for such action had been made since the war began.

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(1) Die Burger (17) headed its account :
SENSORRAAD SE DWAASHEID
AFRIKANERLEIERS SE WOORDE VERBIED
MOES DEEL WORD VAN ' N FILM
AND Die Transvaler likewise :
LEIERS VAN OPPOSISIE SE TOESPRAKE GEBAN
SENSORRAAD TREE OP TEEN DR MALAN EN GENERAAL HERTZOG

Bureau of Information

The establishment of a permanent public service post of Government Information Officer was approved by the Public Services Commission on the 29th January 1936. Early in October 1939, the Government appointed Mr A.N. Wilson as Information Officer in response to widespread and repeated requests provoked by the pernicious Nazi broadcasts from Zeesen both before and after the outbreak of war and by the subversive activities of certain elements within the Union itself.(i) In time, growing demands impelled the establishment of a "Bureau of Information" staffed with translators and English and Afrikaans journalists and broadcasters. Though its activities covered the Press, radio and visual information, no provision was made for the cinema. For more than nine months after its establishment, the Bureau appeared entirely to neglect the possibilities of film propaganda and information. Not until August 1940 did it arrange the production and exhibition in commercial cinemas of "Fighters of the Veld", a documentary dealing with the South African war effort made to the Bureau's order by African Film Productions from various items most of which had already appeared in the "African Mirror". Despite published pleas from members of the public (18) dating from May 1939 onwards for recruiting and information films as well as many editorial appeals for screen publicity of the Union troops and the war effort generally (19), the Bureau contented itself with the issue of two short newsfilms "The Springboks Trek North" and "With General Smuts Up North" which were shown early in November 1940. Thereafter the films taken by its official cameraman Lieutenant F.D. Dixon in East Africa were included in the "African Mirror" among the usual items of local interest.(ii)

Union Unity Fund

The Union Unity Fund was launched in October 1939 by the United Party to provide the means of combatting subversive propaganda, both foreign and domestic. Sponsored by a number of distinguished South

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(i) This officer immediately undertook a thoroughgoing refutation of the Zeesen statements by broadcasting throughout the Union (thereby according to some detractors, popularising the Nazi station). His efforts were initially rewarded by derision in the Opposition Press and a considerable amount of hostility (both editorially and in the correspondence columns) in the English. In time, the Bureau considerably expanded its services and increased its efficiency with manifest effect.

(ii) The film activity of the Bureau of Information subsequently developed very considerably.

Africans and approved by the Prime Minister, General Smuts, it appealed to the public for financial support to enable it to counter detrimental influences. One of its first enterprises was the institution of a "Truth Service Bureau" (1) to combat mendacious enemy propaganda and to substitute reliable information. Its modus operandi was through pamphlets; exhibitions of maps, photographs, diagrams, etc; articles in the Press; and cinema films. Through financial stress, over a year elapsed before a propaganda film was produced; but in November 1940, the "Truth Legion" was ready to show "Noordwarts".

This film, the first propaganda Afrikaans sound film, was made to the Legion's order by African Film Productions Ltd (ii) under the direction of Joseph Albrecht and Henry Cornelius, an English film editor. Designed for platteland audiences, the film depicted the family life of a typical Afrikaner homestead, the leading roles being played by the well-known Afrikaans actress Lydia Lindeque (iii), W. Scheepers

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(1) During November 1939, the Union Unity Truth Service organised a "Truth Legion", issuing a statement which announced inter alia - "Every legionary will be expected to sign this pledge : "I hereby pledge myself to support General Smuts and his Government in the war against the Nazis by becoming an active fighter in the Truth Legion". Later this was amended to "I make this faithful promise that as a soldier of the Truth Legion, I will serve the ideal of a free, united and prosperous South African nation, and in the war against Nazi domination and terrorism, I pledge my wholehearted support to General Smuts and his Government by helping to spread the light of Truth and Honour and by exposing the lies and falsifications of the enemy." General Smuts agreed to become Honorary Commander-in-Chief of the Truth Legion.

The founding of this body evoked sarcastic comment from the Afrikaans Opposition Press. Die Transvaler which had already christened the Union Unity Fund "Die Khakiefonds" now conferred the title of "Ridders van die Waarheid" or "Knights of Truth" on the Truth Legion. Later they became "Khakieridders", a word which was subsequently applied as a term of abuse to any individual incurring the newspaper's displeasure.

Within the first year of its existence, the Truth Legion performed prodigies of work in enrolling members, organising exhibitions, printing and distributing pamphlets etc though its efforts were sometimes attended with regrettable maladroitness (such as the sending of propaganda material to Government supporters, the staging of blatantly "jingo" ceremonies - one of which was the presentation of a "Peace Petition" to General Smuts in the Cape Town City Hall etc).

(ii) see Page 446

(iii) Lydia Lindeque was the wife of the famous Afrikaans author and poet Uys Krige who had become a "Khakieridder" by joining the staff of the Bureau of Information. She suffered personal attack in the columns of Die Transvaler for her part in the film (see Page 483 (1)

and Willie Beckman. The "story" took the form of a soldier-son's explanation to his younger brother of the reasons why he was going to war, a parallel being drawn between the defeat of the Zulus under the dictator Dingaan and the impending defeat of Axis domination. Much of t the film, which ran for about twenty minutes, consisted of sequences from "Die Bou van 'n Nasie" and relevant shots from overseas newsreels. It constituted powerful propaganda (i) and despite unequivocal attack from Die Transvaler (20) (ii), was shown to considerable audiences in the Eastern Transvaal where it was toured by special van, audiences being organised by locallegionaries. The Legion's financial resources temporarily prevented wider distribution which was later arranged.

The inauguration of cinema propaganda by the Truth Legion was rapidly followed by further developments. The Bureau of Information's three films "Fighters of the Veld", "The Springboks Trek North" and "With General Smuts Up North" were borrowed for exhibition with "Noordwarts" and towards the end of 1940, the Legion commissioned Leon Schauder and Henry Cornelius to make an English-sounded propaganda film involving the activities of Union troops in the actual theatre of war. Meanwhile the Legion continued showing "Noordwarts" in appropriate areas and endeavoured to obtain more cinema vans for touring the whole country.

General

Ideological propaganda was to a certain extent disseminated by the commercial cinemas themselves through specially-staged tableaux, military spectacles and parades, special organ interludes (iii),reviews of units outside theatres by well-known personalities, etc. These shows run in conjunction with the ordinary filmx programmes aroused great enthusiasm.

Recruiting propaganda which was indirectly ideological, was comple ely ignored by the Department of Defence for the first year of war,

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(i) At the first showing of "Noordwarts" at a special preview at the Empire Theatre in Johannesburg, the Truth Legion exhibited typical maladroitness by staging a preliminary tableau of extremely scantily-clad chorus girls (likely to shock Afrikaner sentiment) holding propaganda banners.

(ii) See Page 483 (i)

(iii) War propaganda was moreoverss consistently propagated by cinema organists (particularly Archie Parkhouse of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Dean Herrick of Twentieth Century-Fox) through the playing of popular patriotic songs and the adaptation of others to popular sentiment. Charles Manning and the Colosseum Orchestra were respon ible for sustained attempts to maintain the public's war effort.

the sole film enterprise with which it was concerned being the productio of "They Serve to Save", a film dealing with the South African Medical Corps.(i)

SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL WELFARE

Health Propaganda

The use of films as propaganda against the spread of disease was exploited principally by commercial cinema companies as a "sensationalist" speculation, and by the Public Health Departments of Municipal Councils. The movement originated in South Africa during the Great War when current film-drama, by assuming a pseudo-philanthropic air, descended to record depths of vulgarity and suggestiveness.(ii) The social problems aired in these "moral dramas" had to do largely with the "white slave traffic", the dangers of drink and various causes of marital infelicity and there is no doubt that they did much to impede the serious use of the cinema for prophylactic propaganda purposes. There were in South Africa a few individuals aware of its value, one of whom was Mrs Fitzgerald, chairman of the Public Health Committee of the Johannesburg Municipal Council (iii) through whose efforts the Council obtained from the Union Department of Public Health a copy of "Whatsoever a Man Soweth". This film was shown free of charge by the Public Health Committee in the Johannesburg Town Hall on the 2nd September 1920, advertisements stating that "This film is shown by the Public Health Committee in connection with the Council's scheme for the Prevention of Venereal Disease and is an outspoken and impressive but seemly warning as to the nature and consequences of sex temptations and dangers to which young people are especially liable". The success of this enterprise was considerable and resulted in one of the most extraordin-

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(i) See Page 482

(ii) see Page 193 et seq..

(iii) Mrs Fitzgerald was a famous character in the Johannesburg political and municipal world. She held pronounced views which she was never afraid to express and was distinguished in addition by exceptional energy and initiative.

ary scenes ever to take place in Johannesburg.(i). The film was shown again and succeeded in creating a demand for the further use of cinema propaganda of the type. The public exhibition of disease-prevention films was not however developed to any appreciable extent. The production of an anti-phthisis film by African Film Productions under the direction of Dr Orenstein in 1921 (ii) for exhibition to men engaged in the mining industry aroused some interest; but it was never publicly shown. In 1923, an unspecified exhibitor road-showed "The End of the Road" (iii) to separate audiences of men and women and later, "by

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(i) "The film was due to be screened at 8.15 but long before seven, a huge crowd running into several thousands had assembled, blocking all vehicular traffic in President Street and, upon the doors being opened about fifteen minues later, they were immediately rushed. Very soon the hall was crowded to capacity and it was necessary to close all means of access. Intending spectators continued to arrive in hundreds and thousands, and scores of young men scaled the high gates of the courtyard in the hope of getting into the hall while others, even more active, climbed up the verandah brackets on to the ledges round the building whence they gained admission through the open windows until they were closed by janitors. The interior of the hall was packed and it was astonishing to notice that 20 or 30 venturesome beings had, in some mysterious manner, won their way to the roof of the building whence they got through the large glass windows and were perilously perched on the ledge that runs round the top of the walls...."(21)

So sensational was the success of this attempt to rouse interest in the combatting of venereal disease and particularly in the new clinic opened by the Municipality, that the Public Health Committee showed the film four more times in a packed Town Hall and once in a suburban cinema where it was estimated that 40,000 people had seen it free of charge. Subsequently it was shown along the Reef from Springs to Ramfontein and at Bloemfontein during a Child Welfare Conference, between 50,000 and 60,000 people having seen it

Speaking at the Venereal Diseases Conference held in February 1921, Dr Porter paid tribute to the energy and enterprise of Mrs Fitzgerald, chairman of the Johannesburg Public Health Committee, in obtaining this War Office film. It had originally been imported by Colonel Stock C.B. of the Defence Medical Service at the request of Dr Porter, a copy having been lent to the Johannesburg committee by the Secretary for Public Health. The conference resolved that "as regards future work, the most important items appear to be (1) continuance of propaganda and in this respect, there can be nothing to exceed in efficiency suitable cinema films. The purchase or production and continued periodical exhibition of such films is therefore considered to be a most important matter...."(22)

(ii) see Page 435

(iii) This was obviously a commercial speculation as the advertisement implied :

Enormous Striking Sensation
Griffiths' Greatest Problem Play
THE END OF THE ROAD
A Powerful Public Health Propaganda Film
for combating
Venereal Disease
The most daring exposure ever attempted on the screen
revealing Life's Darkest Secrets for the first time
This Great Film Drama is positively Unique
Scenes of Realism that stagger the imagination
Never before seen by the human eye

special permission of the Censors", mixed audiences were allowed. In 1925, largely owing to the initiative of Councillor Mrs Miriam S. Walsh film shows were given to European women at the Alhambra and non-European at the Majestic Cinemas in Cape Town of "The Gift of Life" and "Waste", two films imported by the Union Department of Public Health. Ahtough these shows, at which lectures were also given, were a complete success they were not frequently repeated. In 1926, commercial speculation again resulted in the showing of "Damaged Goods", a film version of Brieux's famous play and in 1928, Kineams Ltd attracted enormous crowds by showing"The Road to Ruin".(1) At the same time, Independent Films road-showed "The End of the Road" with some success. There then ensued a considerable gap in the showing of disease-prevention films both by commercial enterprises and private bodies. The Union Department of Public Health eventually acquired a number of 16mm silent films on various health subjects, the majority of which were suitable for showing in schools and which were later distributed by the Film Division attached to the Department of Education. In 1932, the Public Health Department of the Durban Municipal Council commissioned the making of ten 16mm silent (ii) films for general health propaganda purposes and there were a few other such endeavours; but on the whole the organised use of films to combat disease fell into abeyance.

Throughout this period there was a constant demand for such propaganda, particularly on the part of bodies concerned with venereal disease; but it was not until 1939 that energetic steps were taken. Acting in conjunction with the Union Department of Public Health, the South African Red Cross Society organised a "health drive" in April 1939 which was to be assisted by films, posters and booklets. By September, production had already commenced on "The Two Brothers", an anti-syphilis film for native consumption under the direction of Joseph Albrecht who had also written the scenario, and acted almost entirely by natives. The film was first shown at the Empire Theatre in Johannesburg on the 7th February 1940 when the Minister of Public Health, Mr. H.G. Lawrence, launched the "Health Drive", and was very favourably

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(1) Under the auspices of the South African Red Cross Society and the various Medical Officers of Health, "The Road to Ruin" was road-shown throughout the Transvaal.

(ii) See page 487 (i)

received.(i) The widespread hope that its success would stimulate the production of many other such films, particularly for European consumption, was not realised despite the necessity for their showing to Union troops.

The Council for Combatting Venereal Disease, an association in Cape Town assisted by the City Council, the Government and the Divisional Council, presented propaganda films in halls through the Peninsula; but the film resources of the Union Department of Public Health were not sufficient to meet a situation in which propaganda was a vitally urgent need and which, towards the end of 1940, the Federal Council of the Medical Association of South Africa announced that it viewed "with alarm". Despite these and other pleas, film propaganda continued to remain unexploited. In April 1940, the film "Enlighten Thy Daughter", a re-issue in newly-edited form of the earlier sensation, had commenced a long season of road-showing throughout the Union and in November, the "Modern Film Corporation" launched a similar season with "Damaged Lives", a Canadian film made several years previously; but, apart from these two commercial speculations, there was no organised showing of anti-syphilis films on the scale demanded by the incidence of the disease in South Africa.

Instructional

The use of films for medical and health instructional purposes has a long history. As early as 1910, Wolfram showed a film of the microbes of sleeping sickness "magnified 40,000 times - demonstrations by Dr Camanden for the Academy of Science". In 1913, the Pathé Agency in Cape Town (ii) gave a film-showing to a social gathering organised by the Western Branch of the British Medical Association in the University Buildings, the films including several microscopic studies of germs and one showing "a smear of infected blood magnified many thousands of times in order to make clear the wrigglings of the trypanosomes".(23) Later in the year, Mr W.F. Clarke, manager of the

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(i) A special showing of "The Two Brothers" was given in Johannesburg for European troops despite its having been designed for and acted by natives. The film was subsequently shown throughout Africa and overseas and was most effective with European audiences.

(ii) Pathé were the pioneers in the production of scientific and instructional films for non-commercial exhibition (Charles Urban had made and marketed them much earlier for commercial showing). At a time when American production was almost totally preoccupied with the making of fantastic fiction films and Wild Westerns, Pathé had the faith and foresight to develop this special type of production.

Pathé Agency, gave an exhibition of educational films to a representative audience of church, educational and social welfare authorities, the films including microscopic studies of a drop of water, the circulation of the blood, X-rays of the stomach and the microbes of relapsing fever In 1918, Mr K. Welford of Durban secured the importation of a number of films depicting surgical operations made by the Clinico Film Manufacturing Co. of America which were shown privately to an audience of local doctors at the Town Hall; but despite these incentives, the use of films for medical instruction did not progress. In 1927, Professor Dart of the Witwatersrand Medical School showed a number of German medical films borrowed from the South African Dental and Surgical Manufacturing Co. to his students; but as in past cases, it was not possible to institute a regular service of such films.

Before the Film Division of the Union Department of Education was organised to provide such a service, the Department of Public Health circularised a number of 16mm silent films on a small sale and the production of a few instructional films was independently undertaken by certain bodies.(1) African Consolidated Films 16mm Department also imported and made available a number of films of the type before the Government service was instituted. The Film Division in the course of time built up an extensive circulation for medical and health instructional films for showing in every kind of educational institution from schools to universities as well as hospitals, clinics etc. Its resource were not adequate to university demands at least and a wide field of possible use of films remained unexploited largely through lack of funds.

Apart from the standardised educational use of such films, there have also been one or two examples of films specially produced for instructional purposes, notably Dr E. Jokl's film dealing with a scientific syllabus for physical exercises for children which was produced by African Film Productions at their own expense in 1938.

Safety-First Films

The use of Safety-First films by the Traffic Departments of

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(1) For instance the Durban Public Health's Department's commissioning of Lynn Acutt to make ten films dealing with malaria, plague, mid-wifery etc (see Page 487) and the Cape Town City Council's Child Welfare Department's commissioning L. Lewis to make a mid-wifery film (see Page 487).

Municipal Councils, by mining organisations and insurance companies was early appreciated. Some Traffic Departments assisted in the production of special films as in the case of Johannesburg which, apart from importing safety-first films from England in 1931 and showing them in schools, assisted both Kinemas and African Film Productions to make films demonstrating road dangers.(i) Safety First Associations themselves xxxx commissioned productions such as "Travelling About Town" made in 1937 by A.F.P..

The Prevention of Accidents Committee of the Rand Mutual Assurance Company, an association sponsored by the gold mining industry, promoted the production and exhibition of safety-first films, both for European and non-European audiences, some of the films having been sounded in "Mine Kaffir".(ii)

"Safety-First" was also xxxx promoted in commercial cinemas by the showing of feature films such as "The Devil is Driving" (1938) and shorts such as "Drunk Driving"(1940),a "Crime Doesn't Pay" film.

ANIMAL WELFARE

The use of films to promote animal welfare was xxxx erratically exploited by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (iii), and by the Wild Life Protection Society.(iv)

GENERAL INTEREST

The showing of films by cultural and other associatxions was a comparatively late development contingent on the advent of the 16mm film and its purveyance firstly by African Consolidated Films 16mm Department and later the Union Department of Education's Film Division. The first such body to show films (in 35mm) to its members was the Zionist Association, other Jewish and Zionist Associations soon following its example.(v)Of the many associations founded on a specific interest, the

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(i) see Page 441

(ii) see Page 486 (i)

(iii) The Society commissioned L.Lewis to make "They only need to be Told"-see Page470 (i)

(iv) The Society commissioned Harold Weaver to make a colour film of the Kruger National Park - see Page 488

(v) From about 1920 onwards, Yiddish films were shown in the Union, notable examples being "Uriel Acosta", "Endurance" or "The Life of Theodor Herzl", "The New Jewish Palestine", "Brother of Mine","Land of Promise (1936), "This is the Land" (1937), "The Occupation of Tirat Tsi", "A Homeland in the Making", "Oded" (1939) and "Collecti Security" (1940).

most consistent film exhibitor prior to the outbreak of the Second World War was the National Travel Club of South Africa which was founded in August 1937. National associations such as that formed by the Netherlands community in Johannesburg which showed films of Queen Wilhemina's Jubilee in 1939, have also exploited films intermittently. Other cases are the Johannesburg Labour League of Youth which showed "News from Spain" and "China Strikes Back" in 1938 and 1939, the Transvaal Amateur Film Society's showing of Soviet films ("Song of Happiness", etc), the Cape Natural History Club, the Cape Times Art Club, etc etc. A consistente exhibitor of films was the Transvaal Workers' Educational Association. Almost every association in South Africa organised at least one film show at some time or another; but few, apart from some of those mentioned, maintained consistent showing. An exception was the Rotary Club of South Africa which maintained film exhibition services for benevolent reasons. Its operators maintained regular exhibitions of films in hospitals and other institutions and, after the outbreak of war, in soldiers' clubs, camps, etc.

RELIGIOUS

The use of films for religious purposes was one of the cinema's first box-office successes, the first Passion Play being shown commercially in South Africa in 1899, Despite the unfavourable impression created by the first showing of "The Temptation of St Anthony" in 1898 (i), religious films continued to be made in increasing numbers until their inherent blasphemy itself put an end to the movement. "The Passion Play" was still being shown in 1910 but direct interpretations of the Bible fell into final disfavour with the showing of "From Manger to Cross" in 1913.(ii) The tantalising possibilities of Biblical films never ceased to appeal to producers of the commercial cinema and from time to time, such films were produced and shown in commercial cinemas in South Africa - "Salome" with Theda Bara in 1921, "The Queen of Sheba" with Betty Blythe in 1923, "The Ten Commandments" in 1925, "Quo Vadis" with Emil Jannihgs and "The Shepherd King" in 1926, "The Sign of the Cross" in 1934 etc.

Privately the use of films to stimulate religious sentiment was not attempted until 1928 when in December, the Rev. H.G. Leverton of the Fordsburg Wesleyan Methodist Church proposed showing "The Life of

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(i) see Page 40 et seq..
(ii) see Page 389 et seq..

Christ to his congregation in the manner practised overseas. The success of this experiment was not sufficient to warrant its continuance. The movement was revived in December 1937 when the Rev. A.W. Eaton, rector of Malvern, proposed substituting a feature film and commentary for his sermon but once again, the idea lacked support. In April 1938, the Rev. Leslie A. Hewson, addressing lay preachers of the Rosebank (Cape) Methodist Church, urged the use of cinema films to make the message of the Church more widely known and understood, and in November, subsequent to a demonstration of sound films given by Mr Martin Gibbs, the Pretoria Diocesan Synod gave the matter full consideration. The Bishop of Pretoria, the Right Rev. Wilfred Parker sounded a note of warning and, subject to a report by the Rev. A.W. Blaxall which had special reference to the needs of deaf persons, the matter was referred to the next synod. Almost at the same time, the Rev. R.J. Cooke of the Sea Point Congregational Church at the Cape was giving evening services at which he showed the film "The Passing of the Third Floor Back" and which proved very successful. In January, the Rev. Norman H. Pike of the Roodebloem Methodist Church, Woodstock, Cape inaugurated a series of "film services" at which he showed religious films with some success.(24) This enterprise and that of the Rev. C.W. Moore of the Methodist Church, Jeppe, Johannesburg who gave religious film shows to children from June 1938 onwards, inspired a great deal of interest; but apart from its practice in a few isolated instances, the movement did not show any great development in South Africa.

FORENSIC

The use of films in courts of law and official enquiries dates from 1913 when the Judicial Commission appointed to enquire into the causes of the Kleinfontein Strike on the Rand was given a special showing of films "in order to get a clearer impression of events than could be obtained from the hearing of witnesses".(i) Again in 1918, at the inquest proceedings on Colonel Johan Colenbrander and two other men who were drowned in the Klip River while acting in "Symbol of Sacrifice" films were used to demonstrate the circumstances of the tragedy.(ii)In 1921, the forensic use of films was again utilised in what came to be

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(i) See Page 419 (iii)

(ii) See Page 429 (1)

known as the"Bullhoek Affair" (1) which was filmed for the "African Mirror" by Ayliff , the material never being publicly shown though used in the official enquiry.

This random use of films in evidence demonstrated the value of moving picture records, At some time which, owing to the fact that no official information may be given on the subject, it is impossible precisely to state, the Medico-Legal Laboratories of the South African Police instituted a I6mm cinematograph service by which the circumstances of crimes were filmed for the purposes of investigation.(ii)

The forensic use of films achieved spectacular publicity in occasional court cases such as one, lasting several months, which began in May I937 when a riparian owner on the Modder River sued the Bloemfontein Town Council for £4,287 damages, claiming inter alia an order interdicting the Council from using motor launches on the Modder River near his land. In support of his case, he had commissioned a local photographer, George Wheals, to make a number of films at varying intervals of time demonstrating his allegations that cracks were caused in the river banks by water released from sluice gates and showing how the banks fell in after the flow was stopped, and supporting his further allegation that large amounts of mud and slush were washed away into the river from the banks by the operation of the sluice gates and by the waves caused by the Town Council's motor launches. These films were shown in court at Bloemfontein before the Acting Judge-President Mr Justice Botha, and Mr Justice Fischer. The case which took fourteen days to adjudicate in the Free State Supreme Court, was taken to the Appeal Court in October I937 when the films were again shown.

(i) This deplorable event which created great consternation at the time was precipitated by a band of fanatical natives led by a "prophet" Enoch who, after settling on vacant ground and conducting meetings for some time, refused to disperse when ordered by the police. An attack was then made by the police which resulted in over 200 being killed. The effect of this "massacre" was to arouse considerable ill-feeling throughout the country against the Government's measures and an enquiry was at once held, as well as numerous court cases in one of which Enoch was sentenced to six years' imprisonment. In its course, Mr Merriman asked the Acting Prime Minister, Mr F.C. Malan, whether the exhibition of the films taken with and under the authority of the Police, would be permitted to which he received a negative answer.

(ii) A rare public mention of this fact was made on the I3th February I937 when The Star published a photograph on the cable page with the following caption - "Police Make Cine Record - The cinematographic apparatus of the Institute of Forensic Medicine was used for the first time this morning at the Village Deep slimes dam to ~~complete~~ film a complete record of the discovery of a European body and of the surroundings in a case of foul play. The photographer is

During 1938, films were shown to the Board of Enquiry into the wrecking near Bank Station of the Cape week-end express from the Rand in which five lives were lost. These films reconstructed the scene and showed the passage of a test engine and trucks along the same line in an attempt to determine the speed at which a train would leave the metals on a curve. In 1939, an attorney, E.D. Guinsberg, filmed the view from the driver's seat of a motor car; the film being shown in court in a successful claim for damages made for the estate of a victim of a motor accident.

NATIVES

Entertainment

Although the proposal to use the cinema for the education and distraction of urban natives had been mooted for many years, it was not until 1919-20 that anything positive was done. At this time, the initiative was taken by the Reverend, Ray Phillips of the American Board of Missions in Johannesburg who, in collaboration with their director Dr Bridgman, instituted a service of cinema shows for natives in mine compounds. The venture was entirely private but was regarded with benevolent eye by mine officials. With the coöperation of African Films Ltd, Dr Phillips began giving weekly exhibitions in mine compounds of severely-censored films which proved so successful that both the Chamber of Mines and the Municipal Native Affairs Department began to take an active interest. The question of occupying the leisure time of the Rand's vast native population had for long been serious and the success of Dr Phillips' weekly exhibitions proved the direct value of the cinema in sublimating potential criminal tendencies. The Municipal Native Affairs Department arranged for shows to be given in municipal compounds and the Chamber of Mines which had at first subsidised the Board of Missions' exhibitions, took over the whole organisation and ran it through the Native Recruiting Corporation. In time, this organisation developed and weekly exhibitions for which no charge was made, were given at every native compound along the whole length of the Reef.

The service was instituted at a time when films were blatantly sensational and of the "vamp" and "white slave traffic" type. The programmes shown to natives were very rigorously censored, firstly by the

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Shown at work while Dr Lionel Melzer and officers and detectives from Marshall Square look on.

Cape Town Board of Censors and secondly, by Dr Phillips and later a special board appointed by the Native Recruiting Corporation. It was not generally recognised that the usual rules of censorship did not apply to Africans and that entirely unforeseen impressions would be gained from films that appeared innocuous. During 1923 and several times subsequently, Dr Bridgman and Dr Phillips made a joint protest at the type of films that were being shown to mine natives and an already strict censorship was tightened.

The circuit of mine compound cinemas steadily expanded and in time, talkie films were introduced to the considerable mystification of African audiences, particularly the raw recruits from the native territories. The opportunity was used not only for their entertainment but also for their instruction. Dr Phillips himself assisted in the production of films dealing with the Shangaans in Portuguese East Afric during 1922 and showed them on the compound circuit and later the Native Recruiting Corporation showed its own films detailing the movements of recruits from all the native territories in their progress to the mines and their work when enrolled. Subsequently the Prevention of Accidents Committee of the Rand Mutual Assurance Co. made and showed "Safety-First" films in compound cinemas and similar exhibitions was given to the many health films made specially for natives by the South African Red Cross Society. The circuit furnished a valuable means of providing beneficient publicity to urban natives and during the war years, informative newsreels (though usually somewhat out-of-date) were added to this type of film.

The reaction of native audiences to the cinema was in many cases unexpected (1) and remained constant in only one instance - affection for "Wild Westerns". Originally conceived as a powerfully beneficent

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(1) At the outset, reaction was not unnaturally very primitive and at the touring cinema shows organised by the Native Recruiting Corporation in the country, assembled audiences not infrequently rose as a body and inspected the back of the screen to discover what had happened to the people they had just seen. Similarly, early native audiences in some areas became hysterical when they saw their first "Felix the Cat" cartoon and rushed screaming into the night declaring the drawings to be "ghosts". Sophistication was merely a matter of time but more than twenty years of film exhibitions on the mine circuit failed to cure the "boys" of their affection for a mythical cowboy called "Jack" (no matter what his real name) and his always-successful deeds of daring. Most films depicting action, animals and actual circumstances appealed to natives; but the drama proper, rendered aseptic by severe censorship, interested them very little particularly as audiences, despite the sound-film, persisted in chattering loudly throughout the performance. The first sound-cartoons were regarded with amused condescension, the natives

method of distraction and education for Africans in mine and municipal compounds, the cinema soon began to appeal to the sophisticated urban native as a civilised method of entertainment. The commercial exhibiting companies began to cater for native audiences and in the big townships such as Alexandra Town on the Johannesburg municipal border, provision was made for them in large permanent cinemas. The usual outcries were periodically made regarding the pernicious influence of their programmes on the urbanised native; but comment was far rarer on the fact that they kept otherwise idle natives off the streets and occupied their leisure time. The very low wage level of Africans and the small charges of admission which it was consequently necessary to make, for some time prevented the development of these cinemas; but from 1940 onwards, many were opened.

Labour Recruiting

Although moving pictures might have been considered the least likely method of informing completely primitive natives some of whom had indeed not even seen a white man, the Native recruiting Corporation of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines utilised films at an early date for the purpose of recruiting native labour in all parts of the Union and Portuguese East Africa. Many films were specially made for the purpose (1) and vans were equipped to show them in the remotest parts. A native commentator speaking the language of the region invariably accompanied the showing of films and to a certain degree, instilled confidence in the exhibitions which, in certain areas, at first terrified the inhabitants. Certain officials of the Native Recruiting Corporation and the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (particularly Mr H.M. Taberer) were loved and respected by the natives and the showing of films became a feature of their visits to the territories. The policy of informing uninitiates of the circumstances and conditions of work on the gold mines through films proved successful and films continued to be made and shown until the outbreak of the Second World War when it became impossible to maintain the requisite touring vans.

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thinking it very ludicrous that a duck should be considered capable of speech. The greatest sensation was always caused by locally-produced films taken on the mines and showing the "boys" themselves. Such films, frequently dealing with Mines Ambulance Competitions and other worthy subjects, were commissioned by the Prevention of Accidents Committee and shown with remarkable success.

(1) See Page 486 (1)

Instructional

The extremely slow start made by South Africa in the educational use of films probably accounted for the fact that their special exhibition to natives was a comparatively late development and was undertaken first semi-officially by various organisations and by Municipalities, notably the Durban Health Department. Various missions attempted to use health films for the instruction of their charges but the most extensive work in this field was done by the South African Red Cross Society. Several short films were made and shown by the Society to native audiences and from about 1940 onwards, it became the Society's policy to make special health films for Africans, an outstanding example being the long documentary "The Two Brothers".(1)

Equally active was the Prevention of Accidents Committee of the Rand Mutual Assurance Co. which included the production of films in its policy of publicity for safety-first measures on the gold mines, The committee had the singular advantage of the compound cinema circuits on which to show its films; but at the same time, it suffered the serious disadvantage of there existing no lingua franca among the tens of thousands of natives from every part of Southern and Central Africa with which to commentate films. In 1933, the committee produced "Safety First on the Mines", a film approximately 1,400 feet long in several sections dealing with the daggers of bad hanging, the advisability of wearing hard hats underground, the dangerof touching moving wires, truck and tramway accidents, the necessity for wearing boots in good condition underground, the dangers of stray detonators and fuses, and the dangers of drink at work. A further silent film "First Aid - It's Easy to Learn" of about a thousand feet in length was produced at the same time and later sounded. These films were much appreciated by the natives, their technique being almost invariably the same - the silly uninstructed native was injured while the trained native came nobly and capably to the rescue (the former always being the subject of much mirth on the part of audiences). Later the Committee took the enterprising step of sounding a film "Pas Op Wena!" (Look Out, You !) in "Mine Kaffir" and

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(1) See Pages 445 and 512

continued along these lines in further productions. By this time (from 1940 onwards), it was obvious that Africans had learnt thoroughly to benefit from film instruction and information.

After the institution of the Film Division of the Department of Education, films were also used on a very small scale by native educational institutions, notably the Fort Hare University College. Suitable films however were not available and in addition, African students had difficulties in surpassing the American accent which distinguished the commentaries of many of them.

Commercial Publicity

The mobile cinemas operated by the Native Recruiting Corporation had shown that Africans, however primitive, were susceptible to a "message" in films. This fact was very efficently exploited by the Tea Market Expansion Bureau, a corporate body representing tea growers throughout the world with offices in Johannesburg. At one time prior to the outbreak of war; the Tea Market Expansion Bureau had eight vans touring the native territories showing films and giving demonstrations of the virtues of tea-drinking.(i) The films made and shown by the Bureau were all on 16mm and were of extremely moral character. Indeed it is probable that their showing profited the police more than the tea-growers and certainly they habituated tens of thousands of natives to cinema films throughout the Union who would never otherwise have seen them. Like most films made for natives, they were built on the "two brothers" theme - the sober man who drank tea and prospered and th profligate (always a subject for derision) who did hot and who suffered dire consequences. (ii) The Bureau encountered considerable difficulty in producing films. Productions made specially for the Zulus were useless in the Transkei or Basutoland where differences in costumes, tribal custom and other details were immediately detected and considered completely to invalidate the film. Special films for each area had accordingly to be made though all ended with the same theme and the

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(i) These vans were handed over to the Native Military Corps under the Director of Non-European Army Services for recruiting purposes after the outbreak of war.

(ii) A production made by Union Film Productions Ltd in 1939 for the Bureau and entitled "Mr Tea and Mr Skokiaan" dealt with urban natives and, apart from winning a wife whom he was shown entertaining at the Johannesburg Zoo, "Mr Tea" also won a cup at tennis and prospered at his job in a dry-cleaning works.

same caption "TEA IS GOOD FOR YOU".(1) These shows were also given in municipal native townships with the same success, distrubances sometimes taking place when halls were too small to accommodate the large crowds only too anxious to see a free show. Prior to the loan of their vans to the Native Military Corps, the Tea Market Expansion Bureau included in their programmes the first war propaganda films made by the Bureau of Information and health films provided by the South African Red Cross Society. Like the mine compound circuit, these vans provided an very valuable means of conveying film information to natives and they had the additional benefit of penetrating to the remotest parts,

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(1) The popularity of the free exhibitions given by the Bureau's touring vans was immense and natives in the territories, having seen a show at one village, would walk twenty miles to see it again the following night at the next. Invariably the end of a film would be accompanied by a chant from the audience : "Tea is GOOOOOOOOD for you" and the value of such publicity was strikingly demonstrated.

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CHAPTER XVII

Miscellaneous

The History of Film Criciam in South Africa

The initial wonder that characterised descriptions of pictures that moved on a screen was very soon replaced in South Africa by a comparative negligence on the part of the Press. During the early years despite the efforts of Charles Urban, Pathé Freres and others, the cinema was nothing more or less than a "stunt" operated by opportunist showmen who cared little about the quality of their performances.Later, when the number of itinerant showmen greatly increased and "the bioscope" began to manifest its hold on the public, the South African Press was always ready to give considerable space to the review of exhibitions of "animated photographs"(this was the era of wide and spacious journalism); but in time, reviewers confined themselves to loquacious reports of each film and made little comment on the quality. Columns were devoted to the minute description of films and only rarely did a note of cynicism intrude. This period of comparative quiescence began to be broken from time to time by scathing comment on the grotesqueness and incongruity of the first ambitious productions and Biblical films in particular began to be castigated for their blasphemous ludicrousness. There were times when reviwers lashed out in apparently blind rage at the vulgar but nonethless extremely popular amusement which itinerant showmen provided with increasing frequency but diminishing proficiency. At one time, Wolfram's exhibitions, almost alone, were able to command respect and admiration, possibly due to the high standard of performance on which he insisted.

The increasing profusion of cinema entertainment finally succeeded in dulling the edge of criticism and the swift and constant changing of programmes consisting of scores of films inevitably led to perfunctory reviewing. From the instituion of permanent cinemas onwards,cinema reviews consisted largely of uncritical descriptions of the films shown and only rarely would individual critics such as "Baton" (C.H. Parsons) of the Natal Mercury, R.A. Nelson of The Star and "Treble Vhoil" (Olga Racster) speak their minds fairly and squarely on the merits of any single film. On these occasions, reviewers were unafraid to make forthright and sometimes vitriolic attacks on the vulgarity and poor production of current films; but these occasions became increasingly rare.

With the organisation of the industry into powerful blocs, there was soon established an undeniable commercial liaison between cinema advertising and the quality of reviews. Cinema proprietors throughout the world insisted that if newspapers were to accept large incomes from constant cinema advertising, they should furnish a quid pro quo in undamaging film reviews. In policy, the newspapers in South Africa had to bend to this blast and finally the only cinema shows that were fairly reviewed were those staged by independent exhibitors. The sole critical comment that could innocuously appear consisted of damaging comparison between the merits of films made by various countries and at one time, American production suffered continuous castigation.

The correspondence columns of newspapers were ofcourse open to critical letters from readers who at various times, expressed themselves forthrightly and without reserve on the quality of films; but this expression cannot be said to represent serious or instructed criticism of the cinema. There were ofcourse exceptions and certain newspapers, particularly at the advent of talkies, made the quality of films the subject of editorial comment; but on the whole, newspaper policy tended to treat unbiassed criticism as impracticable. Under these circumstances, cinema reviews in the cases of even the largest and most responsible newspapers became a most haphazard affair dealt with by any member of the ~~staff~~ reporting staff who happened to be available. Films were frequently reviewed by sports and crime reporters who sometimes did not find it necessary actually to attend performances. The report of a morning paper was sometimes diametricallyopposed to that of an evening paper.(i)

The public frequently rebelled against the absence of impartial criticism of films and on occasions, newspapers themselves attempted a greater degree of candour than appeared convenient to the cinema (ii) companies. The character of reviews soon changed however and damaging attacks on films of allegedly poor quality were no longer published.

(i) During 1939, a classic instance occurred in regard to a film shown at the Empire in Johannesburg which was described by the Rand Daily Mail as a tragedy and by The Star as a comedy.

(ii) The Cape Times in particular sought to institute forthright criticism of films and for some time, its critic Derek Drabble, appeared to write without let or hindrance.

Newspaper critics however developed an oblique method of review by whic to the initiated reader, the real quality of films was readily revealed. This"back-door" method had however nothing to commend it.

Newspaper policy and commercial principle combined to prevent the Dail Press from publishing unbiassed criticism in South Africa as much as elsewhere in the world; but its principles did not obtain for other journals. Certain independent magazines and especially the weekly "Forum" under its first editor R.J. Kingston Russell and later John Cope, instituted free criticism of films; but their influence in no way attained that which could have been exercised by the Daily Press. Furthermore there were few writers in South Africa of sufficient criticial stature and instruction to deal competently with films and the independent reviews of films that were published represented little more than average opinion. For the proper direction of public taste and appreciation, South Africa had no James Agate or Constahce Lejeune.

South African Film Archives

Interest in films as historic documentary material was, with most unfortunate results, very slight in South Africa. As early as 1919, The Star published a plea for a "Cinema Museum" reprinted from the Sunday Chronicle (I); but the question raised no response in either private or public circles and it was not until 1933 that the Chief Archivist for the Union, C. Graham Botha, instituted a Film Section at the Cape Archives in Cape Town. In the meantime, films of imperishable value to South Africa had been allowed to disappear.(2)

In point of fact, the "institution" of Film Archives represented little more than the allocation of a small vault of even temperature in the Cape Archives for the housing of cans of films presented from time to time by various bodies and their cataloguing by an Archives official with no special training in film preservation or handling. A certain amount of press publicity was given to the event and a small number of films collected, notably a complete and unused copy of "De Voortrekkers", the Universal Newsreel record of the Jubilee Celebrations of King George V presented by the Universal British Talking News Company to the Union of South Africa, certain issues of the "African Mirror" from 1920 onwards which were of incomparable value, various of the publicity films made by the S.A.R. & H., a copy of "The Dust that Kills", a copy of "Electricity - Spirit of Progress" made for the

Electricity Supply Commission, a reel of items from the Movietone Newsreel showing South African scenes presented by Twentieth Century-Fox which also presented a copy of the feature film "We're Going to be Rich set in early Johannesburg, and a few other films.

The Chief Archivist contended with numerous difficulties, notably lack of proper accommodation for the Film Section and of proper equipment, official apathy towards the subject and, more important, a lack of concept of the proper function and endowment of such an institution. While overseas, the Chief Archivist had studied methods of film preservation etc in America and Europe, being particularly impressed by the work done at the Museum of Modern Art in New York; but his efforts to institute a department based on principles established overseas continued to be frustrated and owing to the outbreak of war in 1939, were finally shelved, the whole matter being pursued only in desultory fashion.

The Union Government utilised films in several departments, the largest and best-equipped being the Department of Education which, it was at one time considered, would be a more proper repository for historic films than the Union Archives under the Department of the Interior. Dilatory treatment of the subject continued to result in the loss of films of value to South Africa.

Cinemas for Non-Europeans

Owing to their low wage level, the provision of special cinemas for non-Europeans could not be contemplated for many years.(1) It became general practice to admit non-Europeans, regardless of race, either to the gallery of "bioscopes" or, when such did not exist, to the front seats at specially low charges. When the Censorship Act was passed, special provision was made for the type of films whose exhibition to non-Europeans should not be permitted. This restriction caused a certain amount of resentment among the better-class Cape Coloured and Asiatics.

The behaviour of non-Europeans at the ordinary "bioscopes" was often vociferous in the extreme and aroused considerable resentment among the habitual patrons. From about 1920 onwards when commercial

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(1) A pioneering enterprise was the Electric Theatre for "Coloured Peopl Only" opened in Durban in 1909 which was short-lived. Early attempts to found non-European bioscopes in Cape Town's District Six and other concentrations of Cape Coloured population were also commercially unstable. (see Page 130)

competition became increasingly acute, the exhibiting companies found it increasingly worth their while to garner the very small profits obtainable by catering for the non-European population, especially the Indians in Natal and the Cape Coloured at the Cape. Cinemas were therefore built in most of the areas where sufficient concentration of population warranted it (especially in the Cape Flats area and certain quarters of Cape Town). These "coloured" cinemas had a definite identity as such and their programmes consisted almost exclusively of "Wild Westerns" and musicals. The "tickey bioscope" of the suburbs soon became a popular feature among the non-European section of the community and though it later became necessary to raise the charges for admission, their maintenance remained commercially practicable even at this very low level.

A policy was also instituted of specially importing films made in India which were shown not only at these "coloured bioscopes" but also at the special cinemas for Natal's Indian population. Sounded usually in Hindustani or Tamil, the more outstanding of these films were sometimes patronised by Europeans.

Though primarily the attitude towards the non-European public of the commercial exhibiting companies was dictated largely by the lowness of their spending power, genuine attempts were made to cater for the educated and socially-aspirant classes. The need to capture this public became more necessary after the outbreak of the Second World War and the disappearance of the European market. In time, excellent cinemas were built solely for non-Europeans throughout the Union and in 1940, the first of a chain of "Avalon" theatres for the purpose was opened. Much of this enterprise was in the hands of non-Europeans.

Mobile Cinemas

The institution of permanent cinemas from 1910 onwards by no means extinguished the touring shows which had become as much a feature of dorp life as the circus. These itinerant exhibitions continued to appear at more or less regular intervals; but, as permanent cinemas were opened in increasing numbers throughout the Union and in smaller and smaller dorps, their number diminished. The institution of a "permanent cinema" frequently cloaked the use of a large hotel room or store or sometimes even a garage on one or two nights a week only by an individual with sufficient enterprise to buy a second-hand projector of dubious performance and to obtain programmes of films at small cost

from one of the big distributing companies. (Many of the"bioscopes" operated in the early fiercely competitive days were of this type.) Their operation did however dissuade itinerant showmen from "taking the road" as extensively as previously.

The addiction of the country public to the "bioscope" continued unabated and with the widespread availability of motor transport, the possibilities of mobile cinemas remained. They operated under exceptionally difficult circumstances. Frequently using open motor-cars to carry all their equipment including the films themselves (which suffered severely from the penetration of dust), they traversed great distances between the dorps often on very bad roads. No Equipment existed in the store-rooms, garages and halls in which they gave their shows and they had to supply their own power. In addition, it was not possible to make high charges for admission with the result that great difficulties had to be overcome for very small return. On the other hand, some films (particularly of the"Tarzan" type) were immensely popular in the countr; and it was sometimes possible to make a worthwhile turnover. There were several such enterprises in the field, outstanding among them being Parker's Talkie Tours.

The advent of talkies appeared to deal a death-blow to touring cinemas. Sound equipment which had also to be portable was expensive and demanded a technical knowledge not previously necessary in the business. For some years, the touring cinemas continued to show silent films but in due course, vans were equipped for amplifying sound and th smallest dorps were treated to their first talkie films. This development came just in time to stave off the new and serious competition of the touring Afrikaans dramatic company which from about 1930 onwards, developed extraordinarily and greatly engaged the affections of the country public.

The predilection of the platteland public for the "bioscope" continued to be manifest, people travelling fifty and more miles to see a film show given by a touring cinema in a hall or a garage. Though their supporting programmes were usually very out-of-date, the newsreel at least provided valuable factual information in the remoter areas and later, at the outbreak of war, special arrangements were made to ensure that touring cinemas were provided with the most recent information material.

In addition to the commercial cinemas touring the country with 35mm films, there appeared after the outbreak of war several organisations touring with I6mm films, notably the Union Unity Truth Legion's vans, the recruiting vans operated by the Department of Defence and the units operated by the Volksbioskope. The Tea Market Expansion Bureau had already been touring the native territories with I6mm silent films for some time. In practice, the touring 35mm commercial cinema used feature films and supporting programmes that had completed circuits of permanent cinemas and the films were often cut and otherwise damaged. The Volksbioskope on the other hand used brand-new I6mm prints of its own productions and, in giving very successful exhibitions to Afrikaner audiences of its own inferior films, opened a new field for commercial exploitation.

South African Cinema Inventions

In common with Australia (which several times claimed the invention of the stereoscopic film) and other Dominions, South Africa produced several attempts to intrude revolutionary inventions on the cinema world. The first considerable such enterprise was the launching of a company "Photo-Vision Ltd" (3) directed by well-known personalities - Sir Julius Jeppe, Mr W.E. John, Mr F.C.A. Roberts and under the chairmanship of Mr Bailey-Southwell - which in I927 issued a company report announcing that Mr W.E. John, an industrial engineer, was going to England to secure the commercial exploitation of the invention of Messrs Campbell and Roberts. This invention claimed to remove the flicker from the exhibition of films, then projected at I6 frames a second. The solution to this problem was ingenious and practicable but various difficulties supervened and the company was finally liquidated.

Later (in I93I) considerable popular interest was aroused in the published news (4) that the former Union astronomer, Dr R.T.A. Innes, had invented a means of projecting films stereoscopically by the use of a large mirror. A company was formed, Dr Innes travelled to England for the purpose of arranging a demonstration and reports on the success of the experiment cheered its supporters. The expense and difficulties of installing the apparatus in cinemas as well as other reasons - notably the fact that the public appeared quite satisfied with "flat" films - prevented the further exploitation of the idea and when in March I933, Dr Innes died in London of heart failure, interest finally declined.

In 1938, a Johannesburg dentist, Dr Joseph Copkans, claimed to have secured stereoscopic effect with 16mm films taken and projected by himself; but nothing more was heard of this invention.(5)

Film-Inspired South African Political Cartoons

The first film-inspired South African political cartoon was published in the Cape Register in 1896. It dealt with the appearance of the Vitagraph and showed one of the leaders of a political party then in power apparently exceedingly pained by another personality's projection of a picture (with some minor political significance)upside down on the Vitagraph's screen.(6)

The indirect use of the cinema as a theme was not greatly used by South African cartoonists, individualists such as Wyndham Robinson of the Cape Times preferring to invent their own themes (i); but from 1930 onwards when political rancour somewhat subsided and it was possible to introduce a humorous note into comment, resort was frequently made to the inspiration of films. Most fecund sources were cartoons, particularly "Pop-Eye" (with whom almost every Cabinet Minister was at some time identified) and "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs". Leyden of the Natal Daily News, Fred Thomas of the Sunday Times and Bob Connolly (a citizen of the United States) of the Rand Daily Mail used the cinema to castigate political figures.(ii) The inspiration of films was not neglected either by cartoonists of the Afrikaans press, Ivanoff of Die Vaderland, Honiball of Die Burger and others making occasional use of convenient themes in which Walt Disney's predominated.

South African Cinema Artistes Overseas

During March 1927, there appeared throughout the Union what was later to prove one of the most successful publications ever launched in South Africa - the weekly "Outspan" published at Bloemfontein. The policy of The Outspan was to engage the maximum popular interest and

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(i) A rare occasion on which Wyndham Robinson used a film theme was his non-political cartoon of the rumoured merger between African Theatres and Kinemas - see Page 287 (ii)

(ii) Outstanding examples were Fred Thomas' cartoon "The Donkey Serenade" published in the Sunday Times of the 10th April 1938 and deriving directly from the film "The Firefly" (starring Jeanette Macdonald and Allen Jones and remarkably popular in South Africa) which dealt with Dr Malan's pique at the Nationalists Party's participation in the Fusionist Government led by Generals Hertzog and Smuts; and a cartoon entitled "Theatre of War" published in the Rand Daily Mail on the 12th July 1940 in which Bob Connolly ingeniously contorted the titles of films then actually showing to emphasise the incongruity of the Opposition's attitude towards the war. The focus of this cartoon was the "Biascope".

towards the end of 1928, in conformity with this attitude, it launched a nationwide appeal for a South African film star. A competition conducted by means of photographs and lasting several months, finally resulted in the choice of a Natal dancing teacher, Molly Lamont, who, amidst much popular interest and in conformity with the offer made by The Outspan, was duly feted and sent to England for a screen test. She was given a contract of short duration by British International Studios and duly appeared on the screen in a few small parts. The film production industry both in England and the United States, was glutted with aspirant stars and the most optimistic well-wishers could not hope that Molly Lamont who had had little dramatic training or experience and was distinguished more by a very pleasant appearance, would make a name for herself and for South Africa. Miss Lamont however had qualities of real courage and pertinacity and, working continuously at small parts on stage and screen, she eventually secured a contract with Radio Keith Orpheum and travelled to Hollywood. Here she again played a few small parts in feature films and in 1937 married and settled in Hollywood, apparently abandoning her film career.(1)

During 1933, a similar contest was organised by African Consolidated Theatres on behalf of Paramount Film Studios U.S.A. to find in the space of three weeks "One Man and One Woman" from South Africa for whom free transportation to Hollywood was guaranteed, free hotel accommodation there and a salary of fifty dollars per week for a minimum of five weeks. These contests were organised in several other countries, Paramount Studios being intent on infusing new blood into its existing collection of cinema stars. In South Africa, the response was remarkable, insufficient entry forms being available for the hundreds of aspirants who had to appear at the various theatres operated by African Consolidated Theatres Ltd. Within the prescribed three weeks, amid considerable public excitement, the winners of the contests were announced. The Witwatersrand section was won by Elred Tidbury and Edith Raynham and the choice for South Africa was finally narrowed down to Elred Tidbury and Lucille du Toit by Paramount Studios

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(1) This subsequently proved to be not the case and in 1942, Molly Lamont made a "come-back" by playing a principal role opposite George Sanders in a first-class film "The Moon and Sixpence".

themselves to whom photographs and screen tests of the sectional winners were sent airmail in August 1933.(i) In September 1933, Lucille du Toit and Elred Tidbury left for Hollywood and in November, headlines in the Press announced that Elred Tidbury had succeeded in being awarded a six months contract by Paramount Studios and a thousand dollar bonus for the best performance in the "Search for Talent" film (which was later shown in the Union in cinemas controlled by African Consolidated Theatres Ltd). Lucille du Toit was "narrowly beaten" in all the awards and later returned to South Africa.

Elred Tidbury changed his name to Donald Gray but, despite his success in the contest, was unable to compete with the massed talent that haunted Hollywood studios. With a courage and determination similar to Molly Lamont's, he went to England and played small parts at various studios and on the repertory stage, his pertinacity finally being rewarded by a considerable part in Alexander Korda's Technicolor production "The Four Feathers" in which he gave a praiseworthy performance and which created a considerable stir when shown in South Africa. His next big part was in another British production "Sword of Honour"; but the plethora of talent in English studios again drove him to repertory acting in which he was engaged when the war broke out and he enlisted.(ii)

South Africa also made a bid for fame in Hollywood with juvenile players. A pioneering attack was made by Sybil Jason of Sea Point, Cape a talented child of five years old who went to Hollywood in 1934. A superfluity of such children did not daunt Sybil Jason who succeeded in co-starring with Shirley Temple in "The Little Princess" (shown in South Africa during 1940) made by Twentieth Century-Fox. As she grew older however, there was not sufficient opportunity for her talents and she returned to South Africa early in 1941.(iii) The most successful South African attack was made by the Severn family which, despite

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(i) Edith Raynham pursued her ambition nonetheless and in 1939 went to England where, under the name of Glen Raynham, she played small parts in films.

(ii) Donald Gray enlisted in the British forces and lost an arm during the invasion of Normandy. He returned to South Africa for a short visit during 1945 when he appeared on numerous cinema stages.

(iii) A similar prodigy, Sherlee Kinsmead Collier of Durban, left for Hollywood towards the end of 1941 and attained some success, playing in several films including "Lassie Come Home" and "Valley of Decision".

long residence in the United States, retained their South African nationality. Dr Clifford Severn, a physical culturist, left the Union for Hollywood in 1933 with his family every one of whom has appeared in films, some in starring roles.

South Africa claimed as its own a number of film stars of the first order/many of whomwere in fact, merely born in the Union and who have not revisited it since very early childhood. These include Basil Rathbone (Johannesburg), Victor McLaglen (Newlands, Cape - Cyril and the other McLaglen brothers were stars of the silent screen and have not continued with talkies), Gladys Cooper (Bredasdorp, Cape), Louis Hayward (Johannesburg), Jeanne Casalis (Basutoland), Ian Hunter (Wynberg,Cape), Bruce Lester (Johannesburg), Cecil Kellaway (Cape Town), Margot Graham (Durban), and Glynnis Johns (Pretoria). Numerous South African players have attempted to gain a livelihood in British production studios, some with a fair degree of success such as Glen Raynham, Edana Romney, Phyllis Greenhill and Audrey Boyes.

On the technical side of production, an outstanding personality was Leontine Sagan (born in Klerksdorp, Transvaal) who, though more widely known for her work as a stage producer, gained worldwide renown for her production of the film "Maedchen in Uniform". Ian Dalrymple (Johannesburg) achieved a successful career first as script writer and then as writer-producer, being responsible for the scripts of Shaw's "Pygmalion", "South Riding", "The Lion has Wings" and other successful British productions.(i) The best known South African engaged on the technical side of production in the United States was Noel Langley, a young Durban playwright who, having written two contentious novels "Cage me a Peacock" and "There's a Porpoise close behind Us" in London, went to Hollywood and attained immediate success and prosperity through writing the script of the successful Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer musical production "Maytime" starring Jeanette Macdonald and Nelson Eddy.Langley was also responsible for the original script of "The Wizard of Oz" produced by M-G-M.

(i) Leslie Arliss who, though not properly speaking a South African, was associated with the Union through a lengthy period as a journalist on the staff of the Johannesburg "Star" and became a writer-producer with a special interest for South Africa as the author of the script of "Rhodes of Africa".

(ii) He also wrote a satirical novel on Hollywood called "Hocus Pocus" and towards the end of 1939, enjoyed the extraordinary distinction of having his South African play "The Farm of the Three Echoes" performed in the U.S.A? with Ethel Barrymore in the lead.

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