

taken under natural daylight conditions. But the weather may be inclement and then elaborate artificial lighting has to be resorted to. This takes the form of powerful electric lamps which bathe the whole scene in a brilliant glare. Anything from 50,000 to 100,000 candlepower may be concentrated upon the scene.

This stage is complete in more senses than one. Crowds of scene-shifters are necessary in order to set each scene; and in this connection almost as much speed is shown as upon the orthodox stage, inasmuch as time means money. Costumes, scenery, and properties for any period or situation have to be wrested from the property room, and while the scene-shifters are busy at work upon the stage between the scenes the actors and actresses are hastily changing their costumes.

Then, again, the whole thing has to be timed. A too lengthy film bates the audience just as much as a long drawn out play, perhaps more so. Also in order to hold the public, action must be continuous, soliloquies are blanks and must be ruthlessly cut out. "Keep on the move" is the one adjuration urged upon the members of the company, and rehearsals have to be carried out time after time to make sure of the merest detail before the whole is presented before the camera. At last when all is ready the first night before the sensitive silver film takes place. The operator sets up his camera and carefully focuses and stops down the lens. The coil of film is slipped into the camera and passed over the various pulleys which bring successive small areas of the sensitized



THE AUDIENCE WHICH COMES AND GOES ALL DAY.

The film makers estimate that in England and in America at least six million people attend the moving picture theatres daily.

two and a half hours the moving-picture manager compresses it within a fifth or sixth of that time expunging everything but action. It appears simple

If the scene is being enacted out of doors amid natural surroundings the scene painter and stage carpenter are dispensed with. The company hustle off to the scene of action with their properties stowed in a motor-car, and garbed ready for the event. The operator sets up his machine, and the scene is carried through. When completed the whole outfit returns to headquarters, and possibly days may elapse before the next scene is taken.

The picture secured, the remainder of the task is purely mechanical. The films are consigned to the dark-room and by special contrivances passed through the developing bath, fixed, and dried. The positive then has to be prepared in much the same manner. In due course the manager is informed that the picture is ready, and he repairs to the testing-room to see the reproduction of the play.

In this hall the drama or what not is put through in sections just as taken. The manager follows it carefully, making notes of what periods in the film could be dispensed with very well. In short the play-picture undergoes relentless pruning and editing. Six inches are cut out here, a foot there, and so on; care being exercised that such cuts do not affect cohesion or continuity of action. Possibly the whole reproduction is unsatisfactory, in which event it has to be enacted again with all revisions. When the manager has completed his work the various sections are joined up to form a continuous homogeneous whole. From this negative the positive is print-

ed, and once again the manager witnesses projection of the whole drama in complete form. It receives his earmark of approval, and then is multiplied by the dozen to be sent to picture theatres throughout the world.

It seems a simple operation, but as a matter of fact the preparation of the play from the writing of the manuscript, the drawing-up of the characters, the rehearsal, and the final projection in the testing theatre occupies several weeks or perhaps months. Nothing is hurried. Waste in this particular field inevitably spells failure. When it comes to a huge production such as, perhaps, a moving picture dramatic representation of "A Tale of Two Cities" or other scenes of the French revolutionary period—which be it noted are particularly popular it is a complex problem. Any theatrical manager will tell you that the staging of a crowd is a difficult undertaking, and the manner in which the moving-picture manager handles such masses of humanity is remarkable from the stage effect point of view. The crowd is seen in the zenith of its excitement and from the artistic point of view is of distinct merit. Yet, as you see the spectacle pass before you on the screen, you cannot form the faintest idea of the labour and worries through which the producing manager passed to secure that effect. They were rehearsed time after time, the controlling personality slaying like a dog to work the crowd up to the requisite pitch of excitement.

And what of the expense? A peep at



THE FIGHT ON THE "PLAINS OF ARABIA" IN PROGRESS.

Stage management of a high order is necessary so to display two bottles of troops before the camera as to produce the illusion of war.

surface before the open lens. The electricians switch on their lamps and the manager takes a last look round to see that everything is in perfect order and that the scene can rattle through without a hitch. The actors and actresses stand in the wings ready to take their cue, and those "discovered on the stage" give themselves a final draw up.

"All ready?" asks the manager. "Now, then, go ahead." The play starts. Scarcely has the first movement begun when there is heard the steady rhythmic pinging of the revolving mechanism of the camera as the operator turns it steadily and persistently, making some twelve or sixteen exposures per second. The members waiting in the wings at their appointed times make their entrances and exits in truly theatrical manner. One and all speak the dialogue, as may be observed by the movements of the lips on the screen in projection. There is not a sound beyond the commotions of the players, but round the little scene is grouped an abeyant body of electricians and others all on the qui vive for an emergency, and under the eagle eye of the manager.

"Right" shouts the manager and the camera ceases its monotonous purring. The curtain—or rather the shutter of the lens—has fallen. In a second everything is hustle and bustle, the scene-shifters setting the next scene, while the company are hurriedly changing their costumes if necessary. Meanwhile the operator has slipped a new film into his camera, and calmly awaits the opening of the next scene.

In this way the whole drama is enacted. It may be a play which would occupy the boards of the theatre for some

but five minutes on the stage of a moving-picture film manufacturer is more exhausting than half an hour under general conditions on a stage.



A REHEARSAL FOR THE PICTURE DRAMA "CHARLOTTE CORDAY."

Elaborate rehearsals are necessary for training the actors and the crowds to accustom them to the requirements of the camera.