

A MOVING PICTURE CAMERA ATTACHED TO A LOCOMOTIVE.

In the beginning such pictures as only showed the passing scenery were considered wonderful. In this case a small railway and all its equipment was leased for a day to depict the "drama" of the engineer and his sweetheart who saved him from an accident.

## How Moving Pictures are Produced.

### THE FAKER IN HIS ELEMENT.

WHAT is the most popular form of entertainment to-day? If a public vote were taken on this question, it is safe to say that an overwhelming majority would be given in favour of the moving-picture theatre. No means of diverting the public in their leisure moments have created such a furore or wrought such changes upon the community as the camera which records life in motion upon a long strip of sensitised celluloid film, and projects it in animation upon a white screen by an improvement of the limelight lantern. Indeed, it has relegated the "magic lantern," so fascinating in our younger days, to the limbo of things that were.

Paris was responsible for this latest development; was the seat of the contagion which has swept throughout the world. About four years ago an enterprising Frenchman sought a new magnet to fascinate the public. He cast round, but inventors appeared unfortunate in hitting upon the right thing to hypnotise the masses, or else the latter had become somewhat blasé. The ordinary forms of diversissement which hitherto had attracted the people in their thousands failed to rouse a particle of interest. Suddenly he bethought himself of the cinematograph.

Up to this time the quasi-coffee grinding magic lantern had been seen but little. Its chief point of attraction was curiosity, and it was regarded more as a scientific toy. This Frenchman decided upon a new plan of action. He would produce tragedy, comedy, drama, and farce in pictures upon the screen in addition to mere scenic pictures. He secured a selection of varied films, leased a hall suited to their projection on a life-size scale, and in this way gave a pictorial pantomime reproduction upon the white-sheet. He furnished his hall upon the most up-to-date lines with tip-top comfortable seats, gaily bedecked the exterior of his building, illuminating it brilliantly and attractively by night, and charged only a few pence for admission.

He nursed half an idea that he would succeed. And he did, but in a manner that exceeded his most sanguine ambitions. The first night there was a fairly large curiosity-provoked audience which did not think for a moment that it would tolerate such an exposition for a solid hour. But its attention was so absorbed that the sixty minutes slipped by as if they were seconds.

The result was that the enterprising Frenchman found his theatre and new

attraction the one theme of conversation in Paris. Crowds flocked to his doors the people fought round the box-office to secure admission, and every inch of space within the building was crammed. The people shrieked with laughter, applauded vigorously the thrilling escapes of the inanimate hero, hissed the villain; in fact they were so enthralled as to think that they were looking upon the real thing, and not a mere pictorial representation thereof.

The moving picture show swept over Paris like an epidemic. The pioneer within a month found that he had reaped his initial outlay and was well on the right side of his profit and loss account, while the rush still at the flood gave no signs of abating. He saw a fortune looming steadily in the distance. Others, following his example with alacrity, and in a short time the boulevards and side streets from the west end to the slums were bristling with moving-picture theatres. It developed into an absolute rage.

Other countries soon fell victims to the epidemic. In Germany, where the cinematograph had scarcely been seen or heard of, as it was somewhat foreign

to the tastes of the stolid Teuton, picture theatres sprang up on all sides. In Italy, Belgium, Spain, Austria, and Russia it was the same. The wave swept across the channel and caught up the English in its mad rush. Hitherto the biograph display had been merely a turn in the legitimate music hall entertainment a side issue turned to convenient use to rivet the audience while a big stage scene was being set. Now it became the entire programme of an establishment.

Large buildings which had been standing vacant for years suddenly were in great demand, were metamorphosed quickly and changed into humming restless hives of activity. Companies sprang up on all sides and as the profits realised by the early concerns were so over-whelming, the public subscribed lavishly. Four years ago it is safe to assert that in the British islands there was not a single building devoted to the exclusive presentation of moving pictures. Today there are over 4000 cinematograph palaces. As the majority of these undertakings give two shows an evening at least, and seat an average of 300 people for the two houses, which is a very modest computation, over 1,200,000 people patronise the moving-picture theatres every evening.

But inasmuch as the show lasts on the average about an hour, and is continued without interruption for six or nine hours per day it is safe to assert that the number is nearer three millions per day. It is well within the mark to say that the British public spend £25,000 a day on this amusement. Probably the sum is double that figure, but taking the average expenditure of twopence per head this is the result obtained from an attendance of 3,000,000 people per day.

The effect upon the manufacturing industry devoted to the production of animated pictures for the delectation of the public is amazing. It is an industry concentrated in but a few hands, comparatively speaking. Three hundred firms would represent the total number for the whole world. This fact is due to the expensive character of the work. That it is highly remunerative is evident from a little investigation.

One firm in Paris, which is probably the largest of its class in Europe, pays a dividend of ninety per cent. upon its capital. In the United States Mr. T. Mva Edison, the American inventor of the cinematograph, nets anything from £1000 to £3000 a week in royalties accruing from the use of his kinematograph appliances.

But between these firms there exists a healthy rivalry. The public having survived the first effects of the craze have become critical as much so in fact as the legitimate playgoers. As a play may fail to draw the public so may a film. The result is that the moving-picture record manufacturer is a somewhat complex personality. In the first place he must be thoroughly an art with the techniques of the photographic side, so as to be sure to produce a film free from all blemish. Then he must be a keen student of human emotions so as to be able to produce pictures which strike the right chord.

With these two attributes he must assimilate a first rate knowledge of stage-

craft, more difficult in his particular instance as often he has to move the pieces over an actual chess board—in other words stage. The play in its natural surroundings. Also as comedy must be well combined with the dramatic he must devote special attention to this detail. Moreover everything must be absolutely perfect, inasmuch as the camera is relentless in its record.

What is the result? The film maker draws the character for his pictorial drama, comedy, farce, or what not from the profession. The players have to learn and study their parts with far more infinite care than is necessary upon the stage, inasmuch as there is no dialogue to counteract defects in action. The public merely sees the representation, and everything must be carried out so as to convey a perfectly lucid impression of the subject, the action must in every respect explain and portray the dialogue.

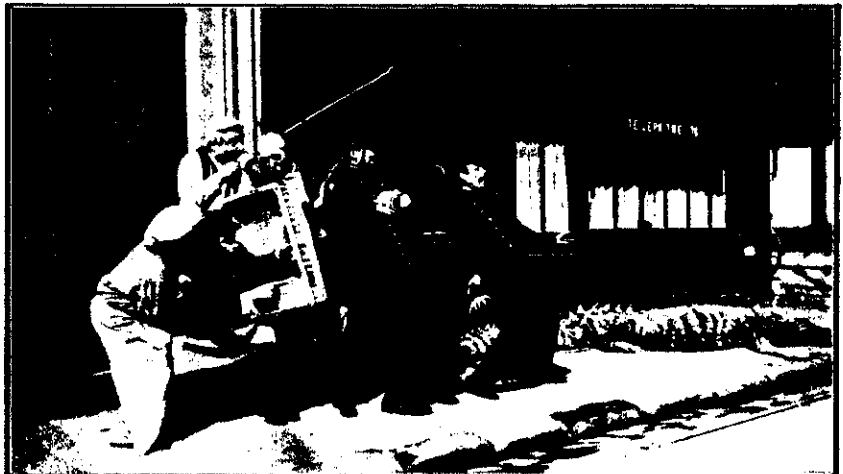
For this reason the actors and actresses have to be selected very carefully. A popular idol may be a perfect success before the footlights, but that is not to say that he will be so in front of the camera, no more than a popular



THE ENGINEER AND HIS SWEETHEART.

nightingale is a success on the phonograph. Cold blooded mechanism has no regard for human popularity.

The actors and actresses in the play having been found suitable the next step is the preparation of the setting of the scene. This may take place either in the open air in a natural environment, or upon a stage. If the latter the scenic artist has to be brought into evidence, and here again much depends upon the individual. He is severely fettered by limitations. Everything has to be painted in monochrome and in black and white at that. The stage is as large or larger than that of the average theatre, and externally resembles a bit of greenhouse. As a rule the front is made movable so that the whole stage can face the open air. In reality it is an immense studio, a multiplicity of blinds being required to secure the requisite lighting effects when



A SCENE POSED IN THE STREETS OF PARIS

A quiet day is chosen, and French actors hired to enact such comic farces as this one entitled 'An Act of Astory.'