

WALTER HUSTON TALKS ON RHODES

"A Good Day for a Death Scene!"

INTERVIEWED BY RAY LEWIS (Editor Canadian Moving Picture Digest)

WHEN I visited the Gaumont-British studio at Shepherd's Bush, the director, Berthold Viertel, was directing the death scene of "Rhodes," with Walter Huston as the Empire builder.

Rhodes is finding it difficult to get his breath, and has asked Dr. Jamieson to open the window wider for more air.

Rhodes gasps, "That's better." I said to Director Viertel, "You are filming the death of Rhodes on Friday, 13th. Are you not superstitious?" He appeared somewhat disturbed, but later on I discovered that he had whispered it to Walter Huston, who remarked, "It's a good day for a death scene!"

It was a powerful scene; I can see Walter Huston now with the spirit of Rhodes in his eyes, Rhodes, who is dying at forty-nine, and still dreaming of a South African Union which only came to fruition after his death.

Afterwards I talked to Huston about the characters he had played.

"I admire people of energy, of courage, those who have the capacity for work," he said. "The man who succeeds is the man who crashes Good Fortune; a man of Rhodes character could not help but succeed. He had the driving force which makes success, the same driving force as we find in all big men to-day."

"But," said I, "these men fail! The very force which drives them on eventually defeats them." "Rather," replied Huston, "is it not this: That what men of the Rhodes type plan to do can never be accomplished in man's span of years."

"Rhodes was a weak boy physically, he had a bad heart and lungs. He went out to Africa and became a cotton farmer. He was known to have made six wills. The first at twenty-seven, at which time, he was quite prepared to die."

"He was strongly pacifistic, desiring peace, and his ideas, in connection with Africa, by way of English expansion, were actuated by a spirit of peaceful penetration. He saw England's mission as that of an Empire builder. The colonial inspiration he inherited from his family, and, although he made a fortune in the diamond fields, his interests were not solely commercial, even when he organised interests to go northward into Africa to find gold, for parallel with this gold hunt was the purpose of uniting the tribes of Africa."

"He was a statesman building a colony for England. He thought, by uniting the native races, the Boers, the education of the blacks would follow. But the Boers saw South Africa as their country, they were not at all interested in his plans, nor of being subjects under the flag of England. There was the inevitable clash, for Kruger could not, and would not, be won over."

"I think I am as good in "Rhodes," as I have ever been in any character I have played," said Walter Huston. "The character gives me great scope."

BRUM PANTOS EXTENDED

Alexandra Show for South Africa

SO heavy have been the bookings for the pantomimes at Birmingham that both at the Prince of Wales Theatre ("Babes in the Wood," with the Houston Sisters, Douglas Byng, Betty Huntley-Wright, and Ned Anderson), and the Theatre Royal ("Puss in Boots," with Sandy Powell, Eve Becke, Marjorie Loting, and De Haven and Page), the runs have been extended to March 14.

The Alexandra "Cinderella" show (Georgie Wood, Clark Ross, Rich and Galvin, Muriel Cronshaw, and Kitty Prince) goes on into April, while "1066 and All That," at the Repertory, is due to finish, although booked up well ahead, on February 24, when a play based on "Jane Eyre" will have its premiere.

The Alexandra pantomime is due to visit South Africa next winter for ten weeks or more. Several of the artists, including Georgie Wood, hope to make the voyage.

TALKING SHOP

(By "THE ERA" STAFF)

W. H. AUDEN

"Dramatists Should Go to the Music-Hall"

By R. B. MARRIOTT

THAT the young dramatist of today should go to the music-hall to learn something at first-hand about stagecraft and how to be "effective" in his work was one of the views expressed by W. H. Auden, the playwright, essayist, and poet, when I had a talk with him.

Mr. Auden has written two of the most discussed plays of the season—"The Dance of Death," a satire on the decay of the British middle-class, and (with Christopher Isherwood) "The Dog Beneath the Skin," a satire on the state of things in the world to-day. The latter has just been produced with success at the Westminster Theatre by the Group Theatre Company, under the benevolent eye of Amber Hall.

Mr. Auden was talking about learning one's job in the theatre, and I had asked him where he would send a dramatist to learn to-day.

"To the music-hall," he replied. "There you will find life being recreated every few minutes; creative work is going on all the time, and the dramatist will see that the music-hall has drifted so far from life as other forms of entertainment."

Mr. Auden, whose plays combine many of the elements of revue and variety, has himself got his earliest cast in a few weeks' time, but did not wish to add, last week, to the staggering pile of solemnities built up by the B.B.C. . . . that Stuart Hibberd, chief announcer, acquitted himself very certainly in most onerous circumstances, though Reith himself decided to make the announcement of King George's death. . . . that Percy Cudlipp and Pat Mannock are responsible for a song, "March of the Men of Garlic," beginning "Why Should Ethiopian Noses Catch Italian Halitosis?" . . . that Quality's "Royal Eagle," directed by George Cooper, from Arnold Ridley's story, is the screen "dark horse" of the year. Good, Master Ridley! . . . And so on.

STOP Press. Mrs. John (Grandma) Ary, eighty-nine years old, of Lawrence, Kansas, says, that modern women "sissies" Mr. Ary smokes big, black cigars, brought up ten children, reads Western magazines, and recently enjoyed a coon hunt.

AN INGENIOUS COMEDY

"Polish" at Cheltenham

"POLISH," by H. Worrall-Thompson, produced by the author at the Winter Garden Theatre, Cheltenham, is a modern comedy concerning the Bramley family, the head of which is a new-rich boot-polish manufacturer. He has been married twice, and has had two children by his first wife, these being at the least uneducated, and two by his second wife, who have had the advantages of a good education.

The play starts with old Bramley's decision that a certain friction existing between the children must cease, and he decides that Fay and Lionel, the educated ones, are to "go through the works, while Emily and Bob are to be polished up."

The situations thus created have heaps of comedy in them, and this Mr. Worrall-Thompson has brought out well. His dialogue is continuously amusing, and his handling of his characters and their predicaments is very well done.

The play goes with a swing and has a surprising end. It was admirably acted and produced with skill.

Eileen Conlon played the part of Mrs. Bramley, with a real sense of character, while James Hoyle created an interesting and amusing personage in Mr. Bramley.

As the children, Margaret McGill (Emily), Harry Douglas (Bob), Arthur Howard (Lionel), and Jean Compton (Fay) were all good, and it must have been a pleasure to the author to see them make his characters full of real life and vivacity.

The penniless son of an Irish peer was neatly played by Walter Horsburgh, Frank Follows was just right as the butler, and William Nutton and Irene Howard were entirely satisfactory as the footman and the maid.

In the drinking scene in "The Informer," no props were used. "Often in a conversation he will take the opposite view."

FORD, who is completing "Mary of Scotland," with Katharine Hepburn, is going on to make "The Life of Custer," a saga of American frontier life, which will probably be an "all-colour" film. Custer was massacred by the Dakota Indians in 1876, in an

THERE is to be a special film-critic for the Children's Hour, reveals Charles Graves in an article on the B.B.C.

NOTE on Robert Browning, from the diary of the great Macready, after the production and failure of the poet's play, "The Blot on the Scutcheon."

March 18, 1842. Went out: met Browning, who was startled into accosting me, but seeming to remember that he did not intend to do so, started off in great haste. What I did contemplate, which one ought not to feel, can we with galled spirit feel for these wretched insects about one?"

OUT of 10,000 theatres equipped by Western Electric, nearly 3,000 are said to be in the British Empire, according to an advertisement in an Australian newspaper.

Sets on which the sun never does.

GALE PEDRICK, who has been deputising for A. E. Wilson in the "Star," claims to have found one of the original badges worn by the "K.O.W."—the "Keen-on-Waller's Club. It belongs to Lewis Waller's sister, and has a picture of the actor as "Beucaire" on one side.

Part of the device on the other side is a pansy, which in those days was a modest and shrinking product of horticulture.

"I WISH to court the derision of the cultured by associating myself with those critics who have praised 'Cyrano de Bergerac.'"—G. K. Chesterton.

"Ayes" versus "Noes."

INFORMATION about John Ford, who directed "The Informer," best film of 1935:

His real name is Sean O'Fiennes, and he is the brother of Francis Ford, the old-time serial star.



JOHN MILLS, in the role of Lord Dudley in "Lady Jane Grey."

episode which has become famous as "Custer's Last Stand."

FROM a new novel: "A chipolata is only a lower-case sausage."

BERLIN is also celebrating cinema anniversaries. In this case the honoured ones were the brothers Max and Emil Siskind, who gave a cinema show in the German capital forty years ago, with an apparatus so noisy that only a vigorous orchestra could suppress it.

WALT DISNEY seems to be continuing his series of subtle Hollywood impersonations started in "The Tortoise and the Hare" and "Who Killed Cock Robin?"

PROVINCIAL FIRST NIGHTS

MANAGER TURNS DRAMATIST

aspire to turn up at Reuben's home for their mutual benefit.

The clash of Reuben with his Lancashire wife and grown-up family of two daughters and a son is too full of comic detail for description. Eileen Draycott as the wife, as is usual with her in these parts, typically Lancashire. Reuben, by the way, is not so strongly accented. As for the family, they are over-accentuated in such a "refined" way that they are almost out of the picture. It should be said, too, that the unities of the whole laughable adventure are further dislocated by the quality of their "society" visitors, of whom Mollie Scott-Wyson, charmingly played by Jessica Dunning, is attached to John Brookings's insufferable Ernest Potter.

The fun of the situation, when Domine Roche as Reuben so quietly and unaggressively dominates it, as he is doing most of the time, largely covers up these flaws. In the end, an issue is devised which is quite satisfactory to Reuben, and not altogether unacceptable to his wife, who retains just a little warm corner for him in her heart.

Charles Lamb, as Joe Barker, added a very lively understanding, apparently inspired by the genuine Cockney sense of humour. Alison Bayley's impersonation of Mrs. Sutcliffe, the "deceived" landlady, was commendably in the vernacular. Marjorie Drake had the task of infusing conviction into the "superior" rôle of Mrs. Scott-Wyson: Enid Hewitt's impersonation of Margery Potter was disagreeable, but well done; and a very nice rendering of the younger sister, Freda, a different type, was given by Joan Sharp.

"ONCE A GENTLEMAN" W. ARMITAGE OWEN, business manager of the Manchester Repertory Theatre, and already author of several successful Lancashire comedies, revealed to a much-tickled audience after the first performance of "Once a Gentleman," last Wednesday evening, that his inspiration for the play had sprung directly out of Dominic Roche's performance as Reuben Potter in the recently-produced "Sally's Husband" (of which he was part author) at the same theatre.

There seems no reason why he should not go on repeating the experiment of the self-same Reuben Potter in a variety of similar plays.

MANCHESTER'S OFFICIAL REPERTORY THEATRE

THE most significant move on record in Manchester in favour of the interests of repertory has just taken place.

At the beginning of last week an inaugural meeting of 150 enthusiastic supporters of the Manchester Repertory Theatre was arranged, to consider whether the Municipal Libraries Committee might give sympathetic backing to the application of the club, their being formed, for permission to hold meetings in the little theatre of the city's new Central Library.

The objects of the club, membership of which is open to "all who are interested in the theatre and the repertory movement," are to stimulate, first and foremost, support for the Manchester Repertory Theatre, and to press for the removal of the Repertory Theatre from near the city-miles out to the centre of the city.

It was decided to appeal to the authorities on the question, with the result that, at the week-end, the Repertory Theatre received intimation from the Municipal Committee that the application for the use of the little theatre was granted.