

# THE SCREEN

By MORDAUNT HALL.

## Hero Remains a Bachelor.

**COBRA**, with Rudolph Valentino, Nita Naldi, Casson Ferguson, Gertrude Olmstead, Claire de Orez, Eileen Percy, Lillian Langdon, Henry Barrows and Rosa Rosanova, adapted from Martin Brown's play, directed by Joseph Henabery; divertissements, with singing and dancing; "M. W. Balfe," one of the "Music Master" series; Kharum, Persian pianist. At the Rivoli.

The original theme of Martin Brown's play, "Cobra," having been written for a woman star, obviously puzzled the picture-makers in their efforts to twist it into a virile vehicle for Rudolph Valentino. Therefore this main idea receives but scant attention in the screen version, the narrative of which, as it is unfurled, is moderately entertaining until the director and his henchmen decide to include a fang or two of the poisonous reptile. It then becomes quite absurd and the accompanying captions assist in the general decline.

Nita Naldi is supposed to officiate in the title rôle, but she is not called upon to appear until the story is well on its way. It is soon after her entrance that the real theme is attacked, the adapter having endeavored to shift the importance of the character from Elsie Van Zile to Count Rodrigo Torriani, which results in the distressing consequences.

Torriani, played by Mr. Valentino, is painted as a happy-go-lucky nobleman who finds any pair of feminine eyes enchanting. One might infer that he is sowing wild oats with a vengeance, as he is constantly discovering himself to be infatuated with some new fascinating creature. He has only to shake their hands, look into their eyes, and the wicked work is started. One of these charming young women happens to be Mary Drake, a stenographer, who is declared to be sweet and innocent, and is an inspiration to the Count to cause him to mend his ways. This good girl is an artist with paint and powder. Her lips are like cherries and her eyes are liberally outlined with mascara. Yet she is declared to be so serious in her attentions that one would expect her to shy at the sight of a lipstick.

The Count falls in love with this Mary, but he cannot resist Elsie's black eyes, even though she is wedded to his fast friend, Jack Dorning; and this brings about trouble. Elsie is burned to death in a hotel fire and Dorning eventually learns of the Count's conduct. So as to ingratiate the Count in the eyes of the spectators, the scenarist has him make a sacrifice. He insists to Mary that he is just as bad as ever, and the consequence is that she marries Dorning. So in this little tale Dorning has two wives, but the Count remains a bachelor.

Mr. Valentino takes advantage of the opportunity to wear a variety of clothes. In one sequence he is seen as the Count's seventeenth century ancestor. After that he wears golf clothes, lounge suits, white flannel trousers with a blue coat, white shoes with a blue suit, and when he dines alone he is so punctilious that he appears in full evening dress. In one sub-title the Count is alluded to as an "indoor sheik," and the fight that follows gives Valentino credit for a Firpo blow, while his opponent must have a cast-iron jaw.

Casson Ferguson, who officiated as the villain in the film version of "Grumpy," and recently was seen in a similar part in "The Road to Yesterday," in this current feature fills the sympathetic rôle of Dorning in a somewhat stereotyped fashion. Miss Naldi, whose eyes match Mr. Valentino's, makes the best of a bad bargain. Mr. Valentino's acting is acceptable, but he is not indifferent to his much exploited looks.

## Three Chorus Girls.

**SALLY, IRENE AND MARY**, with Constance Bennett, Joan Crawford, Sally O'Neill, William Haines, Douglas Gilmore, Ray Howard, Agnes Herrin, Kate Price, Lillian Elliott, Henry Kolker, Sam De Grasse and Mae Cooper, adapted from the musical comedy success, directed by Edmund Goulding; overture, "Capriccio Italiano"; ballet, "Voices of Spring"; "Hawaiian Hours"; "The Slave Market," with singing and dancing; "A Peep into Slam," a scenic. At the Capitol.

Edmund Goulding, who has contributed some sterling adaptations to the screen, including that of "Tol'able David," falls far short of his usual standard in the picturization of the musical comedy, "Sally, Irene and Mary," which he directed as well as adapted. This subject emerges from Hollywood as a species of melodrama packed with trite ideas and appallingly obvious situations. It is a tawdry preachment concerned with the night life of gold-digging chorus girls, at the close of which the old-fashioned moral holds good.

The captions allude to the "wolves of Broadway," and the libertine of this picture, Marcus Morton, is designated the "leader of the pack." Judging from that which is thrown on the screen, Mr. Morton thinks of nothing else except stage beauties, and one opines that he looks in exceedingly good health considering the hours he keeps. Mr. Goulding reminds the spectators that a girl has been out all night, and he shows that she is still so full of life that she enthuses to her friends about the beautiful weather—the sun is pouring its rays through the window curtains. Mary, impersonated by Sally O'Neill, learns so much about the night life that she decides to refuse wealth and return to her Jimmy Dugan, a rather awkward young man who wears the same shirt day after day.

Irene, who is loved by a millionaire, is killed in an automobile wreck, which tragedy brings home to the girls the error of their ways, or at least, the fact that they are playing with fire.

There is quite an imposing sequence picturing a scene on the stage with the audience in the theatre. It is perhaps the best thing in this effort, and even this is spoiled at the end by a visitation of Irene's ghost.

No picture of this calibre would be quite complete without a moon. Here, through the clouds one perceives a new moon, which is followed by the frolicsome Mary and silk-shirted Jimmy embracing each other.

As contrasts there are Erte decorations and tenement house scenes. For suspense there is the telegraph operator writing a message as it comes over the wire, with long pauses between words. The sentences, in the vernacular, are made to suit the occasion, and as this operator writes, the scene is switched to one of a girl and a man in a car racing with an express train, the girl leaning over and kissing the man, when a baby might have known that it was a risky thing to do.

Constance Bennett impersonates the more sophisticated of the trio of chorus girls. She is attractive and does as well as one can expect. Joan Crawford figures as the unfortunate Irene, and Sally O'Neill manifests a penchant for impudent comedy as Mary.

## Other Photoplays.

Colleen Moore in "We Moderns," is the chief offering at the Mark Strand.

"His People," with Rudolph Schildkraut, is the current attraction at the Rialto.

At Warners' the high light on the program is "Seven Sinners."

"The Big Parade," is at the Astor; "Stella Dallas," at the Apollo; "The Phantom of the Opera," at the Colony; "The Vanishing American," at the Criterion; "The Merry Widow," at the Embassy; "Wandering Fires," at the Broadway, and "Clothes Make the Pirate," at the Brooklyn Strand.

## REMEMBER

The 100 Neediest Cases.

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