

# THE SCREEN

"Experience," a screen version of George V. Hobart's play of the same name, directed by George Fitzmaurice, with Richard Barthelmess in the leading rôle, that of Youth, is the photoplay at the Rivoli this week.

There are people, apparently, who are entertained by these so-called morality stories on the stage and screen, for producers keep on presenting them and it is reported that they have box-office justification for doing so. But one cannot help wondering why.

Take this "Experience," for example: The leading character is Youth. He has Mother and Love in the beginning, but Ambition calls him to the Great City, where he neglects Opportunity for Pleasure, Intoxication, Excitement and Temptation, only to find himself later reduced to the company of Poverty. After an unhappy experience with Delusion and Crime, he goes back home and finds Love waiting for him. Then Ambition returns, and, presumably, Youth never loses him again. Simple, isn't it?

And yet it isn't as simple as that, for these personified virtues, vices, states of mind and conditions of servitude are, after all, people playing parts in a story with a plot, and if they are to be manipulated to suggest human beings there is an incongruous mixture of symbolism and literalism that cannot be avoided, or, at least, hasn't been in the present work. The result is confusing, and often unintentionally amusing. Thus, Intoxication, a girl who attracts Youth in the Primrose Path is jilted by him for another girl named Temptation, whereupon Intoxication shows every sign of jealousy. But is there any rivalry between Intoxication and Temptation? If Intoxication isn't Temptation, what's her lure?

And the morality of the story, as brought out by the symbolic figures, is strange, not to say discouraging, to any honest, hard-working fellow who wants to enjoy life a little without going to the dogs. For example, Youth finds Pleasure, Good Nature, Beauty and Excitement only in the wicked Primrose Path. Aren't they to be found in any nice place? It is also noticed that Opportunity appears to be shortsighted, and the character he resembles most is Gloom. Experience is never cheerful, and, although Love is faithful throughout, when she goes to search for Youth she leaves Hope behind. No wonder she isn't successful. Her unseen companion, apparently, is Faint Heart.

Thus, you see, if you examine this simple story at all closely, it shows itself to be a meaningless jumble, and, as you look it over, you may notice that nowhere does Truth appear in it. Consistency, Logic and Sincerity are also absent. Tediousness and Triteness are present from the beginning, however.

Mr. Fitzmaurice, who directed the production, has shown himself a skillful maker of pictures in previous works, but there are only a few shots in "Experience" to sustain his reputation, and almost no sample of cinematography. The settings are elaborate. The large cast overacts, for the most part, though there are bits by Mr. Barthelmess, Kate Bruce and a few others which would be worth while in a more persuasive setting.

There's one thing about Charles Ray's pictures that always saves them from complete negligibility. No matter how weak or incredible his story may be, it is invariably illuminated by genuinely cinematographic scenes which are a pure delight. "A Midnight Bell," at the Strand this week, for instance, is not particularly plausible, and has the weakness of a mystery story with several loose ends which are never brought together. But there are scenes in it between Ray and Van Dyke Brooke, and of Ray alone in a haunted church, which make the spectator feel so good that he is likely to take it for granted that the photoplay is much better than it really is. And these scenes are vivified by imaginative selection and cutting as well as by expressive acting. One of them, for example, is of a country store while an unprecedented bargain sale is in progress. The crowd at the door is shown and then women rushing into the store. After that the cash register becomes the centre of the action. Ray, as Martin Tripp, and Brooke, as Abner Grey, are repeatedly shown dashing up to the register to make change and away again, out of the picture. As fast as one of them rings up a sale and hurries away, the other comes running up. How much more vivid, and pointedly emphatic of the success of the sale this is than scenes of the scrambling customers would have been. The customers are seen, all right. They fill your imagination, and you enjoy them there the more because you are so seldom allowed to imagine anything at the movies.

The story is an adaptation of the play of the same name by Charles Hoyt. Doubtless many will recall that it is about a drummer who finds himself discharged in a "tank town" and stays there to get another job. He shows the proprietor of the general store how to make his business more profitable, investigates a supposedly haunted church, thwarts the plans of a band of bank robbers and marries his employer's daughter. Doris Pawn is the heroine this time and Donald MacDonald is the principal villain. Mr. Ray directed the production himself, with the assistance of Albert Ray.

"Boys," a Sport Pictorial, by Grantland Rice and Jack Eaton, is also at the Strand.

"A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court," which was recently at the Central Theatre, is at the Capitol this week, and Elinor Glyn's "The Great Moment" has moved from the Rivoli to the Rialto.