

# FILM SATIRE FACING TEST

## Sam E. Rork Believes "Clothes Make Pirate" Will Prove Action Makes for Success

What price satire in the films? That's the question Sam E. Rork must answer when his new film comedy, "Clothes Make the Pirate," comes to Loew's State soon with Leon Errol, Ziegfeld's great comedy star, and Dorothy Gish, in the stellar roles.

Other producers have answered the question by giving satire a wide berth. In books and on the stage it is a popular style of expression. But on the screen it has failed to pay its way, and film producers, being primarily business men, make devout obeisance to the teachings of the box-office Baal.

From the standpoint of merit, the screen is not without its achievements in satire. The "Connecticut Yankee" was a somewhat blunt start. A higher refinement was reached in Lubitsch's "Marriage Circle," and Chaplin's "The Woman of Paris." It is no secret that, from the box-office angle, none of these pictures brought any considerable inflation to the producers' purses.

### FILM SATIRE DIFFICULT

From a cursory view it would seem that, of all the forms of expression which have played foster-parent to this cast-off child of the Muses, the cinema is the one to which it should be most fondly clasped. In books there is the difficulty of visualizing the subtly drawn picture from the author's words, while on the stage the evasiveness of epigrammatic lines, the enunciation of the players and the lack of pause to study out meanings that is one of the advantages of written satire—these combine to render stage satire more difficult.

In the films these difficulties would not seem to be so severe. Problems are worked out in plain view. Life's little ironies, its whimsicalities, the immutability of fate and all the gentle perversities of which satire is compounded, can be unfolded on the screen in a manner which even the least of intellects should be able to grasp.

In fact, the greatest difficulty apparent on the surface is the film-house seating problem, whereby near-sighted persons invariably get the last row, while somnolent husbands and sweethearts, dragged by their consorts determined to miss nothing, get the soporific effect of sitting too near the screen.

### RORK TELLS REASON

Why, then, has satire failed to achieve its full possibilities on the screen. Let Sam E. Rork, who has ventured into satire in producing "Clothes Make the Pirate," tell the reason as he sees it.

"It is because producers who have tried to use satire have lost sight of the other essentials of box office appeal," says Rork. "A film story must have strong dramatic action or it drags, and a story that drags fails to hold interest on the screen.

"Satire, of itself, is inclined to pall because it does not appeal as strongly to the eye as to the mind. In making 'Clothes Make the Pirate' I have sought to avoid this. The story which Marion Fairfax has evolved is the whimsical satire of Holman Day, the novelist from whose book it was adapted. But it is woven around the farcical, broad comedy of Leon Errol.

"That of itself, however, would not be enough. We have supplied what I think is the one thing necessary to make satire successful on the screen—action. We have filmed a sea battle between two sailing ships, an attack of pirates on a British man o' war.

### PLENTY OF EXCITEMENT

"There is plenty of excitement when the pirates mistake the war sloop for a merchant ship and board it to make their captives walk the plank. As another feature, part of this sequence is in color."

There is no denying, according to Rork, the satiric quality of "Clothes Make the Pirate." It has a setting back in the pre-Revolutionary days of Boston. Errol plays a timid tailor with a pirate complex who runs away to escape the henpecking of his wife and the bullying of his neighbors. He meets up with a band of pirates while masquerading in pirate costume, and they mistake him for the new leader they have been awaiting.

Leon Errol and Dorothy Gish are co-starred in a cast which includes Nita Naldi, Tully Marshall, George Marion, Edna Murphy, James Rennie, Reginald Barlow, Frank Lalor and Walter Law.

## Sterrett Ford Faces New War With Each Film

The war has been over for seven years for most people, but not for Sterrett Ford. For him, there's a new war with every new picture almost, and the producers don't confine themselves to recent wars either.

Ford, who was a real colonel in the last real war, was almost a field marshal in his last screen battle. That was taken in the period when Gen. Custer was in his prime, Ford being production manager for "The Three Bad Men," the next epic to be released by William Fox.

In his capacity of film general, Ford must be a walking encyclopedia of military lore. He must be able, offhand, to marshal Genghis Khan's hordes or Gen. Kruger's sharpshooters. Every detail of the opposing armies, be they redskins and Arabian cavalry or Cossacks and Arab tribesmen, are his particular forte.

Ford, after functioning as production manager in a number of other big pictures, was chosen by Rex Ingram as his right-hand bowler for "The Four Horsemen."

During the shooting of "The Three Bad Men," Col. Ford was in full charge of all production detail. On the Mojave, he had a full regiment of 1200 men, his job being to get them there, keep them happy while they were there, and then bring them back again.

Director John Ford, who made the picture, gives a lot of the credit for the big outside sequences in the film to Col. Ford.

### BUCK PLAYS HEAVY

Buck Black says he would much rather be a villain than hero before the camera. Master Buck, who is 8 years old, is playing the heavy for the first time in his screen career in Bob De Lacy's production, "Born to Battle" produced at the F. B. O. Studios. He says that being a bad man is much more interesting than doing the goody, goody stuff.