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INDIAN FILMS

(continued from previous page)

human being. At such a time are forgotten all the Mae Wests of the world, and one remembers only the gentle smile of innocent lips. Sensuous curves fail to excite, and the mind recaptures only the peaceful beauty of a figure dressed simply and decently. . . . A man may turn his head several times to see the shapely ankles of a woman passing by, he may even treat her to sumptuous dinners and conduct her to best cinema theatres, but when it comes to settling in life, the question *Will you marry me?* is addressed to a woman whose ankles are a mystery to him . . . the same applies to his admiration for the female artiste on the screen. . . . It is artistes like Greta Garbo—big-footed and flat-chested—who hold his praise and regard."

Well, that's the Indian angle on glamour; a rather angular angle, one might say. But this also is an Indian angle expressed by the same writer:

"It must not be forgotten that whether an artiste is portraying a millionaire's daughter or a beggar girl, she must be an Indian first and Indian last. . . . The interpretation of the role one is playing must be according to the Indian conception of life."

Exactly. It seems a pity that such an intelligent outlook is not found among those responsible for the publicity of Indian films.

THE tone of moral "uplift" and sermonising that one finds in the excerpt just quoted, and in nearly all the writing by Indians in this magazine, is especially prominent in an article on "Film Journalism: What It Is and What It Should Be," by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, in which the writer says useful things in language that often sounds curiously naive to our Western ears. For instance:

"An honest film journalist should always point out the defects and lapses of the industry and propagate through his paper the cause for which the industry is striving so hard. A man never knows his own follies and foibles unless they are pointed out in the best of spirits. If the person referred to is well-meaning, he thinks about the suggestion; and tries to act up to them as far as possible. There lies the pleasure of the journalist and his enthusiasm for serving the cause."

But so far as language goes, the most amusing article is that in which an Indian journalist describes how he tried to interview "the Mysterious Neena" (who must be the Indian equivalent of Greta Garbo—at least from the point of view of reticence, not that of angularity or big feet!). This is a typical Hollywood-style publicity build-up, expressing Indian thoughts in a curious composite of English and American jargonese:

"The greater the mystery with which the lady surrounded herself, the keener was my curiosity to see her—and anyone would agree that it was but human on my part. Was I not entitled to know more of my favourite actress? Was I not in Poona just to gaze on her in real life and to be conscious of her living presence? Dash it all, was she so mysterious as to be practically invisible? . . . O.K., said I to myself, I would find out what all this mystery was about."

At last the writer managed to see the Vision, and this is how he described it:

"Dressed in a light Punjabi costume, she (Neena) was walking with an easy grace; there was a spring in her movement and a swing in her gait. . . . There were real curls in her thick hair and real roses on her cheeks. Her dark brown eyes had a pleasant twinkle and her perfectly chiselled face had the glow of health. Her sylph-like figure was swift and chic without any special effort. 'Gosh,' thought I, 'she is so lovely she needs no special acting talent, her looks are enough—and yet she is a fine artiste. Rare, indeed, in this union of beauty and art.'"

THE last section of the magazine is devoted to pages of advertisements for Hollywood-made films (most of them already seen in New Zealand)

(continued on next page)