

CAGE OF NIGHTINGALES

(French Gaumont)

THIS, the second French film I saw last week, is an unambitious little trifle and not as well integrated as it might be (it takes a long time to get properly under way) but in spite of that I enjoyed almost every moment of it. It is the story of a young school-teacher (delightfully played by Noel-Noel) who gets a job in a home for orphaned and delinquent children. In point of fact, it is more a prison or house of restraint than a home. The official in charge is a sadistic authoritarian, discipline is maintained by an elaborate system of punishments ranging from whippings to solitary confinement, and in consequence the boys are either terrorised by, or terrorise, their masters. To counteract the brutalising effect of this environment the young teacher relies on his lively sense of humour, a strict code of fair play, and an implacable affection for the young unfortunates whose imprisonment he shares. He doesn't find the going easy. His superiors sneer at his humanitarianism and the boys at first distrust it. But gradually he wins the boys over. When he persuades them to share his interest in music and form a choir the meaning of the film's title becomes apparent—and one is treated to some of the sweetest singing that I have yet heard on the screen. There are undeniable weaknesses in the construction of this picture. The story is somewhat awkwardly introduced and the opening sequences might have been pared down substantially in the cutting-room without disturbing the development of the action. But it would be churlish to be hyper-critical about such an unaffectedly simple and honest film. Unlike *L'Eternel Retour*, which relies on English sub-titles, *Cage of Nightingales* has the advantage of dubbed English dialogue, so that there should be no impediment to its full appreciation by New Zealand audiences. I'm sure they will enjoy it.

A DOUBLE LIFE

(Universal-International)

I REMEMBER reading somewhere that Ronald Colman regarded his part in *A Double Life* as an experiment and that he intended to plan his future screen career in terms of the public reaction to it. I hope this is not to be interpreted as a sort of double-or-quit ultimatum. I would not like to see Mr. Colman quit, for I have many pleasant recollections of his quizzical and whimsical charm, but if, on the strength of an Academy Award, we are to be subjected to further experiments along the present lines then I'm going to quit seeing Mr. Colman. After seeing *A Double Life* I am more than ever dubious about the worth of such awards. It may have been Mr. Colman's turn to get one, or it may be that (in the opinion of the Academy) any Hollywood actor who attempts Shakespeare rates some special distinction. Those who have seen *Henry V*, or even Leslie Howard's *Romeo and Juliet*, will recognise Mr. Colman's excerpts from *Othello* for the fustian they are. From a repetition of them (and of their effect on Mr. Colman) angels and ministers of grace defend us!

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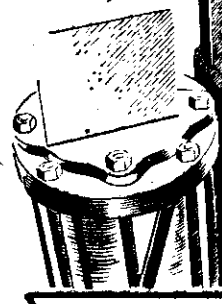
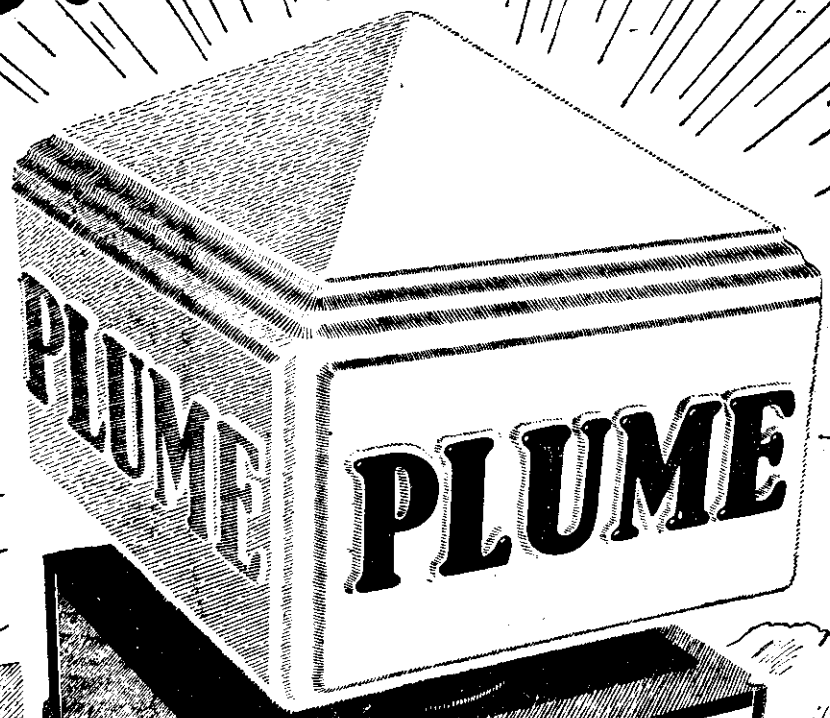
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