



ALUMINIUM

Adorned with rubies and sapphires from the Mogók mines of Burma this Shan woman prepares her food. These jewels and the common clay of her ornate bowl are but a few of the many minerals containing aluminium. Though first isolated in 1826, it was not until 1886 that its production became commercially practicable. Most of the world's aluminium is now produced by dissolving an ore named bauxite in molten cryolite, a mineral obtained from Greenland, and passing an electric current through the solution. In combination with other metals such as magnesium or copper, aluminium forms light alloys, some of which, though only about one third of the weight of steel, are just as strong and do not rust. The famous statue of Eros in Piccadilly Circus, one of the earliest large aluminium castings, shows no signs of corrosion after 40 years of exposure to London smoke.

One of the largest factories producing wrought aluminium and its alloys in the form of sheet, strip, and extrusions is the I.C.I. works at Waunarlwydd in South Wales. These go to help in the production of all manner of finished articles from saucepans to aeroplanes, scaffolding poles to ashtrays, motor car parts to egg cups.



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FILM REVIEWS, BY JNO.

NO BIZ LIKE QUIZ BIZ

CHAMPAGNE FOR CAESAR

(Harry M. Popkin-United Artists)

I CAN'T remember having encountered the productions of Mr. Harry M. Popkin before (and for once I feel I can rely on my memory), nor do I recall any of the earlier work of Richard B. Whorf, who directed this particular opus. Maybe they haven't worked in association before—I would feel less frustrated if I knew they hadn't—maybe (depressing thought) this is the only conjunction of these two luminaries. If that were so I would feel under the same compulsion as W. H. Davies, when he wrote, "A rainbow and a cuckoo's song May never come together again; May never come This side the tomb."

In a mild way, Messrs. Popkin and Whorf seem to me worth singing about, and (again in a mild way) if they never made any more pictures together, *Champagne for Caesar* would be something amusing to remember them by. The film is not without fault—for one thing there is a lot of it, and by the time one gets near the bottom of the magnum the champagne is becoming a little flat—but I feel sure that most filmgoers by that time will be merry enough not to care.

Champagne for Caesar, which you might call a Moral Tale for Quiz Sponsors, stars Ronald Colman as Beauregarde Bottomley, a Hollywood intellectual who will remind you irresistibly of Mr. Belvedere. Beauregarde's *bête noire* is "Masquerade for Money," a television quiz show sponsored by the makers of *My Lady, The Soap That Sanctifies*. "If it is noteworthy to know that two and two make four," he complains, "then two and two will soon become the top level of learning."

However, like so many intellectuals, Mr. B. has difficulty in finding work and as ill-luck will have it he finds himself obliged to apply to the soap czar for a job. His arrival at the sanctified headquarters of *My Lady Soap* is one of the bright spots of a bright show. The general layout reminds one of something by Evelyn Waugh out of *The Loved One*, and the décor suggests *Beauty and the Beast*, by Cocteau, out of the *Penguin Film Review* (disembodied arms holding cakes of soap instead of flambeau). The proprietor (Vincent Price) could pass, too, for a caricature of Salvador Dali. These comparisons may serve to indicate that much of the fun in *Champagne for Caesar* is by no means juvenile. The script might have been written by a team of *New Yorker* comics (led by Perelman, perhaps) as a holiday diversion. It's true that much of the dialogue hangs on the easily-forgotten wisecrack, but the dialogue is buoyed up by well-thought-out comedy of situation which generates a deeper and more satisfying laughter—and if your taste inclines to a sharper flavour in fun there is the hard spine of satire running through almost the whole film.

The fun begins in earnest when Beauregarde is refused a job and in revenge decides to enter the quiz contest. Being (like Belvedere) a genius, he has no trouble in answering all questions correctly, but instead of taking his prize-money he jackpots it and announces that

BAROMETER

FAIR TO FINE: "Champagne for Caesar."
FAIR: "Le Secret de Mayerling."

he will be back next week. After about four appearances his winnings run to well over five figures, and in desperation the sponsor puts him off the air. The result is catastrophic. The sales of *My Lady Soap*, which have been climbing astronomically ("No Biz Like Quiz Biz," quips *Variety*), slump to zero. Since the company plans to launch a new all-purpose cake—it will also clean teeth—something must be done, and only one thing is possible. Beauregarde comes back, and his intention is disclosed. He has made a private financial survey of the corporation and values its total assets at 40,000,000 dollars. When he has won that amount he will retire from the arena.

Having indicated the plot, I won't spoil the rest of the fun for you, though I must add that the satire fails to run the full distance and I found that a little disappointing. But the cast so obviously enjoy themselves that the filmgoer must enjoy himself too. Colman, as usual, is suave and polished; Celeste Holm, the secret weapon of the soap interests ("a corn-fed Mata Hari with everything but a heart"), is in her best form; Vincent Price hams and clowns with a zest that should win him an Oscar, and I think I liked him best of all. The script of *Champagne for Caesar* was by Hans Jacoby and Fred Brady. They deserve a medal of some sort.

LE SECRET DE MAYERLING

(Claude Dolbert-International Films)

IF your interest in films goes back to the time when Charles Boyer's hair was as thick as his accent, then you may recall that he co-starred with Danielle Darrieux in a French production called *Mayerling*, which was shown in New Zealand early in 1939. It was a romantic three-handkerchief chronicle of the events which led up to the tragedy at the Habsburg hunting-lodge of Mayerling in 1889 when the Crown Prince Rudolph and his mistress Marie Vetsera were found shot, apparently as the consequence of a suicide pact. *Le Secret de Mayerling* is another run over the same ground, and sets out to show that suicide was not the explanation of this unsolved mystery of history. Instead, it is suggested that since Rudolph was liberal and had pro-Slav and pro-Magyar tendencies his assassination was contrived through the agency of the Austrian secret police. Though Jean Marais failed to carry conviction as a politicking Crown Prince, I thought that the director, Jean Delannoy, and his script-writer Jacques Remy made out a fairly good case, certainly one that fitted the known facts. But this is in places a pretty grim film—occasionally a little too grim for the Anglo-Saxon stomach—and once or twice incongruous comedy drew derisive laughter from a fairly intelligent audience. The photography, however, is, on the whole, first-class, and the stifling atmosphere of Imperial intrigue is convincingly evoked. Marie Vetsera is, incidentally, played by Dominique Blanchard—daughter of the French actor, Pierre Blanchard.

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