

British Films

WAS HE A JEW?

Jew Suss, 18th Century
Genius, was Possibly
Illegitimate

BIG FILM COMING

Lion Feuchtwanger's famous novel "Jew Suss," which has been brought to the screen by Gaumont-British and which will be generally released in New Zealand shortly was based on fact. The story is a cross-section of the history of Wurtemberg in the first quarter of the 18th century.

There have been numerous discussions as to the legitimacy of the man Jew Suss; because there are strong reasons for believing that he was not the son of Isaacher Sussking Opperheimer and his non-Jewish appearance is an argument in support of that claim. Opperheimer belonged to a company of strolling Jewish singers and actors who travelled through Germany and Holland. They were remarkable for their wonderful voices.

Suss was nevertheless brought up as a Jew, and first thought to become a Rabbi. His financial instincts, however, overcame that original intention. He became a successful dealer in precious stones. He appears to have wandered about a good deal, and took to studying law in Mannheim, and seems to have shown considerable natural gifts for defending hopeless cases. Next he secured a contract to supply stamped paper to the Palatinate Court—a profitable deal. The most significant day of his life was perhaps when he was able to secure an introduction to Carl Alexander, reigning Duke of Wurtemberg, and his wife Maria Augusta. It was not long before he rose to the position of Court Chamberlain, an appointment for which Jews in those days were very popular candidates. He was also made War Agent and Keeper of the Privy Purse. He was in the particularly happy situation of being able to lend money to Prince Carl, and therefore to obtain some hold over him.

All his dealings show that in a very superstitious age remarkable also for its belief in astrology and alchemy he was extraordinarily hard-headed and in his views on economics and finance nearly two hundred years ahead of his time. By 1734 he was in a position to set up two luxurious establishments, one in Mannheim and the other in Frankfurt. His influence extended outside Wurtemberg and he was made Agent for War and Organiser of the Mint for the Prince Elector of the Palatinate.

His great fortune was increased tremendously when he became Director of the Mint. There was in Germany at that time what can only be described

as an epidemic of coining, and the output under his control was considered to be the best and most reliable of all the issues. Surrounded by enemies, inquiries were repeatedly held into his conduct as Director of the Mint but on every occasion his name was cleared and he established himself more firmly than ever in the good opinion of Carl Alexander. All his life he had loved luxury and had continued to deal not only in precious stones but also in wines and cloth and horses, amassing still more money and living in almost regal splendour. His downfall was due chiefly to the treachery and selfishness of Alexander whose ambition it was to become a dictator.

That, briefly, is the story of the Gaumont-British picture which took four months to make and cost, in round figures, £100,000. Lothar Mendes directed it. He was an actor once under Reinhardt's banner and a brilliant one, but since those days, during which he and the famous actor, Conrad Veidt, met and established a great friendship. Mendes has made some of the most intelligent pictures ever produced. Mendes is a graduate of the brilliant, early school of German directors whose work is universally acclaimed.

Supporting Conrad Veidt, who in the name part has a unique opportunity to give further proof of his acting genius, is an immensely strong cast of which the principal members are:—Paul Graetz, Frank Vosper, the late Sir Gerald du Maurier, Joan Maude, Benita Hume, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Gibb McLaughlin, Dennis Hoey, Pamela Ostrer, Lyn Harding and Mary Clare.

USHERING in each film with a stately inclination of her head, as she sits in her ornamental frame, the beautiful Gainsborough lady is well-known to audiences wherever Islington Studio productions of the

Gaumont-British Picture Corporation Ltd., are shown. All the films from that studio are designated Gainsborough pictures, while those produced at Shepherd's Bush are called Gaumont-British pictures.

A new Gainsborough lady will in future greet film-audiences, to the strains of the same charming minuet-motif which has accompanied the slow bow and gentle smile of her predecessors. The new "living portrait" was posted by Glennis Lorrimer, a 21-year-old Gaumont junior star, who plays a leading part in Gainsborough's "My Old Dutch" with Gordon Harker, Betty Balfour, and Michael Hogan. Film-goers who see this film will find it hard to believe that the gracious, be-wigged lady of the opening titles of the picture, and the neat, red-headed gamine, in wartime women's auxiliary uniform of the film itself, are one and the same girl.

Incidentally, it is interesting to note, the little minuet which accompanies the first few feet of each Gainsborough picture is an original composition by Mr. Louis Levy, Director of Music to the Gaumont-British organisation.

THE production of "The Camels Are Coming" ended with Jack Hulbert recording his song which it is hoped will be a worthy successor to "My Hat's on the Side of my Head." The song is called "Who's Been Polishing the Sun?" lyrics and music by Noel Gay. The Dean of Canterbury visited the studio to watch Anna Lee at work on "The Camels Are Coming"; Anna has the leading feminine role opposite Jack Hulbert. The Dean has known Anna some time as she was born at Igham Rectory, which is quite near Canterbury. It was his first visit to a film studio and he showed keen interest in film production.

*Which is the Greatest British
Picture of All Time?*

and in Chorus the Answer Comes

"BLOSSOM TIME"