

TALKING OF TALKIES.

A Viennese Dancer and a Sultan

"Abdul the Damned," While Remaining Faithful to Historical Fact, Is An Engrossing Film — Massacre of the Young Turk Party In Constantinople Nearly Thirty Years Ago.

MANY strange pranks have been played on history since movie magnates discovered that the private lives of the famous are a short cut to box office records. George Arliss, Charles Laughton, Ronald Colman, Marlene Dietrich, and Elizabeth Bergner have all brought more fame to the historically great than those worthies could have hoped for in their own day. True enough that America's idea of the not-so-private life of Catherine of Russia differed considerably from England's—but, after all, it was entertainment for the masses.

"Abdul the Damned" doesn't belong to that class of film. It is a genuine effort to give the public a glimpse of the Constantinople of 1908—a city torn between a new regime and an old. But "Abdul the Damned" never ceases to be entertainment of the highest order, and it is not merely idle talk to describe it as one of the finest pictures to come out of England. After a private screening the other evening in Wellington I was curious enough to turn up text books setting out the reign of Abdul Hamid and the rise of the Young Turk party.

I learned that the Young Turks were the successors of the Young Ottomans, who, after the closing of their first Parliament, had worked in secret for the restoration of the constitution. Abdul Hamid, the Sultan who was determined to maintain the absolutism of the Turkish Throne over a Parliament, had put the Press under a strict censorship and by an elaborate network of spies had abolished freedom of speech. In July, 1908, the Young Turks rose in revolt and Abdul Hamid was forced to acknowledge the power of the party. In the following April Abdul Hamid, secretly alarmed at the way in which power was slipping from him, ordered a wholesale shooting of the members of the Young Turk party. A great number of officers were massacred, Parliament was raided and several deputies were murdered. Abdul pardoned the insurgents and formed a Cabinet more to his own liking. But news of the revolt had spread and soon supporters of the Young Turks were marching on Constantinople determined to revenge the massacre of their fellows. Abdul Hamid was dethroned and forced to leave the country.

This may all sound very dull, but I promise you on my word as a critic—and I'm easily bored—that "Abdul the Damned" is one of the most engrossing of the year's films. The settings are magnificent, the acting is beyond reproach and—most unusual of all—the historical facts are accurate. Fritz Kortner, the British actor who played in "Chu Chin Chow," is Abdul Hamid, the despot with a flinty soul and 300 wives; Nils Asther is his crafty officer who "gets it in the neck" in the end; Adrienne Ames is the beautiful Austrian dancer who becomes involved in Turkish plots and politics. Many more films like this from British International Pictures and Alexander Korda, maker of "Henry the Eighth" and "Catherine the Great," will have to look to his laurels.

"CARDINAL RICHELIEU," George Arliss's latest starring vehicle for Darryl Zanuck, is adapted by Cameron Rogers and Maude Howell from the famous play by Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton. The film depicts the colourful drama of the red-robed prelate who became a power behind the throne of Louis XIII during those stormy days in feudal France when Church and State were contending for supremacy. Rowland V. Lee, who scored such a success with the direction of "The Count of Monte Cristo," handled the megaphone on "Richelieu," while W. P. Lipscomb contributed the dialogue. Maureen O'Sullivan, Edward Arnold, Francis Lister, Douglas Dumbrills, and Cesar Romero head the imposing supporting cast. The film will be released by United Artists.

WILLIAM POWELL, attired in a natty dressing gown and carrying a large turkish towel, entered the bathroom of the elaborate bachelor apartment set of RKO Radio's "Star of Midnight." Cameras were focused upon the marble and glass enclosed shower cabinet before which Powell paused. "Gentlemen," said he, "I'm really not accustomed to being photographed in the privacy of my bath, but . . ." "Any sacrifice for clean pictures," Assistant Director Jimmy Anderson cut in.



MIMI AND RUDOLF.—Gertrude Lawrence and Douglas Fairbanks, junior, in a scene from their new English film, "La Boheme." While this version may not please grand opera fans, it brings to the screen two famous stars in a film that is as delightfully entertaining as anything that has come from the English studios this year. "La Boheme" will be reviewed on this page shortly.

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