

Defending Films

(Continued from Page 5.)

There is an open cheque waiting for the genius who can attach himself to any film-producing organisation as Lord High Crystal Gazer or Somesuch and forecast what picture patrons—men, women or child-minds—want.

The trouble with the carping critics is this: They overlook the fact that the function of the cinema is to entertain and to tell the truth about life. Only while it does both will it continue to attract. When it stops, it will die the death it deserves.

That pillar of journalism, "The Manchester Guardian," struck the nail on the head recently, when it had occasion to rebuke Lord Tyrrell, the British film censor, who didn't like the idea of "politics creeping into films." "The three most important and absorbing subjects of discussion on earth are probably religion, politics and the relations between men and women," said the "Guardian." "If anyone has something genuinely new to say about them he has reasonable liberty to speak in the pulpit or Hyde Park; he may publish books; he may even, thanks to the Shaw-Ibsen assault on the Lord Chamberlain, write and produce moderately candid plays. What he may not do, as he generally has sense enough to know, is to get any film producer to look at him and his ideas. Curiously enough, another speaker at the conference was lamenting that millions apparently never entered the cinema. As remedies one might suggest, first, the production of better films, and, secondly, the abandonment of the idea apparently held by Lord Tyrrell, that the British people are a pack of children who cannot endure hearing or seeing anything disagreeable without breaking into open riot."

Richard Crooks' Life

(Continued from page 6.)

Then, with 1300 dollars, he and Mildred shipped third class to Paris, where they lived in cheap lodgings while he studied. When Paris had taught him what it knew, Crooks went to Munich. Before he left Europe he was a master tenor; and he was singing incessantly, with or without contracts. Taxi drivers and waiters heard his voice for nothing at night in restaurants. For six years he was an idol on the Continent.

When he had finished with Europe, he set about conquering the United States, in concert, not in opera. Crooks could have had second or third place in the Metropolitan, but he was seeking tops. And before his debut there in 1933, when he received 37 curtain calls as Des Grieux in "Manon," and stopped the performance for 50 minutes, he was known to the whole nation as the greatest tenor.

He never stints his marvellous voice. With or without an audience he still sings for the joy of song. He has made it a rule never to accept payment if his concert is not a success. Not long ago his voice failed from laryngitis at a concert in New Jersey. "I'm sorry," he said, near the close of the programme. "I cannot go on. I shall give another concert next week instead." And he gave it, refusing a cent for his services.

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