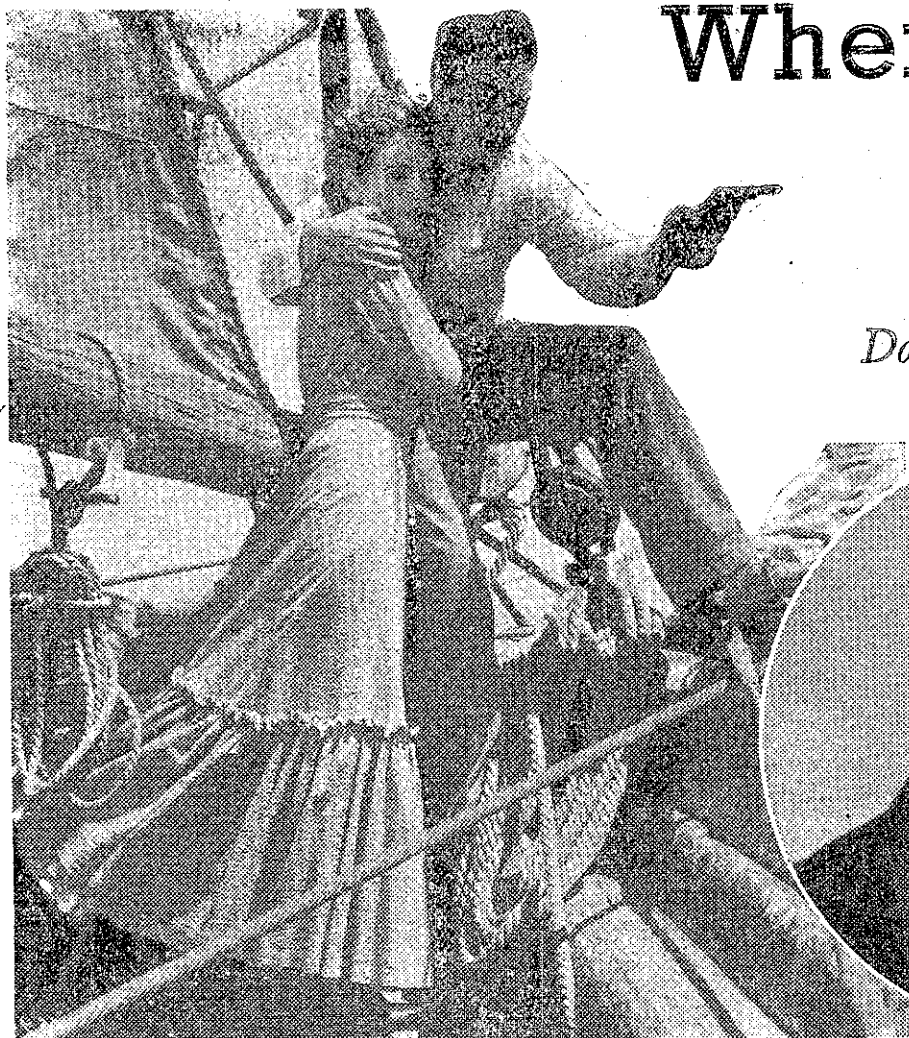


# Film Record—by Gordon Mirams

## When Critics Agree—

*The Public Often Doesn't, But "Ebb Tide" May Be an Exception*



*When R. L. Stevenson wrote "Ebb Tide" he didn't provide a heroine. Paramount here supplied one to the film version, reviewed on this page. She is Frances Farmer, who is seen above with Ray Millard. Inset: Oscar Homolka, brilliant as Captain Thorbecke.*

**I**N the ordinary journalistic world it's not news when a dog bites a man. In our special little sphere of film criticism, the parallel to this is that it's not news to disagree with the notorious James Agate. Disagreement with the dyspeptic Mr. Agate is in the natural order of things, for the simple reason that Mr. Agate himself so persistently and whole-heartedly disagrees with everyone but Mr. Agate.

So the very rare occasions when one finds oneself in harmony with the Agate are as newsy in their way as the discovery of a dog-biting man. One such occasion occurs with the release of Paramount's coloured version of R. L. Stevenson's story "Ebb Tide." Writing about this film in "The Tatler," James Agate describes it as "an absolutely first-class transcription to the screen of a rich and enchanting novel." Bravo, Mr. Agate—except for that word "absolutely," you've bitten the dog!

### Whoops Of Joy

**Y**ET, while the critics are practically unanimous that "Ebb Tide" is a picture well worth noticing (I under-

stand that Miss C. A. Lejeune was a bit snooty about it, and I must say I'm surprised at Miss Lejeune), the film people give me the impression of being rather down in the mouth over its box-office prospects. Not so that you'd really notice it, of course—just a slight restraint in their manner of discussing the show. But if a film man isn't actually bubbling over with enthusiasm about a new production you can generally be pretty sure that he's either dubious about the queues it will line up—or else it belongs to another company.

This conflict between critical opinion and box-office appraisal is so common it has ceased to be a phenomenon. The reason for it is that critics see so many pictures that when one occasionally jumps out of the rut they go whooping after it with cries of joy, whereas the film men, for safety's sake, usually prefer their pictures to run along well-worn box-office lines.

### Why They Worry

**I** AM possibly giving the impression that "Ebb Tide" is startlingly original. That is not strictly correct, and yet the picture appears to me to be unconventional enough to have made the film trade rather unsure of its public reception

Not in so far as the colour goes. The fact that "Ebb Tide" is the first story of the sea to be filmed in "glorious natural colour" will doubtless be given top place in the advertisements and will doubtless pull considerable weight with the public—as it should. Yet I imagine that very much less attention will be directed to the omission of a fade-out kiss, the somewhat deliberate pace of the story, and the fact that villainy is far more important than romance. In spite of the way they write advertisements, film men are conservatives at heart.

Yet those three aspects I have mentioned above are, because of their rarity, the very ones that catch the critics' attention and make them enthusiastic about this picture. Personally, I believe that as hindrances to the popularity of "Ebb Tide" they are far more imagined than real. Let us examine them.

### Over-Acted, But . . .

**I**N the first place, "Ebb Tide" seems to move at a leisured pace because, despite its adventurous theme and setting, it is primarily an exaggerated study of character. When everything else about the film (including its colour) is forgotten, I think some people