



Merle Oberon returns to the screen after a year's absence in Victor Saville's technicolour production, "The Divorce of Lady X." She takes the part of a society beauty who carries out a hoax on a young lawyer, played by Laurence Olivier. They are seen above.

will still remember Captain Thorbecke (Oscar Homolka) in that scene where decency fights a losing battle with his greed as he listens to Huish's filthy suggestion to kill a man by throwing vitriol. Or that earlier scene in which the captain, a beachcomber because he is a drunkard and has lost his ship, comes to tell his two comrades "on the beach" that he has been given a new command—even though it is only a plague ship which nobody else will sail.

The picture is full of these revealing glimpses of character. They come mainly from Homolka, from Ray Milland (as the young down-and-out Englishman), and from Lloyd Nolan (the religious fanatic, Attwater, who rules a strange island and bears a quaint semblance to R. L. Stevenson himself).

Strangely enough, the force of these character-studies lies in the fact that they are over-acted, that the lurid colours of melodrama are put on with a palette knife rather than with a brush.

In less capable hands such characters might arouse derisive laughter, and the film itself be nothing more than conventional blood-and-thunder. Instead of this it has the semblance of reality, or, if it hasn't, it doesn't seem to matter.

His Face Runs Riot

THERE is a fourth character whose part is almost the biggest in "Ebb Tide"—that of Barry Fitzgerald as Huish, the leering, snivelling, drunken Cockney. But in this case, I think, there is over-acting. The other characters, though highly improbable, yet seem possible because there is a certain restraint even in their luxuriance; whereas Huish is just a fantastic nightmare. At the beginning Homolka relies as much as Fitzgerald does on grotesque grimaces to gain effect; but comparatively soon Homolka brings his facial displays under control, whereas Fitzgerald lets his face run riot throughout the picture.

It was a mistake also to force Fitzgerald, an Irishman in every inch of his stumpy height, to play a Cockney, even though that was the way R.L.S. wrote the part.

Only in one scene does Fitzgerald approach the level of the others—that moment of sickening suspense as he carries the "peace offering" of a bottle of vitriol to Attwater.

Love And Colour

IN such a story of masculine villainy and masculine struggle with good and evil, love-interest necessarily takes a back seat. In Stevenson's story it was given no seat at all, but, personally, I welcome the addition of Frances Farmer to the crew of the ill-fated "Golden State," because her presence gives point and purpose to the clash of loyalties in the young Englishman (well brought out by Ray Milland), and because Miss Farmer herself has a cool loveliness that photographs delightfully in colour.

In this matter of the colour I am almost all enthusiasm. It's not so long since all players in colour films looked like roast turkeys or as if they were suffering from bad bouts of scarlatina, but in "Ebb Tide" you can actually distinguish between the complexions of male and female, and between those of white men and Kanakas. And the vivid blues of the the southern seas, the purples and oranges and reds of the tropical vegetation enhance the mood of a story that is essentially vivid—a story, indeed, that Joseph Conrad as much as Stevenson might have written.

Lest anyone thinks that this film lacks action, let me hasten to add that it includes a remarkably realistic typhoon and sundry shootings. It also includes, at the end, a blast of ridiculous music from an unseen choir, which comes through a scene of sunset that looks to have been caused by Paramount's artists tipping the whole con-

tents of their colour-boxes on to the screen at once. This scene was doubtless to compensate us for the omission of that fade-out kiss: instead of which it momentarily blasted away the whole excellent impression which the picture had made upon me. But only momentarily.

["Ebb Tide." Paramount. Directed by James Hogan. Starring Oscar Homolka, Ray Milland, Frances Farmer. Released this week.]

Good-Bad Beery

SO tough guy Wally Beery is just a sissy, after all. But he keeps the secret pretty well until the end of M.G.M.'s "Bad Man of Brimstone," when, in a Stella Dallas finale, he stands outside the window with yearning eyes and bobbing Adam's apple, and watches his son (who does not know the Bad Man is his father) being married to the girl of his dreams. Then the Bad Man turns on his heel toward the waiting Vigilantes, and goes to his

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ANN TODD has one of the leading roles in "South Riding," the London Films' version of the best-seller by Winifred Holtby. Other players of note are Edna Best, Ralph Richardson, Edmund Gwenn and Marie Lohr.

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self-sacrificing death with his secret forever hidden.

In just one previous scene did I think that Beery was going to let his fatherly emotions get the better of him. Bad Man and clean-limbed son are bivouacking out on the prairie. The son goes to sleep; Beery creeps long-