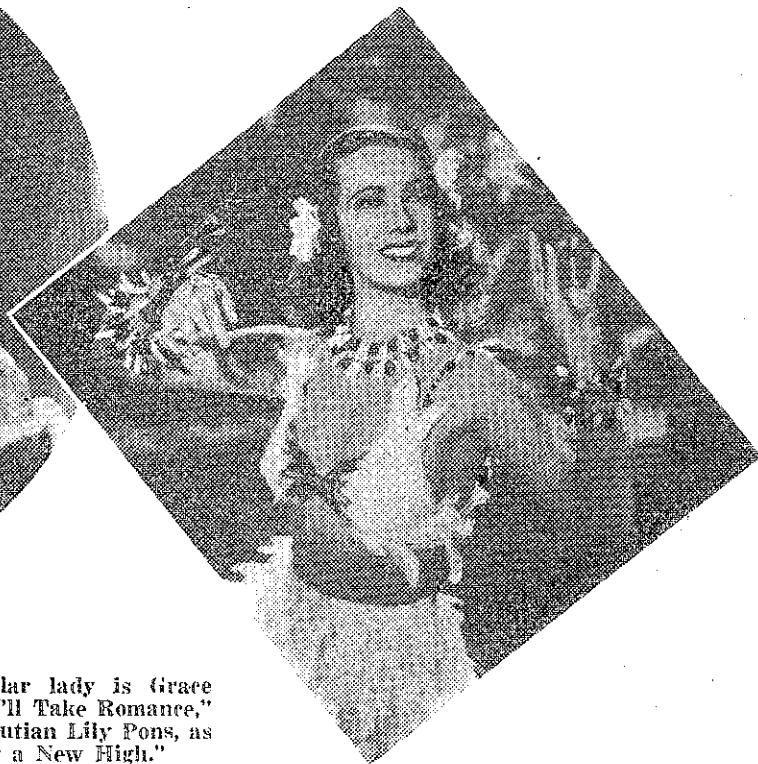


Film Record—by Gordon Miriam

GRAND OPERATIONS

—And One Was Graceless



Opera stars have a day out this week. The circular lady is Grace Moore as she appears in Columbia's new release, "I'll Take Romance," with Melvyn Douglas. The square-cut star is Lilyputian Lily Pons, as Oongahunga the Bird Girl, in R.K.O.'s "Hitting a New High."

WHEN I saw Grace Moore swing her hips (well, nearly) to the tune of "Minnie the Moocher" in "When You're In Love," I had the sudden hope that the great singer was also going to prove a good actress.

But, alas, for human expectation! So far as Miss Moore's acting goes, her latest Columbia film, "I'll Take Romance," is way back in the days of "New Moon," long before she started that puzzling habit of putting the word "love" in all her film titles, thereby making it so hard to remember which is which. It seems unfortunate that the only one of her recent pictures with a name to stick in my memory is fated to recall for me a Grace Moore who actually graces it less.

Too Much Say

WHAT is the cause of this deterioration in Miss Moore's performance I could not quite decide. Either it was poor direction, or else Edward H. Griffith is a weak man who allowed his own opinions to be overborne by those of the star herself. "I'll Take Romance" reveals suspicious signs that

the leading lady had far too much say in its production. Throughout the film there was an uncomfortable restraint in the comedy scenes, which slowed them up fatally. And Miss Moore moved through them about as heavily as a diver in his swim suit.

In short, "I'll Take Romance" has made me fear that unless Grace Moore takes a pull on herself and submits to directorial orders with better skill, she is doomed to go slipping down the ladder of fame. She seems to be get-

be still only playing at romance.

If ever a film told a tale of storms on the set, that film is "I'll Take Romance." The proof is not only the coolness and rather stilted formality of the two stars, but the regularity with which acting honours are stolen from them by the featured players—particularly Stuart Erwin and Margaret Hamilton in the roles of Douglas's friend and Miss Moore's maid.

Music Excellent

BUT enough of the critic's disappointment, since this picture is not likely to make half so bad an impression upon the public as it did upon me. I cannot see it doing as happily as that gem of musicals, "When You're in Love," but it will no

doubt make its own way.

In the first place, the music is excellent and fits into the plot quite naturally. Grace Moore's duet with Frank Forest in a "Madame Butterfly" aria is far and away the best bit of film opera I have heard; nor have I any complaint to bring against the drinking song of "La Traviata," the excerpt from "Martha," or the gavoite from "Manon."

The theme song itself, although composed in a wistful minor key which might prejudice its chances of popular-

Two Kinds of Prima Donna

ting a bit too big for her boots—not to mention her frocks.

NOR does the canker stop with Miss Moore. Tall Melvyn Douglas, never less than competent although he may lack the personality of top-ranking stars—is here palpably ill at ease. His pretended adoration for sharp-tongued and elderly Helen Westley rang more sincerely than his tete-a-tete conversations with Miss Moore. And he did the last scenes of courting with so little fire that I caught myself wondering whether he was meant to