

Horton takes Oongahunga back to New York to train her twitterings for grand opera. So by a devious route is ambition realised.

Just Like Tarzan!

SOME of you may think this a silly story, but it appealed to me as a good joke. And it is a joke with several comical side-issues—notably the unexpected appearance of black-mailing Eric Blore, posing as the Bird Girl's seafaring father, who claims his "daughter" was lost as a baby and

THEY SHALL NOT PASS

Free Shows And Scripture

THE film industry is continually having headaches about the number of people who get passes to see shows for nothing. Now a correspondent to "The Film Weekly" has come to the rescue and supplied a list of texts to prove that free passes are Biblically forbidden. His comment was: "Even in those days there were no free passés given. Search the Scriptures." The passages enclosed were:—

"Thou shalt not pass."—Numbers xx., 18.

"Suffer not a man to pass."—Judges iii., 28.

"The wicked shall not pass."—Nahum i., 15.

"None shall pass."—Isaiah xxxiv., 30.

"This generation shall not pass."—Mark xiii., 30.

"Though they roar, yet they cannot pass."—Jeremiah v., 22.

"So he paid the fare thereof and went within."—Jonah i., 3.

brought up in the jungle by the birds—just like Tarzan.

Of course, Oongahunga and Press-Agent Oakie can't deny it or expose him.

Tinny In Jazz

LIKE most long-winded jokes, "Hitting a New High" falls flat in places, especially toward the end. But, although to this extent the film is not without its disappointment, I take issue with those critics who have jumped at the obvious pun and declared that "Hitting a New High" hits a new low.

Lily Pons lets her operatic hair down and plays at being a Bird Girl for all she is worth. To my mind, she's no beauty, but she has definite talent as a comedienne. She's a prima donna without any accent on the "prima." As for her singing, I enjoyed her few operatic sequences—they include the mad scene from "Lucia di Lammermoor"—much better than her jazz numbers. Her voice in jazz is metallic.

Horton isn't quite up to his usual standard in this picture; but gross Jack Oakie goes through his familiar paces as amusingly as ever. I like an actor who so obviously thinks it's great fun being an actor.

["Hitting a New High." RKO Radio. Directed by Raoul Walsh, starring Lily Pons, Jack Oakie, E. E. Horton, John Howard. Just released.]

Open Letter To Gordon Mirams

"A CANDID FILM CRITIC SHOULD BE CONSISTENT"

THERE are slaps and claps in an "open letter" which I received the other morning from a writer who signs herself "Nina Bevan." I am grateful to her for that letter, which I have reproduced in full, because it contains an excellent review of the United Artists' picture, "Stand In." To the writer's complaint about my personal failure, I have a very good answer, but I shall reserve it till the end of the letter. And now, as they say in the serials, read on (and it's worth reading):—

Dear Mr. Mirams.

When a man sets himself up as a candid film critic, it must be to him the crown of success when the public suffers him unquestioningly to lead it in the choice of screen entertainment.

Now you, Mr. Mirams, as the one and only sufficiently candid critic in New Zealand, have won that crown. A large block of readers to-day looks to the "Record" for reliable appreciations of coming films, and whole-heartedly thanks you for the service.

Unfortunately, as their thanks grow, so, too, grows their expectation that the service be consistently given. And it is not.

I am disappointed, Mr. Mirams. How comes it that we have so far seen in your columns no mention of Leslie Howard's latest film, "Stand In," which has already been publicly released in Wellington?

If I had not been in the first place an admirer of Mr. Howard's work, I might very easily have missed that comedy in favour, perhaps, of "Nothing Sacred," which you recommended so highly. And if I had missed "Stand In," Mr. Mirams, I would never have forgiven you your lapses. For it gave me the merriest two hours' of sitting in the dark that I can remember since father fixed our electric toaster.

Say what you like about Paul Muni and his Zola, and I am ready to applaud your judgment. But, to be logical, you must not, a few months later, coldly ignore Mr. Howard and his stand-in. For Mr. Howard's creation of Atterbury Dodds was just as carefully consistent—even though the role was much lighter and less exacting—as Mr. Muni's portrayal of the fighter for truth.

The conception of a prim, mathematical banker with myopic sight who determined to put Hollywood finances on a sound basis was amusing enough as a start for a film story. But Mr. Howard in spectacles, politely forcing smiles and ever zealous for statistics, was better even than the script seemed to expect. His dancing and jiu-jitsu lessons, the hectic martyrdom with which he led a film star downward into "moral turpitude" (how breathlessly funny that slipping was!), his dignity when he carried his black eye away from a party, his resolute proposal of marriage to Miss Plum, best of all, perhaps, his blind running and bumping at the end of the picture—these things are springs of laughter that have kept bubbling up and overflowing in my mind ever since last Friday night. Incidentally, my aunt has not yet forgiven me for giggling suddenly and hysteri-

cally in the middle of her sombre tale of a dentist's visit.

That Mr. Howard made an admirable and lovable character out of what was intrinsically rather goody-good material was not the least part of his triumph. And the faltering attempt at philosophy in the scene with Humphrey Bogart at the window was a stroke of pure genius—for author, actor, and director alike.

Indeed, Mr. Mirams, I'm surprised at you. Why didn't you tell us of Mr. Howard's excellences in the comedy role which most of us had forgotten he could play? Why didn't you mention the incisive freshness of Tad Gurnett's direction—or that the script for "Stand In" was written by the author of "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town," with a pen still as smooth and sharp as when it gave us the famous doodler? Why didn't you even let us know that marriage or Max Factor has taken away those dirty circles under Joan Blondell's eyes, and that, behind a new face, she is at least as slick a comedienne as Jean Arthur?

Why didn't you warn us that, despite the picture's appeal primarily to those who follow film careers and politics, "Stand In" may yet prove a strong candidate for the best comedy of 1938?

—Yours sincerely,

Nina Bevan.

The Answer

WHY didn't I tell you about all this.

Mrs. Bevan? Because, Mrs. Bevan, I couldn't see "Stand-In" any sooner than you did, which was in Wellington at its first public screening about ten days ago. And that, Mrs. Bevan, wasn't my fault, because United Artists are a company with a policy (perhaps a curious policy) of only giving rare previews for what they consider their really important pictures. Apparently they didn't consider "Stand-In" was important enough. You and I think it was—but there you are.

If you hadn't done the job so well, Mrs. Bevan, I would have reviewed "Stand-In" for this issue, and I think I should have been very nearly as enthusiastic as you are about the film's merits. But already it is too late for your review to do the film as much good as it might, for already its seasons in Auckland and Wellington are over.

Anyway, Mrs. Bevan, I am grateful to you for bringing this matter to light. It's not the first time an important United Artists' picture has missed its share of praise in the "Record." And United Artists isn't the only film company that considers it not worth while—or perhaps is just a trifle afraid?—to show me its pictures in time to be able to say just how good—or not so good—I think them. Of this be sure, Mrs. Bevan, that letter of yours is going to find its way to the notice of the proper people.

But please, Mrs. Bevan, even if the millenium comes and all theatrette doors are opened by those magic words "Candid Criticism," don't be too hard on me if I occasionally miss reviewing a picture you specially enjoy. I do like a night off sometimes.

Perhaps, Mrs. Bevan, you'd like to be a film editor yourself?—Candidly yours,

Gordon Mirams.