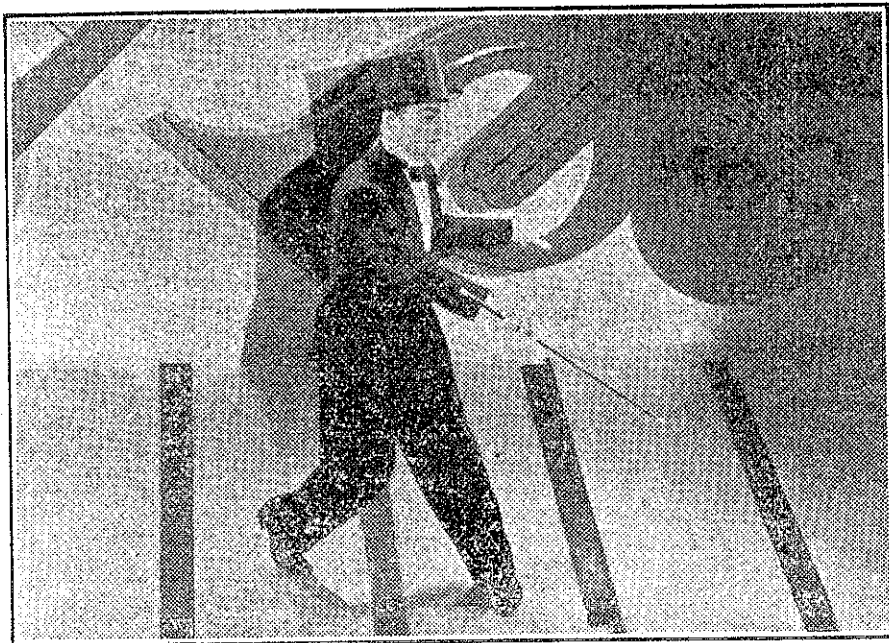




Jimmy Cagney's performance in "Something to Sing About," the Action Pictures' release reviewed on this page, is likely to surprise his admirers—and win many new ones. He proves himself a very talented dancer.

Just A Mother

PORTIA MERRIMAN (Frieda Inescourt) may be a wronged woman, but not a defeated one. With a cynical and perhaps justifiable contempt for the male sex, she sets herself up as the legal champion of other, less courageous, wronged women, and becomes a leading barrister. Her methods are sometimes unethical but they are at least effective, and she wins the admiration—if not exactly official approval—of the District Attorney (Walter Abel).

And then the re-appearance of Portia's son, after many years in England penetrates her armour and she discovers she is Just a Woman—and a Mother. Fortunately, Portia has a friend (Ruth Donnelly), whose caustic comments defeat any attempt's by the heroine to over-dramatise her situation.

Wrong-Righting

SHE gains the love of her son, and then jeopardises her new-found happiness by deciding to defend another wronged woman (Heather Angel). This one happens to have shot the boy's father, who is thus doubly shown to be a man of wrong habits—though whether that is enough to justify murder is another matter.

So the story climbs wrong by wrong to its very gripping climax in the court scene, when the heroine, defending the murderess, lays bare her own murky past, and reveals that the real wrong 'un all the time has been Grandfather Condon, a shockingly unscrupulous newspaper proprietor who goes round trampling the faces of less fortunate people into news-pulp and ruining young romances for the sake of Ambition, Family Pride, Sheer Cussedness, etc.

Fine Material

I MAY have treated that story somewhat lightly (film critics sometimes have to do that so that people will read their stuff), but I am perfectly sincere in describing it as fine material for Frieda Inescourt, who has

the poise and control of the mature actress. If you liked her in "Call It a Day" and if you thought (as I did) that she was practically all that was worth noticing in the maudlin "Sweet Aloes," don't miss her in "Portia on Trial." She's good!

Next highest marks go to Ruth Donnelly and Heather Angel.

The only stridently false note in the

CHANCE FOR FAME

Three More Smart Girls

OPPORTUNITY does knock more than once.

Three young players are to get the biggest chances of their careers at Universal shortly.

The studio is going to make another "Three Smart Girls" picture.

It is to be a romantic comedy called "Three Smart Girls Leave Town" and three unknowns, not the original "three smart girls" (Deanna Durbin, Nan Grey and Barbara Read) will be selected for the leading roles.

It may be a chance for them to become stars just as Deanna Durbin became a star in her first picture.

Joel McCrea has been borrowed from Samuel Goldwyn for the male lead, as well as Archie Mayo for the post of director.

The picture will be produced by Joe Pasternak, producer of the Durbin pictures.

acting is struck by the irritating young man who plays the part of Portia's son. He has a tooth-paste smile and attempts to be awfully English. I didn't notice his name and I couldn't find it out. Which was, perhaps, a good thing. Such a poor actor doesn't deserve even to get his name in the papers.

But don't let this, or the fact that the story gets tangled up with itself in places, put you off seeing "Portia

on Trial." It's specially notable as a successful attempt to treat melodrama on sensible, sophisticated lines—without tearing a passion to tatters.

"Portia on Trial." Republic—B.E.F. Directed by George Nicholls Jr. Starring Frieda Inescourt. First release: Auckland, May 20.

Not So Hard-Boiled

"**SOMETHING to Sing About**," the first production from the new Grand National studios, really gives that company something to sing about. Beginners' luck? Perhaps, but there's probably a lot more to it than that, since the star is James Cagney and the director was Victor Schertzinger who, among other things, set Grace Moore on the road to fame in "One Night of Love."

I hope that "Something to Sing About" will now set Cagney back on that same road. Possibly some of you will not share that hope, because little Jimmy has never been very popular in this country—this being due, more than likely, to his ungallant habit of socking his heroines in the jaw, and the scandalous way in which he smashes furniture. My own opinion, however, is that Cagney is, at a conservative estimate, one of the ten finest actors on the screen.

In his new film, the hard-boiled egg has gone slightly soft. And he could afford to. Maybe the little rebel has been chastened by his quarrel with Warners (now patched up); possibly he has discovered that although being ultra-tough may bring critical plaudits, it doesn't bring much fan-mail.

Cagney Dances

ANYWAY, it's a more restrained and likeable Cagney you'll see in "Something to Sing About"—and a more versatile one. He dances, and when I say dance, I mean dance.

Quite likely the advertisement writers will also try to tell you that he sings. Don't believe a word of it—unless you call it singing when a fellow recites the words of a song to music, as Cagney does in one scene for the benefit of a bunch of girls.

All the same, Cagney has everyone fooled about his voice for the first few minutes of the picture—and therein lies one of the finest "trick" openings you're likely to have come across for years.

This opening sets a merry pace for a musical satire on Hollywood, including a lot of amusing leg-pulling at the expense of publicity departments, "yes-men," temperamental actresses, equally temperamental producers, the star system, and a few more of the film industry's quaint inventions.

It's old stuff, of course, and the satire isn't as sharp as it was, for example, in "Stand-In"—but it's likely to be more popular for that very reason. Also because it's presented with musical honours.

Meet Miss Daw

THIS seems a suitable occasion to introduce Evelyn Daw to your notice, and it's a pleasure to do it. She's Jimmy's leading lady, and although her acting needs some polishing round the edges, she's got a voice