

salaries they receive. In future I am going to concentrate on good actors and good writers and not bother about the stars."

The Manhattan bombshell is just a damp squib compared with a statement like that from a producer of Korda's calibre. For Korda has had experience both of making pictures without big stars and with them; and he has learnt that the first consideration of a good picture is a good story.

It was Korda who produced "The Private Life of Henry VIII." That picture, as everyone knows, made history and a fortune. It proved that a good costume film could be as popular as any other kind; it put the British film industry on the map, and Korda at the keypoint of it; it made a screen star of Charles Laughton and put Merle Oberon, Robert Donat, Binnie Barnes and Wendy Barrie on the road to success.

Yet "Henry VIII" was produced for £59,000 (less than the cost of the average B grade show which is lucky to make any money at all). Some of its scenes cost only £10. Its cast consisted of players who then were practically unknown. Laughton was the only one who received anything like a large salary; many of the others took part in it solely for the joy of the adventure.

A freak success? Not by any means. In "Henry VIII" Korda showed the world that a fine picture could be made for very little money if it had a good script and if brains, artistry and enthusiasm were behind it.

In subsequent years Korda has been inclined to forget that lesson; but now he seems to be returning to first principles when he announces that in future he is going to begin at the right end, and put emphasis on the story first, and then on competent acting—and not indulge in the costly process of trying to remodel stories to fit starring personalities.

THIS is not the first time the star system has come under fire. On several occasions in the past, producers have been worried by the threat to their pocket-books, from rising star salaries. I read somewhere the other day how Vitagraph once decided to blaze the way and make a picture without star names. It was announced solely as a J. Stuart Blackton-Albert E. Smith production. A Japanese exhibitor advertised it as a comedy introducing "those two great American movie stars, Blackton and Smith!"

True or not, that story is illustrative of the public's hunger for "names." So rapacious is it now that it is curious to note that in the old days the screen was deliberately impersonal, mainly because the heads of the industry feared that boosting might cause players to become swollen-headed and (Continued on Page 40.)

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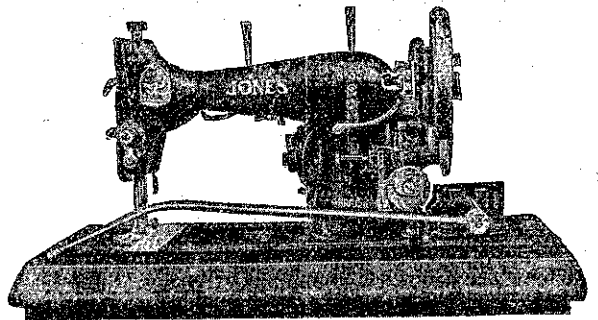
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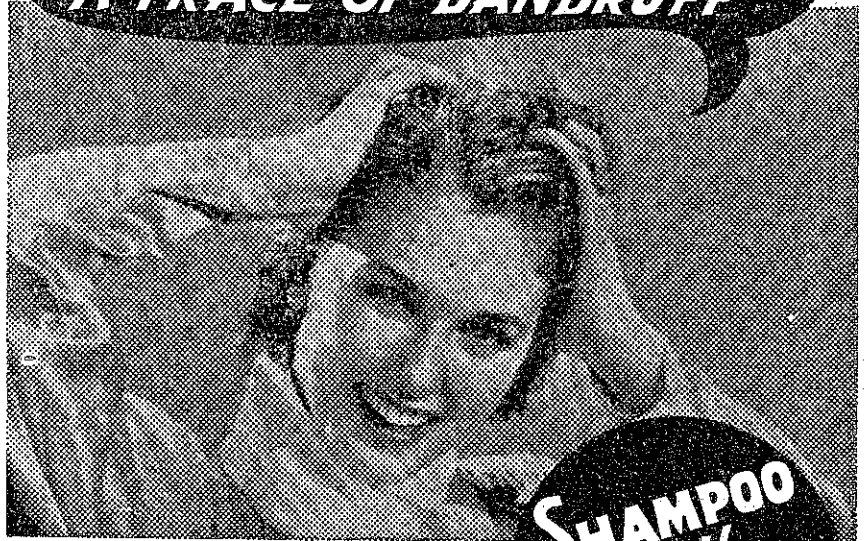
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