

FRENCH INVASION OF ENGLAND

*Where Napoleon Failed
Parisian Film Producers
To-day Are Succeeding*

Special to the "Record"

by

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A scene from the French film "Double Crime Sur La Ligne Maginot."—An exciting spy story that gives the world a glimpse of France's secret fortifications.

RECENTLY, an enterprising reporter on a London newspaper noticed that two ordinary "popular" cinema theatres in the metropolis were screening a French language film, "Un Carnet de Bal." This impressed the reporter so much that he made inquiries from the managers. He discovered that in both theatres the film had been screening to crowded, satisfied English audiences.

Surprising? Apparently the reporter's newspaper thought it was, for the "story" was featured boldly in the next edition. And it seems surprising also to us out here in New Zealand, where all we see from year's end to year's end are the films of Hollywood and Elstree.

But as it happens that enterprising reporter was a little behind the times in springing the news that French films are popular in London.

Quietly, steadily, for months and months past the French have been invading England. Where Napoleon failed, the French film producers are succeeding.

To-day, in London, there are at least half a dozen theatres that screen nothing but foreign films, most of them French. These are "special" theatres; but more and more French productions are finding a place in "ordinary" theatres previously sacred to the product of England or America. It is significant also that a "popular" magazine like "The British Film Weekly" now reviews French films with as much prominence as it gives to America and British productions.

In the provinces, too, the invaders are gaining territory. A few months back I heard a talk on shortwave from Daventry in which the speaker said that there was hardly a town of any size in England to-day in which you did not come across a theatre showing a French film. And they do good business.

Less spectacular than the recent visit of King George to Paris, the growing popu-

larity of the French cinema in England is nevertheless a welcome sign of greater accord between the two countries.

But it goes much deeper than that. The French invasion is not succeeding on sentiment, but on merit.

DON'T run away with the idea that these Gallic pictures are mainly of the "arty-crafty" type which appeal to the intellectuals who despise Hollywood and all its works. Naturally, with its huge population, London contains plenty such people, as it also contains a great number of people who can understand French; but the general widespread popularity of the Continental product shows that the language difficulty is by no means serious. It is, in fact, largely overcome by subtitles in English; while the outstanding quality of most French films compensates for the slight handicap that remains.

Nor are French films proving popular because of the old British idea that anything French is necessarily "spicy." They are popular because they are good entertainment.

While Hollywood frantically searches for ways to make its pictures pay; while the British industry just keeps on its feet with injections of patriotism and the quota system; and while the German industry is submerged more and more in propaganda, the French industry is striding vigorously forward, winning prizes at international exhibitions, securing the praise of critics on both sides of the Atlantic, and—most important—it is making money!

There may be some (Continued on page 38.)



JACQUELINE DAIX, heroine of the Parisian production, "La Tendre Ennemie."