

documented with innumerable little touches revealing a shrewd and honest observation. Good or bad, it deals with life; it is aimed at the adult intelligence instead of the mental age of 13 which is the avowed target of the British and American producer. Above all, it has style. Only an imbecile could confuse the work of Rene Clair, Sacha Guitry and Julien Duvivier. . . . Three out of the four new films I have seen this week are French. They are all expertly made, all brilliantly directed and acted, all scrupulously honest."

One might detect in such enthusiasm as this the odour of literary "high-browism" and snobbish reverence for anything "foreign," were it not for the fact that most French films make handsome profits. Purely highbrow pictures don't do that.

IT is significant that Hollywood no longer adopts a patronising attitude toward France's film industry. Hollywood, indeed, is almost on its knees begging for the services of some of the greatest French directors. Yet it is not likely that they will be seriously tempted. For the French studios consistently do something that Hollywood seldom does—they give their directors practically a free hand. With nothing much to lose, French directors are continually experimenting. Already they have evolved a technique of production that is as typically French as that opening shot of the Eiffel Tower which Hollywood sticks into every film with a Parisian locale.

French technique, however, is not static. Sacha Guitry, says a writer, has achieved the most remarkable series of innovations in technique; and in almost any production you will no-

tice some ingenious twist that compels admiration. For instance, there is a film, "La Belle Equipe," which in itself is not much more than a pleasant little comedy in the manner of "The Good Companions." But Julien Duvivier's direction makes it seem something greater. Particularly impressive is a new device for showing an exit.

The story has reached a point where only two survive of the five unemployed men who set out to build a restaurant with the proceeds of a winning lottery ticket; and these two are quarrelling over a scheming woman. At last they face her together. One is in danger of succumbing to her charms, but suddenly a certain determination shows itself on his face. Now comes the device. The woman remains out of sight of the camera, and her departure is indicated only by the men's eyes following her invisible form across the room. There is the sound of a door slamming, and the audience is left with the vivid impression of the victory of male comradeship over feminine wiles.

IT is difficult to particularise about films one has not seen. As it happens I can remember having seen only one French production—"Le Million," a Rene Clair musical-comedy which the Christchurch Film Society brought out several years ago. But I still remember that as one of the most genuinely amusing films I have ever encountered.

Still, "Le Million" is an old film. Here are just a few titles of comparatively new ones which, according to overseas reports, will be well worth noting should a kindly Providence ever put you in the way of seeing them:

"Un Carnet de Bal" (a dance programme); "Pepe Le Moko" (Hollywood is making a version of this French Rafles story and calling it "Aiglers"); "Gribouille" (a story of middle-class simplicity and kindness rather similar in atmosphere to the films of Will Rogers); "Mayerling" (starring Danielle Darrieux and Charles Boyer); "La Grande Illusion" (Jean Renoir's prize film about a prison camp in war-time Germany).

But why go on? Most of us aren't ever likely to have the chance to see these French films. Our population, the theatre people would say, is far too small to make it anything but a losing proposition to import them to this country. I suppose they're quite right. But it's a darned shame!

PUBLIC TRUST OFFICE

Statement For June

ESTATES of a value of £537,681 were reported and accepted for administration by the Public Trustee during the month of June, 1938. The total value of the estates and funds under administration by the Public Trustee on March 31, 1938, was £60,815,306, and the new business for the three months ended June 30, was £1,391,469.

Grants of administration made by the court in favour of the Public Trustee numbered 143 for the month.

During the month 382 new wills appointing the Public Trustee executor were prepared on behalf of testators and lodged for safe custody, and 326 existing wills were revised to provide for changes desired by testators. The total number of wills now held in the Public Trust Office on behalf of living persons is 91,118.

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