

## ON THE SCREEN

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### *The Vamp* (蕩婦)

A Hsin Hwa Motion Picture Co. Production. Directed by Lee Ying. In the leading part: Miss Violet Goo.

We might just as well get used to the idea that in another few months we shall have to look at old Hollywood films all over again or go to movies that are made on this side of the Pacific. We, for one, prefer the latter choice by far. What is more, we intend to suggest to those of our readers who have never seen a Chinese or Japanese movie, assuming that they were not worth the trouble, that they have a try at it after all. For a start we recommend *The Vamp*. For one thing, there is no institution in Shanghai which, like the Hays Office in the USA, dictates at what point a shoulder or a leg becomes immoral. Moreover *The Vamp* is so well acted and has so little dialogue that anyone with any imagination at all knows exactly what is going on even though he may not understand a word of Chinese.

The plot is no more involved than Hollywood's usually are. The heroine, called Miss Yang, is a sultry beauty whose seductive eyes conquer every man with whom she comes in contact (and if her eyes don't do the trick, as in the case of a virtuous young husband, she does not hesitate to win her point with other parts of her anatomy). She has worked out an extraordinary solution for the problems of her life: while five rich and unpleasant gentlemen shower her with money and gifts for the privilege of taking her to the ballrooms of Shanghai, she in turn keeps half a dozen poor but attractive young men. This is revealed in a scene which Hollywood would never dare to show: Miss Yang, after a night of dancing and drinking with her rich admirers, lies voluptuously in bed and pushes button number two (or number six as her fancy may strike her).

The film does not conceal the less agreeable consequences of Miss Yang's ingenious way of living: the wrecked home of the once virtuous young husband whom she has lured away from his wife, child, and mother to give him room and board as Number Six. In the end, to be sure, the virtuous husband returns to his forgiving family, and we see the vamp, twenty years later, in rags, beauty and money gone, as she collects cigarette butts on the street.

### *Flesh* (肉)

A Hsin Hwa Motion Picture Co. Production. Directed by Chu Shih Lin. In the leading part: Miss Yin Ying as May Shiang.

A few weeks ago the tragic suicide in Shanghai of the gifted and popular young actress Yin Ying caused much excitement. The showing of her last picture, *Flesh*, was consequently of particular appeal to the movie-going Chinese public. The program was preceded by a newsreel showing the young actress in her coffin and the crowds attending

her funeral. The film itself, although dealing with a subject as untouchable for Hollywood as *The Vamp*, is so different from that picture that a visit to both of them is enough to prove the versatility of the modern Chinese movie industry.

May works as a servant girl in the home of a rich man, Mr. Bah, who, though married and the father of a son, not only frequently visits a certain singsong house but also makes use of the absence of his wife to rape May. When May is with child, Mrs. Bah turns her out and May returns to her own village. She is tempted to commit suicide, but the thought of her unborn child prevents her. After the birth of her little girl she is unable to support herself, her child, and her mother in the village, and she returns to the city. In vain she tries to earn her living respectably, and finally she becomes a successful inmate of Bah's favorite singsong house. In the meantime some years have passed, and Bah's son, Hung Meing, who as a child was very fond of her, meets her again and falls in love with her. May loves him so much that she does not reveal her profession to him, although she uses it to obtain a sum of money from Bah for Hung Meing, who needs it to start a night school. As chance and the movie director would have it, young Hung Meing appears on the scene just when May is doing her best to make his father give her the money. Realizing her occupation and misunderstanding her motives, the young man condemns her and insults her bitterly. May, brokenhearted over her young lover's opinion of her, neglects herself and dies of pneumonia. To quote the last sentence of the Chinese program: "She goes away just like the leaves fall off the autumn trees."

The audience watched the film with tense interest. The scenes of her near-suicide and her death at the end caused audible excitement in the packed house which had just seen the newsreel of the actress's funeral.

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Different as these two films are—one out-Hollywooding Hollywood in its creation of a super-glamour-girl, the other a tale of hardship and suffering—they both have several features in common. Both present a good cast supporting accomplished female stars, and neither covers with niceties the brutal realities of life. Both tackle subjects which Hollywood must leave alone. Both are very well directed by men, who—perhaps through the influence of Russian films—have a keen eye for detail and facial expression. Both films possess some unforgettable scenes, but both at times lapse into slightly painful sentimentalism.

If we try to interest our readers in Asiatic movie productions, we must also repeat the wish expressed in our last issue and directed at the leading movie houses, namely, that they add subtitles in a Western language to their Chinese or Japanese films.—M.