

KITCHENWARE, NOTIONS, LIGHTS, ACTION, CAMERA!

TO the casual reader, there was nothing in the *New York Times* of November 9th to distinguish it from any normal edition of that newspaper. Caught like flies in the amber of the daily screen jottings, however, were two items whose implications easily outweighed anything on the front page. "Virginia Dale, Esther Fernandez, Dana Dale, and Martha O'Driscoll," ran the first, "have been loaned by Paramount to Harry Donahue, independent producer, to appear in a fashion short, which will be photographed in color in the Grand Canyon . . . the film will be exhibited in department stores throughout the country on a rental basis." Hard on the heels of the first came this second tidbit: "Gloria Jean, child songstress at Universal, will make a personal appearance at Gimbel Brothers store at 11 A.M. today to discuss her favorite sports and life in Hollywood."

Aesthetes may decry this *rapprochement* between art and commerce, this spiritual wedding of L. B. Mayer and R. H. Macy, but I feel the match was made in heaven. The day is dawning when film and department store may fuse into a single superb medium, with

mighty themes like "Resurrection" and "Gone with the Wind" harnessed directly to the task of merchandising winter sportswear and peanut-fed hams. Once self-consciousness disappears, January white sales, midsummer clearances, and current specials will be neatly embodied in the pictures themselves, and it should surprise nobody to hear Miss Loy address Mr. Powell thus in some future "Thin Man": "Why, hello, dear, long time no sec. Yes, this divine mink coat, tailored by mink-wise craftsmen from specially selected skins, is only \$578.89 at Namm's in Brooklyn, Porch & Schlagobers in Dallas, the Boston Store in Cleveland, the Cleveland Store in Boston, and Kerosene Brothers in Denver." As for the legitimate theatre, it will probably preserve its usual stiff-necked attitude for a while, but in time it must adapt itself to the external pressure of pictures and radio.

AS little more than a trial balloon in this direction, I append the following blueprint for a new department-store dramaturgy. In the event of a production, I suggest a week's tryout in Philadelphia, at some house like Straw-

bridge & Clothier's, before bringing it into Wanamaker's or Hearn's for the New York run:

Scene: The music room in the palatial villa of Mrs. Lafcadio Mifflin at Newport. Mrs. Mifflin, a majestic woman in a slim-pin Bemberg corselet well boned over the diaphragm (Stern Brothers, fourth floor), is seated at the console of her Wurlitzer, softly wurlitzing to herself. Mr. Mifflin, in a porous-knit union suit from Franklin Simon's street floor, is stretched out by the fire like a great, tawny cat. Inasmuch as there is a great, tawny cat stretched out alongside him, also wearing a porous-knit union suit, it is not immediately apparent which is Mifflin. Enter Celeste, a maid, in a shadow silhouette girdle and bra (Junior Misses, Lord & Taylor). She carries a note on a salver.

MRS. MIFFLIN: Hello, Celeste. What's new in the servants' hall?

CELESTE: Divil a bit. It's been sittin' on the lap av Moike, the polisman, Oi've been, bad cess to the murderin' gossoon.

MRS. MIFFLIN: Have you and Mike had words then?

CELESTE: No, Oi loike the larrikin all roight, but Oi've me doubts as to his



"Did you ring, sir?"

sincerity. Oi suspect the craytur av havin' a woife and two childer, alanna.

MRS. MIFFLIN: Then brush him off, lest you become involved in a bigamous action. (*Taking the note*) My, what attractive stationery! Eaton, Crane & Pike (Bloomingdale's mezzanine), isn't it?

CELESTE (*coarsely*): It ain't Eaton, Crane & Pike's brother.

MRS. MIFFLIN: That will do, Celeste. I obscenity in the obscenity of your obscenity. (*Celeste goes, Mrs. Mifflin opens note.*) Oh, how provoking!

MIFFLIN: What's the matter, dear?

MRS. MIFFLIN: Our big gray gelding kicked one of the grooms in a fit of temper.

MIFFLIN: Better sell the brute. He hurt two stable-boys last week.

MRS. MIFFLIN: No, that was a horse of a different choler. (*Thoughtfully*) Martin, I'm worried.

MIFFLIN: What about?

MRS. MIFFLIN: Our daughter Gisèle, yclept Tucky. As you know, she has conceived an unfortunate attachment for a barber. Inquiries I have caused to be made reveal the man to be little better than a fortune-hunter.

MIFFLIN: This is alarming news. As you know, her engagement to Stacy Bonbright IV was a foregone conclusion.

MRS. MIFFLIN: You mean the brilliant young aviator and six-goal man whose athaletic career at Yale and subsequent speculations in Wall Street have made him the catch of the season?

MIFFLIN: The same.

MRS. MIFFLIN: Martin, this tawdry infatuation with a barber must be terminated.

MIFFLIN: How did she first meet this—this person?

MRS. MIFFLIN: It was a typical Tucky Mifflin escapade. Headstrong child that she is, she refused to have her hair washed in any one of several department-store salons where courteous attendants and sympathetic service insure satisfaction. Instead, she visited an establishment upstairs over a poolroom



"I wish there were some tactful way of telling him that he's got it upside down."

and encountered the coiffeur in question.

MIFFLIN: How to resolve this perplexing state of affairs?

MRS. MIFFLIN: I have a plan. Why not consult our favorite department store? As you know, nationwide credit facilities maintain a close surveillance on the character and reliability of customers. Should this Luigi, as he styles himself, have come under their scrutiny—

MIFFLIN: Capital. (*He picks up a tomato can connected by a length of waxed string with New York.*) Hello, Central, give me the credit bureau of my favorite department store. . . Hello? This is Martin Mifflin. What information have you on a party named Luigi? . . . Yes? . . . Yes? . . . Indeed. Thank you.

MRS. MIFFLIN (*anxiously*): Were our apprehensions justified?

MIFFLIN: Fully. This scalawag who has led Gisèle down the garden path is none other than Mike, the quondam policeman currently laying siege to Celeste. As she feared, the rogue has a wife and two children. But thanks to the watchdog who never sleeps (or-

ganized retail credit investigation), our child is safe. (*The door opens and Gisèle bursts in, accompanied by Stacy Bonbright IV.*)

GISELE: Oh, Mother, what a little goose you must think me! Fortunately, I discovered my error in time and married Stacy Bonbright IV.

MIFFLIN: Take her, my boy. You've earned her. Here is my certified check for several million dollars.

STACY (*warmly*): Thanks, sport.

GISELE: How do you like my wedding taylor, Mother?

MRS. MIFFLIN: It's a heller. Altman's, of course?

GISELE: Yes, and available in nineteen different shades—among them wine, russet, beige, peach, grackle, stone, liver, lover, blubber, blabber, and clabber.

MIFFLIN: And now, children, what are your honeymoon plans? Hot Springs? Placid? Sun Valley?

GISELE (*dimpling*): Not on your tin-type, Father. Just plain, old-fashioned Saks.

CURTAIN

—S. J. PERELMAN