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Another reason for the success of the film when contrasted with the play, is limitation of space. For instance, in the play the dormitory scene was a failure, whereas, in the film, one had the impression of a large room filled with girls. This is principally due to the fact that the theatre can only represent a given dimension at one time, whilst the ease with which a camera can be moved from one place to another enables us to obtain various aspects of the same situation, thus giving an impression of space which it is impossible to realise in the theatre. The same defect was visible in the closing scene. A very different effect was obtained in the film by showing the different aspects of the staircase, and the various phases of the search by her companion for Manuela.

I have referred to the question of languages on several occasions, and in such a story as Mädchen in Uniform, this is of paramount importance. There are certain idiomatic necessities of the German language which sound just as idiotic when translated into English as "My Lord" does when reproduced on the Continent as "Milord." No German girl ever talked as the characters are made to talk on the stage, and the plea that the English slang was intended to represent the German equivalent makes no difference. It was impossible to overcome the difficulty that English girls were trying to express in English, not only events, but psychological processes taking place in German.

As usual, the only character made to talk with a foreign accent was the unfortunate French governess who made use of the ancient device of saying something in French and then repeating the same in English. No French person of my acquaintance ever does talk in this manner, but it is a time honoured custom on the stage and in a certain type of literature. In this particular play, it was unusually irritating, as other performers who were also supposed to represent foreigners were talking English in the most English of ways.

In Grand Hotel, to my great surprise, the result was exactly the opposite. The play was much better than the film and yet the possibilities were immense, for instance, the entrance hall of the hotel. I was expecting that this scene would be more realistic on the screen because of the limitation of space in the theatre, and yet it was not so. I am still puzzled why this should be, because the opportunity of showing the hall from various aspects, to say nothing of a vertical shot taken from the top of the central shaft, made me think that the result would have been different.

Although the film story was practically the same as the play, something seemed to be lacking. For one thing, I do not think the characters were so happily cast. I liked the Flammchen but the play infinitely more than in the film. This does not explain everything. In theory, the film should have been as good as, if not better than, the play. But it was cut up too much into incidents, and stress was laid on some trivial details when attention to more salient features in the story would have been an improvement.

For instance, the scene in which Kringlein gets intoxicated would have been equally effective if it had been cut short at the moment when he enters his bedroom. The rest is superfluous and lacking in taste. Grand Hotel is a very good example of what I have been trying to explain above with regard to the question of language.

Although the story is supposed to take place in Berlin, it does not matter in the least that all the characters talk in English.

The action flows on smoothly and naturally. But in Grand Hotel, the story is essentially cosmopolitan, and might equally well take place in any other country, whereas, Mädchen in Uniform is essentially racial in both thought and action.

I have just been reading again the book of David Golder, and I have been struck by the close way in which the film follows the story, and by the fact that one slight alteration makes an enormous difference. In the book the death of Golder occurs during a storm on board ship in the Black Sea, whilst in the film the storm is replaced by a fog. The change is wise, for it is easier to describe in words (word picture) the sequence of events taking place in a storm, whereas, on the screen, the dramatic effect (Visual picture) of the fog is much greater than that of a storm, which would only have produced a disagreeable oscillation transmitted to the retina of the spectator's eye.

Numerous films have been made from books, but I have mentioned these two as they have recently been shown and have received a good deal of publicity.

Last week I went again to see "As you desire me" and I was just as pleased with it as on the first occasion.

I still consider it to be one of the most interesting films I have seen for the reasons given in a previous article.

I am also hoping that one of these days we shall be shown in London "Zwei Herzen in drei viertel Takt".

ck.

RIFLESSIONI.

Guizza la fiamma su su verso la nera cappa: faville leggere, schioppettano allegramente, e, a volte, impetinenti, impetuose, irrompono fuori dal cammino, diventano neri punti sul pavimento: i grossi ceppi, bruciando, lanciano intorno sulle pareti oscure, bagliori rossastrati, interrompono con subitanei sprazzi di luce le ombre della sera.

E seduti accanto al focolare stanno i vecchi, silenziosi, fissando il fuoco, meditando, rievocando altri tempi... "i miei tempi," sui quali ritornano così volentieri con il pensiero o parlando con i giovani. Più nulla è come allora. Si sono adattati a tutti i cambiamenti della vita, hanno accettato filosoficamente (torse non sempre!) le evoluzioni volute dal continuo progresso, in cuor loro approvandole, ma... ai miei tempi si stava meglio"... Meditano accanto la focolare, loro che rappresentano il passato... ma ecco che l'avvenire arriva! E' l'eco balzuziente di un dolce cinguettio, sono passi oscillanti, incerti, un cosettino dal capo biondo sulla cui fronte è nascosto l'enigma, è lo sguardo di occhi interroganti... l'avvenire che tende rotondette braccia al passato, per invocarne quasi aiuto, sostegno... E i nonni dimenticano ogni tristezza umana... in quell'aurora che si nasconde dietro azzurre spire di nebbia, il tramonto ridiventa luminoso... par quasi vogliano fondersi. Le ultime battute dell'esistenza si accordano con le incerte note dell'infanzia, mirabilmente formando un unico assieme. La culla rende meno triste, amabile quasi, il sepolcro.

E la grave voce del nonno narra di cose lontane, di fate e di maghi; ascoltano i bimbi, entusiasti, cercano imprimere nel loro cervellino tutte quelle avventure vissute o fantastiche che sogneranno poi la notte, che rievocheranno poi più tardi, quando anch'essi saranno il tramonto. Il ciclo della vita continuerà... Quei dolci momenti saranno il ricordo che custodiranno in fondo al cuore, saranno ricompensa per la loro bontà, saranno conforto per i loro dolori. Nel corso degli anni faranno altri sogni, seguiranno altre chimere, ma nulla potrà cancellare dall'animo la dolcezza dei racconti del nonno... e nelle burrascose ore rievocheranno anch'essi "i miei tempi." Come l'avvenire si volgeva al passato, il tramonto si volgerà all'aurora...

Tacciano i vecchi, sognano i bimbi. Il ceppo più non sfavilla, langue la fiamma che s'assottiglia sempre più...

La vita sta per spegnersi, ma la vita riprenderà... come ieri, domani!

Elena Lunghi.

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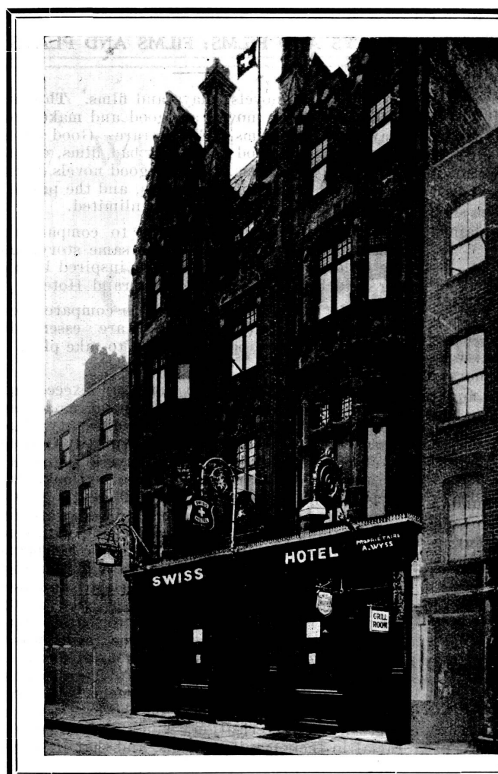
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