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"THE HEART OF A NATION."

Presented at the Academy Cinema, Oxford St., W.1.

The *Academy Cinema*, which was blitzed in 1940, is now repaired and showing for its opening presentation "The Heart of a Nation." This film was completed three days before the Germans marched into Paris, after which the French Studios were taken over by them. The first film the Nazis were anxious to destroy — and they appear to have been well informed — was "The Heart of a Nation," while other new French films were permitted to be shown. When one sees the film, it becomes obvious why the invaders were bent on its destruction. It is a terrible indictment, depicting as it does a triple invasion of France within one man's lifetime. The Germans thought they had destroyed this Duvivier masterpiece for ever — but they were wrong. Paul Graetz, the Producer, has saved one lavender print. With two loyal employees he headed for the Spanish border, in an attempt to escape from France, but their car was wrecked by low-flying Nazi planes. The fugitives hid until nightfall, when they buried the cans in several different parts of a friendly farmer's vegetable garden. Bit by bit the film was eventually smuggled out of France, though in the process part was lost.

One of the first to see "The Heart of a Nation" on its arrival in America was Charles Boyer. At his own expense and under the Direction of Duvivier he completed the film, as the Stars who originally played in the picture had, as it happened, all found their way to the New World likewise. Charles Boyer, in this resurrected film, speaks a foreword about its adventures, as related and gives a brief narrative of the story throughout the passing years from 1870—1940. To give a synopsis of the whole picture would lead too far and take up too much space. Suffice it to say that it is a vivid and moving story about one Pierre Froment, a French farmer and his descendants who, through diligence and perseverance, had gradually risen in the social scale. However, it is by no means a sombre picture throughout, depicting only war and destruction, for the intervals of the years of peace show how France, after the invasions of 1870/71 and 1914/18, recovered not only her dignity and balance, but also her spirit and gaiety.

The cast of the film includes such famous actors as Michèle Morgan, Raimu, Suzy Prim and Louis Jouvet and has, of course, a French sound track, but the introduction in English by Charles Boyer, together with the English sub-titles, make the story perfectly clear to a purely English audience. On the other hand, anyone understanding French, will probably find the continuous English captions somewhat irksome and distracting.

"The Heart of a Nation," which might be summed up as A Cavalcade of France, was the last film made by Duvivier in his native country and the acting of the brilliant cast is of a very high standard. The characters are well chosen, alive and sensitively represented.

The *Première* took place at the *Academy* on March 14th, in aid of the French Prisoners of War Fund and an advance performance, given to representatives of the Press, was held the previous day.

"The Heart of a Nation" is a picture leaving a lasting impression, not least owing to the remarkable

circumstances, by which it was preserved and reconstructed.

The management, at the close of the performance to the Press, generously provided a liberal and excellent buffet of tea, coffee and refreshments.

GALLUS.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Editor Swiss Observer.

20. Februar, 1944.

Lieber Landsmann,

Ich weiss nicht ob ich der Einzige war der ein leises Wehgefühl hatte als er die Worte von Herrn A. F. Suter, die Sie im "Swiss Observer" vom Januar gebracht haben, las. Der Präsident der N.S.H., dessen Wort immer so interessant sind und die mir immer Freude bringen, sagte "we cannot expect our sons, born in this country and having come through a world war fighting with the British forces to regard themselves as Swiss citizens . . . they recognise that Switzerland is the land of their fathers, not their own, but the finest land next to their own."

Ich dachte an meinen Vater, der glaube ich, zugegen war, und hoffte dass er nicht dasselbe von mir denke. Ich möchte ihm versichern, dass wir junge Auslandschweizer, auch wenn wir in England geboren und aufgewachsen sind, auch wenn wir englische Mütter haben, wir auch dann im Herzen Schweizer sind. Ich habe nicht mit "the British forces" kämpfen müssen, aber ich kenne etliche junge "Anglo-Swiss" in H.M. Forces, die regelmässig Nachricht der "Swiss Colony" verlangen. Vor dem Krieg schrieb ein bekannter Schriftsteller "Ein rechter Erbe muss den Geist der Ahnen haben, die ihm ihre Schätze hinterlassen" und ich bin sicher dass wir — Erben Schweizerahnen — den Geist und die Schätze, die wir von unsern Vätern erhalten haben preisen werden.

Doppelbürger, zugleich von der Schweiz und von England, wo ich geboren und aufgewachsen bin, und obwohl ich die Schweiz mein Vaterland und das Land meines Vaters, höchstwahrscheinlich nie mehr betreten werde, bleibt sie mir ebenso teuer wie England, das Land meiner Mutter. Für mich ist die Schweiz nicht "next best thing" sondern "the finest land" — prima inter pares genau weil sie "the land of my father" ist.

In Liebe unseres Schweizerlandes
bin ich Ihr ergebener
Sohn von St. Gallus.

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