

# THE STAR-MAKER OF HOLLYWOOD

IT IS difficult, in these days of high-pressure press agency, to get a true close-up of a film celebrity. The path that leads to his private chambers is barricaded by an army of press representatives, public relations counselors and first, second and third secretaries to Mr. or Miss Celebrity. But I had made up my mind to have a face-to-face talk with Ernst Lubitsch, showman and director extraordinary of Hollywood. I wanted to get a real close-up of the man who made Pola Negri, Maurice Chevalier, Emil Jannings. I did not want a second-hand impression of Ernst Lubitsch as the efficient publicity department of Paramount serves him to you, all ready-made, in stories numbered from 1923 to 1931, covering the various phases of his phenomenal success.

So here I am, racing through the long, tortuous corridors of the Long Island Paramount Studios to see Ernst Lubitsch "by appointment." I meet his secretary, a sweet person with flaming red hair and a most gracious manner. A de luxe edition of Clara Bow. Apologetically she explains that the director will be a few minutes late, and escorts me to his private office. What a retreat! From the luxurious rugs to the very beautiful paintings all bespeak perfect taste. Every chair has been carefully chosen, every nick-nack belongs just where it is and nowhere else. Only one photograph of a screen luminary hangs on the wall—a picture of America's new idol, the French chansonnier Maurice Chevalier.

My thoughts revert to the personality I am awaiting. A pell-mell of eccentricities and oddities, as exploited by the press agents, spring to my mind. Lubitsch is said to be a skillful pianist. He is himself an actor of no mean talent. At the age of thirteen he ran away from home because he dreaded the prospect of becoming a business man. He is an extraordinary linguist, speaking German, French, English and Spanish with almost equal fluency. He never sleeps more than five hours. And still more of these "did-you-know-that" items run through my mind.

Herr Lubitsch walks in abruptly. He is small of stature, but somehow his figure gives you an impression of

## Ernst Lubitsch Talks About Anti-Semitism in Shadowland

By JEAN EPPLER

*A close-up of that man Lubitsch, today considered the outstanding director of American motion pictures. This is not a "success story," but an illuminating description of what the Jewish screen genius thinks about success, anti-Semitism and what is needed to achieve stardom in Shadowland.*

—THE EDITOR.

strength, energy and enormous vitality. His black hair is parted on one side and combed straight across his forehead. The inevitable cigar hangs from his humorous mouth. A distinct German accent adds a condiment to his speech. His genial salutation at once puts me at my ease. I settle beside a small table. On it I notice a copy of Feuchtwanger's "Success." The sight of the book inspires my opening question.

"What are your views on success, Mr. Lubitsch?"

The Little Caesar of the screen does not hesitate. He pounces on my question like a tiger happy to get something between his jaws.

"Success, my dear young lady, is everything. It's the grandest thing on earth. All of us are trying to snatch it—the lover, the writer, the business man, the director, the student, yes, even our great Einstein. Of course it doesn't always mean the same thing. You, perhaps, consider me a success because my yearly income reaches six figures. I, on the other hand, may regard myself as a success because I managed to mould Chevalier's typically French talent to fit American screen purposes. But however much we may differ in our definitions of success it always, in the final analysis, means the same thing—achievement. And achievement is the most worth-while thing I have yet discovered."

"But are not lots of successful people unhappy, Mr. Lubitsch?" I interjected meekly, overpowered by his verve and enthusiasm.

"Aber nein," replied the Herr Direktor. "Once you're unhappy the desire to create and the joy of creation have dissipated and you're lost in material pleasures. And material pleasures, *liebes Fraulein*, though you in your youthfulness may doubt it, lose their fascination after a while. Boredom sets in, and then you're unhappy."

"You will forgive my query, Herr Direktor, and if you do not wish to you need not answer. I want to know whether you have met with racial or religious prejudice in your sphere of activity."

Herr Lubitsch does not seem at all embarrassed by the question. His eyes grew serious, though, and his manner became grave.

"I shall be very frank with you. You know, of course, that I am a Jew. I don't make a secret of it. All my life (Ernst Lubitsch is only thirty-nine years old) I have moved in theatrical circles. I have been an actor and director in Germany. For years I belonged to the Reinhardt group in Berlin. Later I produced on my own. To the best of my knowledge and recollection I have never met with anti-Semitism in my profession. Rather a broad statement, you may think. But I stick to it. I have very often wondered why this is so, for I by no means want to give you the impression that I deny the existence of anti-Semitism in this world. It is here—very much so. In some countries more, in others less. Just now it is rampant and reaching alarming proportions in my own country, Germany. But in the entertainment field, during my activity in Europe and now here, I have never met that kind of discrimination. Artists are, as a rule, more tolerant and cosmopolitan in their views. Even when they are religious they are rarely fanatics. And besides (here the Herr Direktor smiled) there are, perhaps, too many Jews in the profession. We are hardly a minority.

"Now Hollywood is a spot where anti-Semitism is unknown. It often makes me think of a League of Nations in miniature. It is the most international of cities. Some of the foremost figures in the American motion picture industry are Jews; but they are never thought of as such, because nobody believes it important to emphasize or minimize any one's religious affiliations.

enthusiasm. What a versatile actor—what resourcefulness—"Puffing at his cigar, Herr Lubitsch leaned back in his chair, presumably thinking back to the studio days when he directed "The Patriot," with Jannings in the leading role.

"What do you consider the most important requisite for a successful screen career?" I asked.

Lubitsch smiled broadly, so broadly that it gave me an uncomfortable feeling that the famous star-maker was laughing at me.

"Talent, of course, *liebes Fraulein*. Talent, and nothing else. I don't care much for looks or for ambition. All I want is a human being who was cut out to be an actor. Appearance does mean something, of course. An actress must be at least pleasant looking. But first of all she must have a mobile face, a face that speaks even without words, a face that can smile or suffer with a minimum of contortion. And then, strange as it may seem to you, I want intelligence in my actors. I want them to understand a part, to understand it sufficiently to feel it. Then the director can safely confine himself to his special task, that of directing."

"Why are there so few Jewish stars?" I asked, finally.

"Your question is wrong. There are plenty. In the United States the genius of the Jews has orientated itself more toward the channels of business. But I could name you dozens of nationally and internationally famous stars, men and women, who are Jews, even though the world may not know it. But why should I name them? It would be introducing a subject which might tend to draw racial or religious lines of demarcation in a profession that knows no prejudices. In Hollywood we try to eradicate these differences. A person is judged solely by his achievements; and that is as it should be."

And Herr Lubitsch, lighting a fresh cigar and evidently in the best of humor, bade me a jovial farewell.

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