JEWISH PIONEERS OF THE MOVIES

BY

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WHILE it is wrong to assume that Jews are the creators of the film in- dustry, it is interesting to find that the world of cinema entertainment owes much to those hardy pioneers who have brought a one-time luxury within reach of the purses of the masses. They have played a prominent part in the development of the industry, and civilization has been the beneficiary of their contributions. The story of the movies is a romantic one of men who rose from obscurity by their own genius and native ability, and who, in the face of over- whelming odds, the world is richer for their labours.

Adolf Zukor was to have been a Rabbi when the films were considered a futile experiment. Born in Riese, Hungary, in 1873, he came to the United States in 1888 and, through the vagaries of circumstance, took to the fur business in the gloomy slums of New York. It was at that time that William Selig, an owner of a travelling minstrel show, became interested in Goldfish in Warsaw in 1882, when he told the world about the moving folk-story of a Jewish-Polish man, Benjamin Harris, who, by the time of his first appearance on screen, as a one-time heroine; bolshevik, Joseph Schildkraut, one of the best character actors, and many others.

Of present-day producers, there are David O. Selznick, Fritz Lang, Sid Franklin, Joe Pasternack, Henry Koster, George Cukor, and many others, including the late Irving Thalberg.

Jewish pictures that have become famous are "Der Dybbuk," "The Golem," "Green Fields," and that moving folk-story of a Jewish-Polish village, "Der Purimspieler.

The story of the birth of the talkies is the story of Jewish ambition and enterprise. The microphone and the gramophone had been invented by Thomas Edison, but it was Isidore Myers, a one-time heroine; Joseph Schildkraut, one of the best character actors, and many others.

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One of the important men in the movie world to-day.

They engaged the Jewish actor, Al Jolson, to play the lead. Then, braving a sceptical press, they released the film. It was a stunning success.

Al Jolson, formerly a Hebrew choir master, achieved fame by bringing into popularity one of the greatest inventions of the age. The sound film revolutionised the entire cinematographic world. The talkies brought to the world the kings of Jazz, Irving Berlin and George Gershwin, two young Jews from "Zin-Pan Alley," who achieved worldwide fame.

Then, then, is the story of the Jewish pioneers in the films. We can name many actors who have added prestige to the art. We can point to Pola Negri (Pauline Schwartz), the first vamp of the movies; Carmel Myers (daughter of the late Rabbi Ildore Myers), a one-time heroine; Eddie Cantor, the pop-spy clown; Paul Muni (the finest Pasterne the screen has known); Louis Rainer, twice winner of the Academy Award; Edward (Goldberg) Robinson, the ideal "gangster"; Joseph Schildkraut, one of the best character actors, and many others.

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