

DOWN THE HOMESTRETCH

After Eighteen Months, Time Completes
'The Ramparts We Watch'—Potpourri

By THOMAS M. PRYOR

WORKING practically 'round the clock for the past three weeks, a weary, albeit jubilant, crew of movie historians is hurriedly putting the final touches to The March of Time's first feature production, "The Ramparts We Watch." Notwithstanding the physical and mental strain under which eighteen months of planning and preparation are being brought to a climax, the boys are pitching in, happy in the knowledge that, with this maiden effort, Time will scoop its Hollywood contemporaries in dramatizing the material and mental barriers erected in this country against war.

Within a fortnight the picture is expected to have a world premiere in Washington, following which it will be immediately released in six other key cities for test runs. The Washington premiere probably will take place July 9 or 16, and the New York opening is slated a week later. Although no booking has yet been made for the local premiere, it is possible that "The Ramparts We Watch" will come to the Radio City Music Hall, after the engagement of "All This and Heaven, Too," which opens on Thursday.

"The Ramparts We Watch" promises to differ in many respects from the accepted Hollywood formula. The most striking departure, aside from the story treatment itself, will perhaps be the absence of screen credit for the players. The film will not dwell so much on the military and naval aspects of the nation's preparedness program as it will on the attitude of the average citizen when confronted with war. And to best illustrate the reactions of the American mind in the face of war, Louis de Rochemont, producer and driving force behind The March of Time, decided to re-create as faithfully as possible the workaday life of a small community during the war years of 1914-18.

Though the producers deny "The Ramparts We Watch" is a documentary picture, a studious effort was made to obtain realism in cast-

ing as well as in production, and the fact has been stressed that none of the elaborate technical rituals of Hollywood productions have been used in making "Ramparts." "No panning, trucking or trick shots through the strings of a harp" is the way the boys put it. More than 1,400 players take part in the production and seventy-three are said to have "important speaking parts," which seems like a record of some sort. The cast contains no professionals and was recruited from among persons of various occupational and social spheres because they happened to represent types called for in the story. For instance, the part of an old German professor is enacted by a medical doctor and research scientist, while his son is played by a Brown University undergraduate, and the roles of a Hungarian housewife and a clergyman are interpreted by real-life counterparts.

To give the film an added atmosphere of authenticity the producers have interspersed several hitherto unreleased shots of prominent personalities of the war years, which were obtained from the archives of the United States Army Signal Corps and from private collections. By careful selection of prints and even more exacting processing by laboratory experts the historic clips have been blended so perfectly with the film photographed by the Time crew, they say, that it is practically impossible to detect the inserts. You'll be seeing the real thing, though, when Woodrow Wilson, General Pershing, Newton D. Baker, Theodore Roosevelt, German Ambassador Count von Bernstorff, Billy Sunday and Herbert Hoover flash across the screen.

Since filming started last September in New London, Conn. (selected after a nation-wide survey as the most typical of American communities), the producers struck numerous snags as a result of the Nazi blitzkrieg. The script had to be altered several times to conform with the new order, a circumstance which not only caused extensive re-shooting but costly delays. Originally the film was budgeted at \$200,000, but it is understood the cost to date is in the neighborhood of \$400,000.

Indicative of Hollywood's desire to steer clear of anything Nazi, in view of public apathy toward pictures like "Confessions of a Nazi Spy" and "Four Sons," is the switch in title by Twentieth Century-Fox of "I Married a Nazi" to "The Woman I Married."

Trend of the times note: A reporter for the trade paper Film Daily has discovered an apartment house in Philadelphia which provides tenants and friends with free Friday night roof-garden motion picture shows. The building, it is reported, also has a liquor license and serves drinks (c. o. d., we presume) during the show.

While Hollywood was preoccupied with events in Europe, Cuba slipped over an anti-block-booking bill promulgated by Presidential proclamation. The coup is believed to have been engineered by disgruntled theatre men. Cuba is not a large market, but the new law makes it even less profitable and steps are being taken to have the measure rescinded.



Jon Hall and Nancy Kelly smile for the birdie in "Sailor's Lady" now showing at the Roxy.