

# THE SCREEN

By MORDAUNT HALL.

## Oklahoma, Then and Now.

CIMARRON, with Richard Dix, Irene Dunn, Estelle Taylor, Nance O'Neil, William Collier Jr., Roscoe Ates, George E. Stone, Stanley Fields, Robert McWade, Edna May Oliver, Frank Darien, Dolores Brown, Gloria Vonic, Otto Hoffman, William Orlamond, Frank Beal, Nancy Dover, Helen Parrish, Donald Dilloway, Reginald Streeter and others, based on Edna Ferber's novel of the same title, directed by Wesley Ruggles. At the Globe.

A graphic and engrossing screen conception of Edna Ferber's widely read novel, "Cimarron," was presented by Radio Pictures last night at the Globe before a keenly interested audience. In it Richard Dix plays that unique character, Yancey Cravat, poet, pistoleer, lawyer and editor, the man who is periodically attacked with the wanderlust. This picture, a stupendous undertaking in view of the time that is covered and the hosts of persons in its scenes, starts with the land rush forty years ago to the Indian territory now known as the State of Oklahoma. It ends in 1930 with many of the characters who were in the first scenes still surviving.

Although it is episodic, it holds one's attention and Mr. Dix gives a fine impersonation of Cravat. Cravat's nonchalance and his impulsiveness may seem more than a trifle strange at times, but he is nevertheless a person to be remembered. He is consistently inconsistent. His sangfroid is remarkable, but he goes on until he comes to a tragic end.

From the first to the last scene one is often stirred by this chronicle. It has its subtleties and it has been most intelligently directed by Wesley Ruggles. It gives a wonderfully impressive idea of the early days in the territory, from the time the hordes of persons on horseback, in wagons and on foot make the dash to lay out their claims on the signal of a pistol shot, to the gradual improvements that come to Osage as years go by. There is the indomitable Sabra, Cravat's sterling wife, who sticks to the newspaper that he starts in the early days to the last. No matter how gallant Cravat may be during certain interludes, it is invariably his wife who enlists one's sympathy.

Imagine a husband who has deserted his wife and children to go to the Cherokee strip, returning five years later and asking his wife whether she missed him! And what's more, he discovers at the moment of his return that the notorious Dixie Lee, who tricked him in the first land rush, is on trial for her wayward conduct in Osage. Sabra, like other women, is eager to have Dixie put in prison, but Cravat hastens to the court and offers Dixie his services as counsel and finally wins an acquittal for her.

In a previous episode, Cravat is asked to read the church services. There is no place of worship, so the biggest building in the community is sought. It is a gambling hall, with grotesque pictures on the wall. Lon Yountis, who is responsible for the death of the first editor who came to the territory, is at the service, and Cravat seizes that occasion to denounce the murderer. Quick as a flash the repellent Yountis pulls the trigger of his pistol, but like Wild Bill Hickok's victims, he is not quick enough, for Cravat ducks behind the table and then sends a bullet through Yountis's heart.

Cravat has other encounters, where it appears almost as though he alone fights a whole band of desperadoes. And when he kills the Kid, who had been his companion on other jaunts, he regrets that he had to do it.

There are moments when one may feel that Mr. Ruggles banks too much on Cravat's unerring aim, but it is pardonable license and last night's gathering was never quite sure whether Cravat would lay his man low or himself meet an untimely end. He is winged in one encounter, which is rather clever, for in spite of Cravat's charmed life, until a closing scene, one feels that after all he might be a target for some desperado's weapon.

The changes in the scenes as the community grows are done with a great deal of artistry. The place that was nothing but a scene with people erecting wooden shacks finally becomes a hustling modern town. And through it all one sees Sabra and The Wigwam, as the newspaper is called. There is the stuttering printer, who toward the end asserts that he has been forty years with The Wigwam, the longest time he has held any job! In the course of this lengthy film Cravat reveals his tolerance, not only in the case of Dixie Lee, but also when his son becomes enamored of an Indian girl. His editorial in

favor of the redskin, which was frowned upon at first by his wife, is eventually reprinted every anniversary of its appearance, and when Cravat is away for several years, his name still stands at the masthead of The Wigwam.

In harking back over this picture one is tempted to describe one of the sequences and then revert to Yancey Cravat, for some further deed of his that escaped the mind for the moment is remembered. And toward the close of the picture the spectator will in all probability find himself waiting to catch the last glimpse of Cravat, gray, wrinkled and aged, the victim of an accident.

Irene Dunne is excellent as Sabra. Edna May Oliver furnishes some really clever comedy. Estelle Taylor does good acting as Dixie Lee. Stanley Fields gives a steady and convincing performance as Lon Yountis.