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COURIER'S CURRENT INDIA COMMENTS

By JAMES H. HENNING

It was an unusual and exciting screen work last night. In addition to the impressive "Mariano" which featured here after its preview, the downtown theaters of Grand Central Square have had the new picture and certain to be one of the best pictures of the year in the production of the John Steinbeck novel, "Tortilla Flat."

"Tortilla Flat"—A-1

If you loved John Steinbeck's tender and beguiling little stories of the peasants the lovely descendants of early Spanish settlers in California, you will probably be glad to hear that the stories were to be filmed with none other than Henry Fonda in the role of the principal hero. I'm glad to tell you that your fears were unjustified.

"Tortilla Flat" is one of the most completely delightful pictures the screen has given us. The picture is present and the character of the play has been considerably expanded from that of the book—but not at the expense of anything that was loved in the book. No Danny doesn't die in the picture—he married his "Susana" but that seems right and logical due to the fine screenplay of John Meehan, direction of Victor Fleming and acting of all players. You, the audience, know that Danny is as responsible, but generous and philosophical life of the peasants as though he had died.

Steinbeck's characters were never " quaint " or "cute." They were human and real—and the elegant acting and direction has kept them that way. There are notable performances by Spencer Tracy and John Garfield, as Fido and Danny, and there is excellent support by Akim Toomboff, John Qualen, Henry O'Neill and the others. Even Hedy is surprisingly effective. But the performance of the picture is that of Frank Morgan, as the Pirate, a simple little old man who owns the dogs and saves "two-bits" for a candlestick for St. Francis who has appeared to him in a vision and told him to "be good to little dogs, you dirty man." It's another proof that Morgan is one of our finest actors and not merely a bungling comic. But everything about "Tortilla Flat" is beautifully done—a heartwarming picture, shot with gentle humor and retaining the authentic Steinbeck flavor.

"The Gold Rush"—A-1

"Charlie as ever was!" The magnificent comedy of Charlie Chaplin reached its peak with his "Gold Rush" which came out some sixteen years ago. It's one of the high water marks of my early memories. I remember that it was one of the very first pictures I saw of the Madman. I remember it even better because I saw it again—and "cracked" the house. That was adventure, that was excitement, that was "putting something over on them"— whoever "them" was. I had been to a Saturday matinee at a Fairport theater and coming home had passed this other I had seen "The Gold Rush" but that didn't spoil my excitement when I noticed that there was no body selling and nobody taking tickets.

Cautiously looking around to see whether anybody was watching, I started to climb the steps—the theater being above a store. Then I was inside—just at that marvelous moment when Charlie makes the roll dance on the table. I was in—and nobody had questioned me. Did I feel daring? Of course, anybody could have walked in because the matinee was not continuous and was three-quarters through, but I didn't know that. That was also the first time I saw two features—in a single day. I bragged about that to my properly envious contemporaries for a week. How times have changed.

But all of this is to say that "The Gold Rush" is back—and it's welcome. It's just the way you remember it. The stewed shoes, served and eaten with all the appropriate flourishes by Charlie, Charlie, at his most gallant, bravely barring the way to the party leader who wants to burn the dance hall and the New Year's Eve party with its gentle pathos and the unforgettable dance of the rolls, the mad slapstick of the teetering cabin on the edge of the precipice—they're all there. It's not brought up to date by Chaplin—it is up to date. The costumes and makeup of Georgia Hale and other players may look ludicrous, but

(Continued on Page 20)

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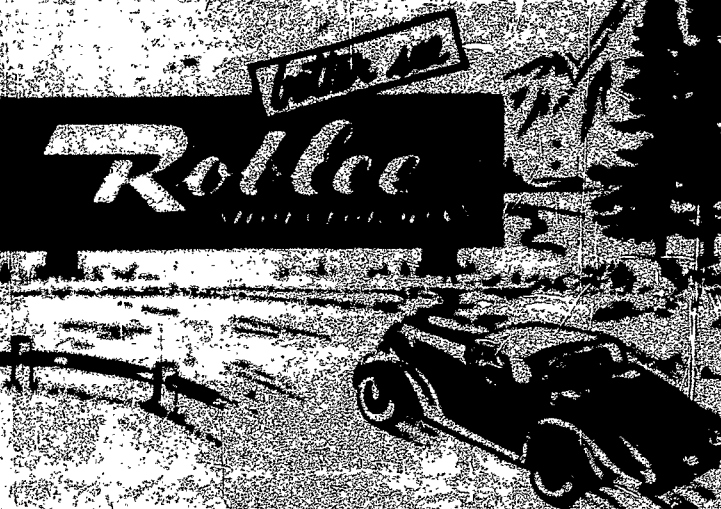
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