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of that indefinite but so potent thing sometimes called glamor she would be talked about far and wide as a great actress.

In her latest picture she adds one of the best to her already impressive list of screen characterizations which have been remarkably varied and remarkably successful. "Madame X" may have been the best of all because it covered a wider range of life and went deeper into human experience. But the new role covers a good deal.

In "Sarah and Son" she is a mother and an opera singer. As a mother she is immensely successful. As an opera singer—well, her lullaby is convincing enough, and quite touching, but it is not possible to believe in her great triumphs as Wagnerian heroines. Her stature—and not merely her physical stature—is not heroic enough.

That has little practical importance, however. What will matter to audiences is that she is moving and interesting in a part that might easily have been maudlin and tiresome. Mothers on the screen are generally mushy creatures, loyal and long-suffering and without much common sense or much gift for anything but drudgery and silent heroism. The mother in this case fights a really intelligent battle—for a screen mother—to get back the child who was stolen from her as an infant. Her determination seems of the right kind of stuff to accomplish things, and her dogged seriousness is lightened by a naïve recognition of facts that has almost the effect of a sense of humor. Miss Chatterton, with her customary skill and a believable accent, makes her alive and appealing.

So also is Frederic March, and so also is Phillippe de Lacy, who here seems—as he does not always seem—to be a real boy and not a boy actor. All of the cast, in fact, are pretty good, though it is rather rough sledding for Mr. Emery and Miss Lloyd, who are compelled by the exigencies of the plot to seem villainous in the style of old-time melodrama. The late Fuller Mellish, Jr., served all the purposes of a villain without having to be theatrical and unnatural.

The story itself has plenty of genuinely movieish moments, where the plausibility of the adaptation has hard work disguising the hokum. The strain is particularly apparent toward the end, where some sort of climax had to be contrived. Why the boy is so desperately ill after his little escapade in the motor-boat—unless perchance his foster-mother was right about his delicate health—is beyond guessing, and still more of a mystery is the strange but sentimentally satisfying shift from foster-mother to real mother for the final embrace. I suppose the justification is to be found in the wet eyes with which the picture leaves many in the audience.

Dorothy Arzner's direction is fine and intelligent, with much more depth of feeling and understanding than she has had a chance to show before.

## SARAH AND SON

A PARAMOUNT production, adapted by Zoe Akins from Timothy O'Shea's novel, directed by Dorothy Arzner.

### PLAYERS

Ruth Chatterton

Frederic March

Doris Lloyd

Fuller Mellish, Jr.

Gilbert Emery

William Stack

Phillippe de Lacy

THERE is a thorough-going efficiency, a sure and effortless technical skill in Ruth Chatterton that, combined in a charming and distinctive personality, makes her stand out with enormous effect among screen actresses. She gives the impression of being able to act almost anything, and still have reserve forces that have been hardly touched. Her ability and sincerity, and the impression she continually conveys of a richness and culture that is not mere veneer, give her a quite noticeable eminence. With more