

ALFRED HITCHCOCK

The British Master of Melodrama Comes to Hollywood to Direct "Rebecca"

By FOSTER REYNOLDS

THERE are said to be certain parts of the British Empire where the mere mention of the name of Alfred Hitchcock sets up a violent knocking together of the knees of the natives and they can be heard uttering feeble frenzied sounds like "Br-r-r-r!"

This is because Hitchcock is the cinema's acknowledged master of melodrama under the Union Jack, and increasingly elsewhere.

Now at work on his first American motion picture, the glossily rotund Hitchcock, whose gelatinous appearance and jocose manner belie his sinister intent, and who brightly eyes all comers with a sort of controlled effervescence, happily declares that his first Hollywood opus will surpass anything he has yet done to keep an audience poised on the edges of its chairs.

For its effects, Hitchcock will undertake the appalling task of not only making a dead woman come to life, but having her memory haunt the scenes of the picture so that theatergoers have such a well-defined sense of her presence they will imagine her to be part of the cast!

This is necessary because the picture is named for the deceased character—"Rebecca,"—who never actually appears in it!

Story is from Daphne du Maurier's best-seller novel of English country life in the mossy manses of Cornwall. Hitchcock is well prepared for an exposition of psychological elements in this picture by such past successes as "The Man Who Knew Too

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Much," "The Thirty-Nine Steps," "Jamaica Inn" and "The Lady Vanishes," which last earned him the New York Critics' Award for the best direction of 1938.

The cast of "Rebecca" is headed by Laurence Olivier, and to date includes Judith Anderson, Reginald Denny, George Sanders, Nigel Bruce and Florence Bates.

Hitchcock was born in 1900, son of a prosperous poulterer. Educated at a Jesuit seminary, he later attended the University of London, where he studied, among other things, civil engineering and art. He has since remarked that the things he studied were those that served him best in the many-sided profession of making motion pictures.

The picture that put British talkies on the map, "Blackmail," was a Hitchcock product, and the young director shortly afterward was assigned to "Waltzes from Vienna," and the type of mystery story he loves best to direct, "Secret Agent," "The Woman Alone" and "The Girl Was Young."

When he was making "The Pleasure Garden," with Virginia Valli, he met and fell in love with his future wife, Alma Reville. She has since worked with him as an assistant director and script writer.

Early experiences in pictures taught Hitchcock "the hard way" many phases of the industry, but there is plenty more to learn, he declares. He seldom attends picture shows, and avoids reading novels in which he is not professionally interested. This, he says, is to keep his sources of plot ideas uninfluenced by outsiders. For the same reason, he seldom appears on sound stages where other pictures are being made, although he visited sets of "Gone With the Wind," and doesn't mind visitors on stages where he is working. When Hitchcock came to California under exclusive long-term contract to Selznick, he brought not only his wife, but his daughter, Patricia, aged 10, and her two dogs, Edward IX, a cocker, and Mr. Jenkins, a Sealyham. The Hitchcocks, with traditional British caution, said they would need more time to get acclimated. "You may say," the director joyously commented, "that California looks too good to be true."

