

The Silent Drama

"Wings"

WHAT "Wings" lacks in substantial dramatic construction—and it lacks plenty—it makes up in speed. Indeed, I don't remember that I have seen any picture since the earliest French comedies that traveled at such a breathless pace.

"Wings" sweeps the spectator off his feet, carries him to the dizzyest altitudes of melodrama, and finally shoots him down in flames. It provides a harrowing evening in the theatre, and a superbly exciting one.

It is a story of two extremely youthful officers in the American air service during the war. We see them going through the training mill in Texas, dueling with a German "circus" above the clouds, raking communication roads with machine-gun fire and finally facing each other in a terrific life-and-death struggle in the air. We even see them cavorting on leave—this being the first time, to my knowledge, that any movie has given us a really intimate view of the great Battle of Paris.

THE two heroes are played, and played remarkably well, by Charles Rogers and Richard Arlen—and a nicer, more commendably representative pair of boys would be hard to find. There is nothing movie-ish about either of them, which means that they look and act like honest human beings.

They prove that aviators, while in action, were men of few words; in fact, from my scant knowledge of lip-reading, I gather that their vocabulary was limited to two words, both of which are unprintable in a family magazine.

Clara Bow, who appears as the saccharine heroine, is, I regret to say, not so good.

WILLIAM WELLMAN, the director, and John Monk Saunders, who wrote the story (if such it can be called), undoubtedly saw the war from a bird's-eye view, and they have therefore marked "Wings" with the stamp of authenticity. I don't pretend to know whether or not the air fights are convincing, but I can state positively that the drinking scenes are delightfully realistic.

Such a one is "Service for Ladies," which is gay and graceful, intelligent and smart, and infinitely refreshing. Perhaps its unusual excellence is traceable to the fact that both its star, Adolphe Menjou, and its director, Harry D'Arrast, are graduates of the Charles Chaplin school of comedy.

R. E. Sherwood.