FIGHT FOR SIGHT CAMPAIGN

It is not every month that a Royal World Film Première comes to be launched by an Institute of Ophthalmology and, although both organizers and supporters will thank heaven for that, it actually happened in January and the phenomenon certainly has news value. It came about that the Institute of Ophthalmology in London was running a “Fight for Sight” campaign for research funds, and a member of the Appeal Committee had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of Mr. Jules Stein of Los Angeles, renowned for his great philanthropic work for research against blindness in America. In fact he is Doctor Stein, for as a young man he qualified in medicine and subsequently specialized in ophthalmology, but was somehow sidetracked into becoming Chairman of the Music Corporation of America (the £100 million music-movie T.V. empire) and parent company Universal Pictures, eventually doing more for ophthalmology than many ophthalmologists. Through this happy encounter with Mr. Stein, Charles Chaplin’s latest film “A Countess from Hong Kong”—an eagerly awaited production by the master of comedy—became available to the Institute of Ophthalmology, providing it with a wealth of new friends, new wealthy friends, and a friendly wealth of news that put “Fight for Sight” up on the buses, aside on the hoardings, around the news columns, and down in the Underground, in a flood of publicity that the Appeal itself could never have afforded.

The organization of the première was complicated to say the least with many tantalizing and anxious moments inseparable from the artistic temperament but rather a new experience for the scientifically minded. Eventually the date was decided, leaving only two months, with Christmas intervening, to sell a thousand tickets at the highest prices yet insisted upon (50 guineas each in the Royal Circle), and to produce a worthy première programme, but with the tireless help of the omnipotent Dr. and Mrs. Stein, and the enthusiastic and influential efforts of the co-chairmen of the Première Committee, the Lady Ogilvy and Mrs. Kenneth Keith, many famous and distinguished allies were conjured from the air. Quite uniquely the première was launched at a cocktail party given in the historic Jerusalem Chamber at Westminster Abbey, by kind permission of the Dean. Here Henry IVth died and Henry Vth walked out as King—which was the augury for Chaplin’s film?