

THE SHINING LIGHT

The lights burn brightly in Festival London ... gaily decked craft on the age-old Thames ... and across from the dim-lit Embankment there's the gay brilliance of the South Bank Exhibition. In this year of Festival, London is a city of light. The grey old-remembered buildings take on a new beauty ... Buckingham Palace, home of Kings and centre of so much history ... and over at Westminster, Big Ben whose keep voice is known the world round ... the Admiralty Arch, leading to the Palace; and just round the corner, Whitehall and the Horse Guards. In the mellow light history comes to life. The fountains glew in Trafalgar Square where Nelson keeps endless watch.

On into Piccadilly, and the heart of theatreland is a blaze of light. Through these streets (so different in their days) passed the great people about their work and their pleasure - the heroes and the heroines.

On this special September night the light glews brightly on the statue of one of the greatest of them all - Florence Nightingale - for tonight her heroic campaign to lessen the sufferings of others lives again at the Warner Theatre, Leicester Square in the performance of a great actress.

It's a great night in London's film world. Proceeds of the premiere will go to a cause that would have been close to the heart of Florence Nightingale - the Royal College of Nursing Educational Fund.

Chatting with stars Anna Neagle, Michael Wilding and producer Herbert Wilcox is Gladys Young who played Florence Nightingale in a broadcast play ... and here's Googie Withers.

Gradually, the vast theatre fills, but despite urgent appeals few of the distinguished gathering seek their seats. Any moment now Royalty is expected. First arrivals are Earl and Countess Mountbatten.

Then, there's a stir outside, and Princess Elizabeth arrives with Prince Philip to be received by the Countess and Earl Mountbatten.

For Anna Neagle and husband Herbert Wilcox this is the great night - the climax of months devoted to making the finest film of their brilliant partnership. And their labours are crowned with brilliant achievement of one of the greatest stories in British history.

Nearby are some relics of the great lady who inspired the film. It was this lamp that brought hope and healing to the dread hospitals in Crimea where men went expecting to die. For 50 years Florence Nightingale fought her campaign for better hospitals and better nursing. The world recognised her noble service. In her fight with authority and old custom the price she paid was her private life. And in "The Lady with a Lamp" the enthralling story is recaptured.

Now the film is over, the Princess leaves and the curtain falls on a famous occasion which will live long in the memory of those who see it - "The Lady with a Lamp."