"ONE FAMILY.": A Film of the British Empire.

LONDON, MONDAY.

The long-expected film glorifying the British Empire opened to-night at the Palace Theatre, and those who wish to see the most extraordinary picture yet made by a British firm will have to go early, as "One Family" is only on view for one week. It includes, besides the much publicised scenes in Buckingham Palace, many excellent sequences showing the resources, the wealth, the efficiency of the Empire and their bearing on the daily life of an ordinary family. But it also includes a story which is so finely woven that it nearly negates the very uneasiness of some audience. The film was made by Walter Creighton, who was responsible for the famous Wembley Tattoo.

This film, made by British Instructional, is meant, in spirit, to be a advertisement of the Empire's markets. But, because of the theme seeking to unify the scenes, it is actually far nearer a revue in the stage sense. The many ladies of high position impersonating the Dominions add to this impression of a society matinee, and the small boy who is the hero of the film is surely an "infant prodigy." He falls asleep over a geography lesson and dreams a dream of the Empire. So far so good, although the presence of a Barrie-esque polychromatic as a bore. The boy goes to Buckingham Palace and holds a council of the Dominions. This is as good a way as any other of showing us how vast and varied are the lands that form the commonwealth of nations in the British Empire, but then it appears that the sole purpose of this council is to collect ingredients for the King's Christmas pudding, and this pudding is really hard to swallow.

The boy goes to South Africa, New Zealand, India, Scotland for materials, he visits the Irish Free State with Lady Lavery's wolfhound, and he tours Australia to the tones of Phyllis Neilson-Terry's carefully modulated voice. In Australia he sees the dry land being irrigated by the building of giant dams, the hoarding of reservoirs, and the cutting of canals. All this gives an expression of man's will, is stirring. But all the little boy wants is a bunch of grapes for the King's pudding! There is a magnificent sequence of the Canadian when it snows. It raised a burst of applause from the audience, being finely cut and photographed. But all the hero of the film makes of it was that he could not get flour for the Christmas pudding. Acres of wheat are only absorbed in a plum pudding with difficulty, and the film will make its balance in attempting it.

We have waited for a march of the great armament of the British Empire on the screen, and now that we get it we find it allied to a Christmas tempting the confectioner's boy with ungracious manners and a squaky voice. It is more to be lamented because Walter Creighton's taste of his serious material is excellent. The portions of the film dealing with men at work express that work with a force and honesty that has never been seen in British films on a large scale, and has rarely been equally executed in excursions. But "One Family" should have answered Soviet films on their own ground, and here it fails because it only half succeeds in making us aware of and believe. The Empire should arouse something stronger than sentiment; a director of a British film should achieve something more than an ill-kept balance between the hero and the grandiloquence. It has thought behind it and great technical skill, it does something new, but it is all mixed up with something stuffy and trivial and unimposing.

The band of the Irish Guards introduced the film before a background representing Buckingham Palace, and the Aldershot Tattoo proves that there are no actors better than the soldiers of the British Army.